Food Policy Councils:
An Examination of Organisational
Structure, Process, and Contribution to
Alternative Food Movements

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A Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2007
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

.............................
Rebecca Schiff
Abstract

The contemporary global food system is plagued by a myriad of problems. In recognition of the problematic nature of the conventional food system, practitioners and researchers have sought, throughout the past century, alternative, sustainable food production, consumption, and exchange systems. Some of the solutions proposed for these problems suggest the establishment of new institutional forms such as that of the food policy council, an organisation which, through the embodiment of a food systems perspective, proposes innovative local and regional level solutions to food systems problems.

Over the past two decades numerous food policy councils (FPCs) have been created in North America and Australia. Research on FPCs still remains minimal, leaving many gaps in knowledge as to the role of these organisations concerning the ways that they can and do contribute to the sustainable development of food systems and ‘alternative food movements’. Research to date on the organisational structure of FPCs lacks consideration of organisation theory and the relatively substantial body of literature dealing with evaluation of collaborative, interagency organisations, an organisational type closely related to FPCs. There is a lack of consideration as to definition of the role of FPCs within the broader context of sustainable food systems movements and the procedures and protocol for effectiveness in achieving outcomes and fulfilling these roles.
Considering the significant gaps in knowledge, this research focuses on identifying a clear definition of the mission or roles of FPCs and investigates some of the previously unexplored organisational characteristics of FPCs as a foundation for identifying what may lead to ‘best-practice’ organisational structure and process in fulfilling these roles. Since there is limited information and research to date specifically on FPCs, a qualitative and more specifically grounded theory approach was taken to provide an exploratory and reflexive research design framework. This design incorporated a continuous, interactive layering of data collection, classification, and analysis. Following a preliminary literature review, the inquiry focused primarily on the gathering of information directly from FPCs involving several different types and sources of data.

Research findings revealed several aspects of food policy council objectives that can be considered together as defining the organisational role of FPCs. This provides a basis for determining the most effective administrative structure and operations management for fulfilling this role. Findings and analysis also indicated certain components of structure and process that can lead to effectiveness in terms of capacity building and fulfilling organisational roles. A model of FPC structure is developed and presented to summarise these findings, considering those components revealed through the research as contributing most to effective FPC operation. The development of this model from a broad and diverse representative sample, indicates that such modelling of structure and
process may be applicable in transferring the concept of and creating FPCs in new locations.
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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank two people who have dedicated a great deal of time and assistance throughout my candidature: Dr. Jeff Kenworthy, my supervisor, for his incredible and invaluable guidance, insight, advice, patience, support, and wisdom and; my mother, Dr. Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff, for teaching me how to write and whose dedication, counsel, intellectual support, and love have been invaluable throughout the years. To Dan and Dad I am eternally gratified for their patience, love, confidence and caring.

I would also like to extend my deepest thanks Dr. Laura Stocker for her time, encouragement, advice, suggestions, and support in producing this thesis. Additionally, to Allan Johnstone, Ian Barns, Georgina Wright, Pam Matthews and all of the faculty, fellow Ph.D. candidates, and students at the Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy who have listened, offered advice, help, and encouragement, and who together create an inspiring, friendly, and caring environment, I extend my eternal gratitude and thanks.

In North America and across Australia, I would like to thank and gratefully acknowledge my debt to all of the food councils, interviewees, and others who generously offered their time, ideas, information, and experiences. To all of the teachers at George School, especially Ralph and Carolyn, and to Dr. Julie Cumming and Dr. Madhav Badami at McGill, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for their cultivation and encouragement of my skills and interest in research and writing.

I would also like to thank my wonderful friends and sometimes colleagues Justine, Jen, Yamini, Rachael, and Aharon for your laughter, advice, and invaluable friendship and Natalie for your caring support, advice, long thought-provoking discussions, and for listening. Much thanks to Megan, Susan, Luke, Davina, Steve, and Paul for good food
and drink, counsel, friendship, and relaxing, provocative discussions of Ph.D. candidature and the ways of the world.

I am forever beholden to my Putz, who stayed with me at the computer for long days and nights, and to my Escher and Syntax, for the kind of unconditional love that only four-legged furries can give.

To Marion, John, Willy, and Phyllis who opened their hearts, homes, and prayers to me, I am incredibly grateful for their thoughtfulness, generosity, gentleness, and kindness.

Lisa, Sonya, Ben, Luke, and Kailey, who welcomed me into their family, have always touched my heart and inspired me with their kindness. Thank you also Moses for your music.

I should thank two more incredibly supportive people to whom I dedicate this thesis. My sister Sarah inspired me into the pursuit for social and environmental justice. She has been a never-ending source of humour, wisdom, and witty inspiration and has been a champion and best friend to stand by me through the dark and the light. Last but not least, my partner Rob has graciously listened for hours, days, weeks, and months, advised, critiqued, and supported with incredible strength of mind, body, and spirit. His patience and forbearance, wit and cleverness, mysticism, groundedness, dedication, love, and good cooking are such good medicine.

In all the directions
All my relations
Megwich
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 A Short Background to Food Policy Councils

Over the course of several centuries, the conventional Western food system developed from a rather simplistic structure, of local small-scale production, to one of an increasingly diverse and fragmented character (Green et al., 2003; Tansey and Worsley, 1995; Whatmore, 1997). The contemporary global (conventional) food system, functioning in the context of a globalised, mass-producing market, involves a very complex set of participants and linkages to provide an enormous variety of intensively processed, packaged, and fresh foods from every corner of the earth. For several decades, numerous food system related problems affecting human, environmental, and overall ecological health have become apparent, and persisted despite attempts to redress these issues from within the context of the system (Kimbrell, 2002; Lang and Heasman, 2004; Kneen, 1993). Issues arising in connection with all sectors of and relationships within the food system, in production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste, suggest a lack of sustainability in the overall foundation and structure (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Dahlberg, 2001).

________________________

1 The terms ‘sustainability’, ‘sustainable’, and ‘sustainable food system’, as used throughout this thesis, are defined in accordance with the definition provided in The Brundtland Report (World Commission on
Problems in the foundation and system framework may be the basis for the lack of sustainability in the conventional food system (Dahlberg, 2001). The problematic nature of the food system foundation and structure are a result of characteristics such as fragmentation, a productionist orientation, market globalisation, and a dependence on industrial modes of production. Certain symptoms exist which evidence this problematic structure including the unsustainable patterns of resource input and output to the system (Gardner, 1997; Smit et al., 1996), nutrition plagues (Gardner and Halweil, 2000; Smil, 2000; Pimentel and Wilson, 2004; Drewnowski and Popkin, 1997; Lang and Rayner, 2002), and spiritual ‘disconnectedness’ created by distancing between places of production and consumption (Beatley, 2004; Shand, 1997). Physical distancing and fragmentation opened the resource loops of food production systems. Inputs to various stages of the food system in one area are no longer utilised within and recycled into the same bioregion. While rural regions experience pressure on resources of land and water, urban areas face problems of food waste management and disposal (Gardner, 1997; Smit

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et al., 1996; Smit and Nasr, 1995). Contrary to systems theory that demands closed resource loops for sustainable performance, this ‘throughput’ structure undermines the potential for sustainability and viability of the conventional food system, urban systems, rural areas, and bioregions (Smit et al., 1996). This distancing also creates a spiritual problem in the ‘disconnectedness’ of people from the source of food and food production. This disconnection of people from land and the origins of food, and of farmers from consumers, has become an increasing concern in contemporary food systems research (Freyfogle, 2001; Pretty, 2002; Berry, 1991; Tansey and Worsley, 1995).

There exist numerous significant problems, created by the globalised, fragmented, and commodified nature of the food system’s structure and reliance on industrial methods of production and operation. These problems can often be understood as relating to industrial agriculture, public health, and energy use. For the past three to five decades, industrial agriculture, public health, and energy use have persisted as the three major food-related issues that draw attention to the problematic nature of the conventional food system.

The conventional Western food system relies on ‘industrial agriculture’ as the basis of production. The Malthusian and profit-driven commodified food system justified this industrial mode of agricultural production, which relies heavily on techniques that

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3 The term “agriculture” as used throughout this dissertation encompasses fisheries as well as crop, livestock, and other forms of land-based food production.
facilitate systematic mass production of food and fibre to meet demands for increased profit and food provision for an expanding world population (Dahlberg, 2001; Tansey and Worsley, 1995). Numerous problems caused by industrial farming and fishing techniques have called attention to the inadequacies of this farming system and the reliance of the food system upon this unsustainable production base. Initially, the consequences to environmental and human health were recognized in the risks posed by the use of synthetic inputs, or agri-chemicals, broad-acre tractor tilling, widespread irrigation, genetic modification of crop varieties, and monoculture cultivation. Subsequently, cultural and socio-economic situations of farmers and rural communities, the effects of Green Revolution technology and transformation, and the persistence of hunger and growing population leading to pressures to produce more, drew attention to the problematic nature of the system (Kimbrell, 2002).

The food-related public health crisis that developed and has continued unabated over the past century acts as an important signifier of the problematic nature of the food system. Commodification, poor distributional structure as a result of fragmentation and productionist orientation, and industrial farming techniques prevent the food system from delivering its most basic goal: comprehensive food security. Under nourishment,

\[\text{\footnotesize 4 Forms of production and production processes which: 1) may undermine the ability of future generations to meet their own food needs and 2) do not balance economic, social, and environmental priorities. See Chapter 2 for further detail on the economic, social, and environmental risks of conventional food production.}\]
malnourishment, and anxiety over food safety are common within the contemporary, mainstream food system. The past century has seen a multiplication of the human and interrelated ecological health symptoms of a problematic food system far beyond the concern of sufficient agricultural output. Despite a focus on and success in elevating production levels over the past two centuries to provide food output equal to the caloric needs of the world population, chronic hunger and under-nourishment persist in many places. These problems persist due to failures of the conventional food system, relating primarily to the productionist paradigm and ineffective distributional structure.

Other human health symptoms of the problematic nature of the conventional food system relate to the increase of diet-related illness and disease, such as diabetes and obesity, in more industrialised nations. Food safety issues associated with the industrial food system have created new, unprecedented concerns related to the structure and performance of the food industry. Increasingly throughout the past half century, inadequacies in the food system have become apparent, through not only the continued failure of the industrialised food system to supply a sufficient, nutritious diet for the world population, but through increasing alarm over safety as well as the satisfactory and culturally acceptable provision of food. Over the past several decades the profile of diet-related illness and disease has risen to a level such that public health organisations have increasingly shown recognition for the significance of diet, nutrition, and other food-related human health problems. The concept of “food security”, as a consequence of inadequacies in the conventional food system, has evolved from the sole concern for providing adequate amounts of food, to include the range of public health criteria involved in appropriate and
complete nourishment of the world’s populations.

Food trade, production, processing, distribution, and preparation have always relied on inputs of energy in various forms to fuel the processes involved. However, the scope and scale of energy required by the conventional food system is unprecedented and problematic due to its heavy consumption of and dependence on non-renewable energy. The conventional food system from ‘paddock to plate’ relies on intensive energy inputs largely based on fossil fuel resources. Since the 18th century, and throughout industrialisation, fossil fuel resources and associated technological innovations have enabled the augmentation of agricultural production, as well as enhancement in storage and transportation methods, to feed a growing, urbanising population (Pimentel and Wilson, 2004). Through the process of distancing and compartmentalisation fostered by industrialisation, urbanisation, and the productionist drive, the conventional food system became increasingly dependent on fossil fuel-based and other energy-intensive technologies that enable food to be produced, processed, packaged, preserved, stored, refrigerated, and transported in mass quantities over increasingly long distances. Due to an emphasis on industrial production and technological innovation as essential for augmenting production levels, patterns of energy consumption throughout the food system remain inefficient and troublesome (Green, 1978; Heilig, 1993; Hendrickson, 1997; Leach, 1976; Pimentel and Pimentel, 1979; Smil, 1987; Watt, 1979; Pirog, 2004).

In recognition of the problematic nature of the conventional food system, practitioners and researchers have sought, throughout the past century, alternative, sustainable food
production, consumption, and exchange systems. Agriculture, the foundation of the food system in terms of actually producing food, demands particular attention when examining the potential for creating sustainability in the food system.

Solutions to agricultural issues have emerged in two different spheres. One sphere works within the current industrialised agricultural system, relying primarily on agricultural and bio-technology for solutions. This approach remains critically problematic in that these attempts have appeared to be ineffective when operating from within the inadequate structure of the system (Kimbrell, 2002). The other sphere engages ‘alternative’ farming systems that rely on methods outside those of the industrial counterpart.

While the development of sustainable agricultural production plays a vital role in sustainable food system development, an integrated approach is necessary in the attempt to solve the interrelated system-wide issues. Recently, to counter the problems of energy use, health, waste, and disconnectedness, efforts have focused on re-localising food systems through development and support of ‘local’ or ‘community’ food systems. Decentralisation and re-localisation of the food system encompassing a political-economic model apart from productionist, consumption and profit-driven conventional models, as well as social and environmental concerns, offers a means to counteract many, if not all, of the problematic aspects of the conventional food system.

Other solutions proposed for these problems suggest a shift from traditional, fragmented conceptualisations of food and agricultural activities to a more comprehensive, inclusive
“food systems” framework and approach. These same suggestions, in advising an institutionalisation of such perspectives, propose the creation and development of alternative agrifood institutions which embody and progress these conceptualisations.

One such new institutional form is that of the food policy council, an organisation which, through the embodiment of a food systems perspective, proposes innovative local and regional level solutions to food systems problems. Origination of the food policy council concept included the suggestion that these organisations could work with and advocate for changes in government policy, planning, programs, and decision-making to support integrated, cross-sectoral sustainable development of local and regional food systems.

The concept of a council, committee, or coalition engaging members from a diversity of food system sectors and employing a food systems approach has increasingly drawn interest as a method for promoting planning for sustainability in our food systems. Over the past two decades several such groups known as food policy councils (FPCs) have been created in North America and Australia. These groups engage with government, the private for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, educators, community groups, industry associations, and the public including members from a diversity of food system sectors. Including representatives from a diversity of sectors leads to a development of innovative programs, policy, and planning approaches that might not have been created without the synergistic effect created through cross-sectoral communication. In addition to program and project development, as a less tangible yet significant outcome, FPCs use this
collaboration to build upon, communicate, and educate, throughout the various sectors and to the public, on ideas related to the sustainable development of food systems.

1.2. Gaps in Knowledge Addressed in this Research

Research on FPCs still remains minimal, leaving many gaps in knowledge as to the role of these organisations concerning the ways that they can and do contribute to the sustainable development of food systems. Research to date on the organisational structure of FPCs lacks consideration of organisation theory and the relatively substantial body of literature dealing with evaluation of collaborative, interagency organisations, an organisational type closely related to FPCs. Prior examinations of FPCs leave other areas, related to the placement of FPCs within alternative food movements, not fully explored or unexplored. There is a lack of consideration as to definition of the role of FPCs within the broader context of sustainable food systems movements, and the procedures and protocol for effectiveness in achieving outcomes and fulfilling these roles. Prior research focusing explicitly on FPCs also indicates a lack of consensus as to the unique organisational characteristics of FPCs and an absence of consideration for certain key issues identified in the theory on building collaborative capacity. Defining food policy councils, the effective steps to their creation, the models of organisational structure, and their activities and roles in light of collaboration theory may help to resolve some of this ambivalence, providing a clearer understanding of the outcomes sought by these organisations and the challenges they face.
1.3 Research Goals, Questions, and Methodology

As discussed above, previous research on food policy councils leaves gaps in knowledge concerning their organisational structure, activities, steps to creation, and role in promoting food systems sustainability. This confusion points to the need for an overall investigation into the history, background, and organisational role of FPCs: can they be defined, what do they do, and what roles do they play or purpose do they serve? In other words: what are, could be, or should be the fundamental and unchanging characteristics of food policy councils? This research therefore set about filling this gap in knowledge by examining two overarching questions: 1) what is the history and background of FPCs in relation to problems in the conventional food system? and 2) can one or several models be developed or suggested for FPCs in terms of the steps involved in establishment, organisational structure, and the most effective processes for setting priorities and program implementation? The research questions, data collection and analysis aim to: understand the evolution, context of, and prior research on FPCs; clearly define the mission or roles of FPCs; and investigate some of the previously unexplored organisational characteristics of FPCs as a foundation for identifying what may lead to ‘best-practice’ organisational structure and process in fulfilling these roles.

Two sets of questions form the basis for the research. The first two questions focus on the first overarching question by aiming to develop an understanding of the purpose, evolution, and history of FPCs in relation to the problems in the conventional food system:
1. What are the detailed problems of the conventional food system and proposed solutions to these problems? and

2. What are the origins, history of, and prior research conducted on FPCs in relation to these problems?

These questions are researched and explored through the reviews of relevant literature found in Chapters 2 and 3. Findings related to questions 1 and 2 lead to the second set of three questions which are presented again in Chapter 3. These three questions focus on the second overarching question and form the basis for the empirical research on FPCs as presented in Chapters 4 through 9:

3. What is the organisational role and function of food policy councils in relation to alternative food movements?

4. How is a food policy council created?

5. What is/are the most effective model(s) of FPC organisational structure and process for fulfilling organisational role and function?

Answers to these questions through empirical research were pursued through interviews, collection of data from primary documents, and consultation with FPC experts. Since there is limited information and prior research specifically on FPCs, a qualitative and more specifically grounded theory approach was taken to provide an exploratory and
reflexive research design framework. This design incorporated a continuous, interactive layering of data collection, classification, and analysis.

Following the preliminary literature review in relation to questions 1 and 2, the inquiry focussed primarily on the gathering of information directly from FPCs involving several different types and sources of data. Two primary data collection methods were employed in this research: 1) objective review of relevant existing documents; and 2) semi-structured interviews with key informants. Other methods included: interviews and information exchange with food policy council experts; and collecting information and opinions from experts and other key informants in attendance at a conference designed for the specific purpose of bringing together and exchanging information on FPCs.

The nature of this study and of the organisations being investigated indicates a need to gather data directly from FPC participants. Food policy council members and experts therefore formed the primary sample of those selected for interviews, gathering of documents, and other data collection methods. Given the more extensive history and extent of FPC presence in Canada and the U.S., evaluation focussed on North American FPCs. The selection of sample participants aimed to include a variety of FPCs with different administrative arrangements, histories, and social/cultural contexts as described in Chapter 4. Data obtained from interviews was prepared for coding and subsequent analysis. Following this preparation, interview data were coded topically and axially and interpreted through several subsequent layers of analysis and categorisation. Following
this analysis, the research findings were prepared for presentation and writing. Chapter 4 provides further details on the methodologies utilised for this research.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 explores research question 1 through an examination of the structure of the conventional food system, problems with this system, and solutions that have been proposed to amend these problems, including a discussion of “alternative food movements” and the place of food policy councils within these movements. Chapter 3 moves on to examine research question 2 through an investigation of the current state of knowledge about food policy councils. This chapter also restates the set of three questions for empirical research as based upon the gaps in knowledge identified in the chapter. The following chapter, Chapter 4, provides a detailed explanation of the methodology designed to address the three research questions. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present the data and findings. Chapter 5 examines findings and conclusions in relation to research question 3. Chapter 6 discusses findings in relation to research question 4. This chapter and Chapter 7 also address the fifth research question. These chapters communicate findings and conclusions related to the primary and secondary stages of data analysis such that they examine the existence of common structure and process components of FPCs. The advantages, disadvantages, and recommendations related to each of these components, as conferred by interviewees, are also presented here. However, no conclusions are drawn in these chapters regarding the relative effectiveness
of different structure and process arrangements. Chapter 8 summarises these findings to present some conclusions regarding models for the organisational structure and process of food policy councils. Chapter 9 discusses how each of the research questions has been addressed, and the answers obtained, and examines avenues for further research.
Chapter 2: The Food System Tragedy

2.1 Introduction

As a central and essential component of existence, food permeates our daily lives through our relationships with each other and our environments. Throughout the history of mankind, the acquisition, preparation, and eating of food has fostered patterns of work, cultural, and social organisation. Over the course of several centuries, the conventional Western food system developed from a rather simplistic structure, of local small-scale production, to one of an increasingly complex, diverse, and fragmented character. As any trip to a supermarket will reveal, the dominant contemporary food system, functioning in the context of a globalised, mass-producing market, involves an incredibly complex set of participants and linkages to provide the enormous variety of intensively processed, packaged, and fresh foods from every corner of the earth. For many years, the evolution, structure, and complexity of relationships in the conventional Western food systems have remained a subject of continuous research and debate (Beardsworth and Keil, 1997).

This chapter is an exploration of food systems concepts, the state of the conventional food system, and some of the problems inherent in the dominant, industrialised, and fragmented arrangements of this food system with a special focus on Western forms of production, processing, and distribution. This first section of this chapter, Section 2.2, offers an introduction to the various conceptualisations of food systems. The following
sections review previous work that considers these problems, potential alternative food system approaches or solutions, and the relatively new and emerging food systems related movements, such as sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, and community food security. Examination of these movements reveals the development of “alternative food institutions” (Allen, 2004) providing avenues for support of these movements. In particular, food policy councils emerge as one type of alternative food institution expressly designed to fill gaps in the traditional fragmented food systems approach while utilising cross-sectoral collaboration to advocate within different geopolitical levels for creation of and changes to food planning, programs, and policy.

2.2 What is a Food System?

At the most basic level, food systems are frequently understood within the context of certain characteristic activities, such as production and consumption and related institutions, including hunters, farmers, fishers, gatherers, cooks, grocers, and others. As such, food systems, from the simple to the complex, may be defined as a group of “activities connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management; as well as all the associated regulatory institutions and activities” (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000, p. 113). However, definitions of the food system in such terms may prompt conceptualisation of “a formally organised set of links. . .which is arranged according to some well-thought-out plan or scheme often restrict[ing] understanding of the complexity of the interactions and reactions involved” (Beardsworth
and Keil, 1997, pg. 32). Instead, food systems may be conceptualised as being about the relationships between humans and with the surrounding environment, determining:

‘The how and why of what we eat -- i.e. how food is produced and reaches our mouths and why we eat what we do. It subsumes the terms "food chain", which is too linear a model for today, and "food economy", which is too narrowly economic. The idea of a system implies that there is an interconnectedness beneath the surface of things, which is the case when we look at any aspect of food today’ (Tansey, 1994, pg. 4).

Tansey proceeds to describe three ways in which food and food systems affect different aspects of life. These include a biological, a political-economic, and a social-cultural aspect each of which affects processes and relationships. Tansey’s conceptualisation, while recognising some relatively universal characteristics such as production, exchange, preparation, and consumption, allows for flexibility in subsuming the complex of activities and experiences that relate to procuring and consuming food from the simplest models to the most complex. Other terms such as ‘foodshed’ (Getz, 1991), ‘food circle’ (Bentley, 1995), and ‘food network’ (Brisbin, 2004) have been offered to denote the complexity of stakeholders and relationships involved in food activities. These three terms however engage a cyclical, integrated subtext to subsume notions of resource input, output, and externalities.

In dealing with complexity of food-related activities in the contemporary, conventional
Western food system, a variety of models exist to facilitate specific interests in evaluation. Food systems analysis has frequently been framed in terms of geographic or spatial-temporal relations. This type of analysis took the form of ‘the geography of food’, developed over the past two decades, which involves the “study of the spatial and environmental aspects of food production, provision, and consumption” (Crang, 2000, pg. 272, cited in Bohle, 2002, p. 341). Allowing for spatial and temporal interpretations of food systems dynamics, these conceptualisations, such as that offered by Green, Harvey, and McMeekin (2003), enable consideration of the flows of energy, water, food materials, and other resources throughout and between different bioregions and countries. This approach remains especially applicable in contemporary analyses surrounding issues of resource and waste management when considering the globalised nature of the conventional food system where inputs in one geographic area become outputs to another region. Evolution of the conventional food system into an increasingly complex structure following the Second World War (Tansey, 1994; Whatmore, 1997), demonstrated a fragmentation of the basic activities of production, exchange, and consumption into several sub-sectors including processing, packaging, retail, wholesale, and transportation. Figure 1 illustrates some of these resource flows and the numerous, recently developed sub-sectors involved in the conventional food system.
Figure 1: Food consumption and production systems

Within a globalised context, diverse energy flows, and social, economic, and ecological relationships occur at various spatial and temporal levels of the contemporary food system. In the past thirty years, the construction of ‘community food systems’, ‘local food systems’, or ‘foodshed’ models evolved as means to conceptualising these relationships and the effects of the input and output flows on the ecological integrity of bioregions (Feenstra, 1997). Dahlberg (2001) offers further insight into the concept of local food economies and food systems, especially for urban environments, providing models that shift from the regional to the municipal, neighbourhood, and finally household levels of procurement, exchange, and consumption. Each subsequent level offers a breakdown of subsystems to the previous level such that neighbourhood food systems encompass household, municipal encompass neighbourhood, and regional contain municipal systems. The conceptualisation of food systems in the context of bioregional resource flows and local socio-cultural, political, or economic frameworks plays an important role when considering resolutions to the problems that plague the conventional food system.

2.3 The Roots of the Food System Tragedy

The conventional food system is inundated with a multitude of problems. Problems in the conventional food system, affecting human, environmental, and an overall ecological health, have become increasingly apparent over the past several decades. These problems have persisted despite attempts to remedy them from within the context of the system.
Issues have arisen within and among all sectors of and relationships within the food system, in production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste. This pervasiveness of problems throughout all sectors indicates a lack of sustainability in the overall foundation and structure of the conventional food system (Dahlberg, 2001; Halweil, 2002; Hines et al., 2002; Kimbrell, 2002; Lang and Heasman, 2004).

The root of problems in the conventional food system, as outlined by Lang and Heasman (Lang and Heasman, 2004), lies in the overall theoretical framework in which it operates. Responding to the catastrophist predictions of Malthusian population dynamics (Malthus, 1803), the modern food system developed within a ‘productionist’ paradigm, which is the focus on increasing production levels, meant to provide for both a growing population and increasing profit for capitalist objectives (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Stone, 2001; Campbell, 1998). This paradigm developed in the context of industrialisation through which innovations in transportation, manufacturing, agricultural technologies, and biotechnological advances fostered a shift from small, locally based food production and distribution to increasingly geographically centralised mass modes of production (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Dahlberg, 2001; Tansey and Worsley, 1995). This shift also grew in response to the rapid urbanisation occurring alongside industrialisation through which food producers were encouraged towards commodification to overcome capitalist market forces and the obstacles of supplying an increasingly distant and food-dependent urban market (Dahlberg, 2001; Wood, 1998).

A process of distancing ensued where consumers became increasingly separated from the
source and place of production (Tansey and Worsley, 1995; Kneen, 1993; Dixon, 1999). This distancing also involved a separation of the consumer from the processes and site of waste disposal such that the impacts of wasteful habits remain hidden. The trend towards commodification and centralisation promoted increased specialisation in the type of food produced and in the activities involved with food provisioning such as production, processing, and preparation (Koc and Dahlberg, 1999; Heffernan, 1998). The previous food system of the Western world, comparatively simplistic in structure, developed into an increasing number of components or stages, visible in the current highly compartmentalised structure of the conventional food system in which production, processing, and consumption remain connected only through transportation and are controlled by separate interests.

Throughout the twentieth century, a profit-oriented market structure fostered horizontal and vertical integration among the compartmentalised sectors of the developing conventional food system (Heffernan, 1998). Horizontal integration involves a trend towards increased concentration and monopoly control of capital within sectors of the food system, characterised by the dominance of corporate agribusiness, food processing, and retail entities in various sectors and decline in small, locally owned autonomous production. The concept of vertical integration holds the potential for beneficial and sustainable development of the food system. The benefits of vertical integration could occur through the closing of food production cycles in line with the objectives of ecologically sustainable development, promoting closed-loop, resource recycling systems. However, within the context of the conventional food system, vertical
integration entails consolidation across sectors into large corporate agri-food entities (Heffernan, 1998). Increasing market globalisation, initially led by political centralisation and expansionism of Western states over the past three centuries, encouraged trends towards vertical integration through the development of trans national corporations (TNCs) that dominate commodity chains (Wood, 1998; Dahlberg, 2001). This market globalisation expanded upon and augmented the process of distancing farmers from consumers. Maintaining the compartmentalised, fragmented food system structure, transport acts as a geographic link between sectors, while TNCs act as an economic link (Koc and Dahlberg, 1999).

The conventional food system remains critically unhealthy and unsustainable due to the system foundation and framework characterised by market globalisation, fragmentation, a productionist orientation, and a dependence on industrial modes of production (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Kimbrell, 2002; Nestle, 2002). Certain overarching symptoms, denoting the problematic structure of the conventional food system, include the unsustainable patterns of resource input and output to the system (Gardner, 1997), nutrition plagues (Gardner and Halweil, 2000), and spiritual ‘disconnectedness’ created by distancing between places of production and consumption (Beatley, 2004). Physical distancing and fragmentation opened the resource loops of food production systems. Inputs to various stages of the food system in one area are no longer utilised within and recycled into the same bioregion. While rural regions experience pressure on resources of land and water, urban areas face problems of food waste management and disposal (Gardner, 1997; Smit et al., 1996). Contrary to systems theory that demands closed resource loops for
sustainable performance, this ‘throughput’ structure threatens the sustainability and viability of the conventional food system, urban systems, rural areas, and bioregions (Smit et al., 1996). This distancing also creates a spiritual problem in the ‘disconnectedness’ of people from the source of food and food production. In describing the problematic nature of the contemporary disconnected relationship between humans, food, and the environment, Shand (1997, p. v) indicates that “the gap between nature and human nature is widening. Because we are increasingly alienated from nature, we tend to underrate our dependence on a thriving ecosystem. We underestimate the implications of its erosion and we undervalue the critical place flora and fauna have in our own security.” This disconnection of people from land and the origins of food and farmers from consumers has become an increasing concern in food systems analyses (Freyfogle, 2001; Pretty, 2002; Berry, 1991; Tansey and Worsley, 1995; Beatley, 2004).

Outside of these overarching issues, lie three significant problems, created by the globalised, fragmented, commodified food system structure and reliance on industrial methods of production and operation. For the past three to five decades, industrial agriculture, public health, and energy use have persisted as the three major food-related issues that draw attention to the problematic nature of the conventional food system. Increasing globalisation of food markets and fragmentation of the food chain has created a considerable dependence on transportation to move food from one link to the next (Molly, 1999; Pirog, 2004; Soil Association, 2001; SUSTAIN: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, 2004). This transport dependence and use relies on non-renewable energy resources while contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Due to an emphasis on
industrial production and technological innovation as essential for augmenting production levels, patterns of energy consumption throughout the food system remain inefficient, demonstrating similar dependencies and hazards (Green, 1978; Heilig, 1993; Hendrickson, 1997; Leach, 1976; Pimentel and Pimentel, 1979; Smil, 1987; Watt, 1979). The food-related public health crisis that developed and has continued unabated over the past century acts as an important signifier of the problematic nature of the food system (Toronto Food Policy Council, 1997; Smil, 2000; Lang and Rayner, 2002). Hunger, obesity, and malnutrition persist despite attempts to solve these problems from within the framework of the system (Drewnowski and Popkin, 1997; Gardner and Halweil, 2000; Monteiro et al., 2004; Popkin, 2004; Tomeh, 1998). Commodification, poor distributional structure as a result of fragmentation and productionist orientation, and industrial farming and fishing techniques prevent the food system from delivering its most basic goal: comprehensive food security (Toronto Food Policy Council, 1997; Smil, 2000; Lang and Rayner, 2002; Lang and Heasman, 2004). Simultaneously, severe environmental and overall ecological degradation have resulted from the practices of the industrialised farming system that forms the foundation for the conventional food system (Bawden, 1999; Gardner, 1996; Goldsmith, 1999; Kimbrell, 2002; Whatmore, 1997; Wiese, 2004). Within the construct of the productionist paradigm, industrial agriculture rationalizes harmful effects and outcomes through the assertion that the supposedly necessary augmentation in production demands continued use of hazardous techniques, as described in more detail in the following section.
2.4 ‘The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture’

The conventional Western food system relies on ‘industrial agriculture’ as the basis of production. The Malthusian and profit-driven commodified food system justified this industrial mode of agricultural production, which relies heavily on techniques that facilitate systematic mass production of food and fibre to meet demands for increased profit and food provision for an expanding world population (Dahlberg, 2001; Tansey and Worsley, 1995). However, since the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1963), numerous problems caused by industrial farming techniques have called attention to the inadequacies of this farming system and the reliance of the food system upon this unsustainable production base.

Currently, the management and correction of the threats posed by agricultural production receive significant consideration internationally, attended to by organisations such as the FAO, UNEP, WHO, UNDP, as well as by a wealth of independent researchers and other institutions. The productionist model that “generates food insecurity and hunger as it goes and uses that hunger - perennially interpreted in Malthusian terms - to justify further


7 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); United Nations Environmental Protection Programme (UNEP); World Health Organization (WHO); United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
expansion” and monopolisation by corporate, agribusiness entities (Stone, 2001, p. 575), validates the industrialisation of farming systems and the continued application of agricultural technology, despite mounting evidence that many of the agricultural innovations and the industrial mode of production present dangerous consequences to human and environmental health.

Initially, the consequences to environmental and human health were recognized in the risks posed by the use of synthetic inputs, or agri-chemicals, broad-acre tractor tilling, widespread irrigation, genetic modification of crop varieties, and monoculture cultivation. Subsequently, cultural and socio-economic situations of farmers and rural communities, the effects of Green Revolution technology and transformation, and the persistence of hunger and growing population leading to pressures to produce more, drew attention to the problematic nature of the system (Kimbrell, 2002). Kimbrell (2002) draws attention to the complexity of problems in the dominant industrial agricultural system as well as to the ‘myths’ that aid in the continuation of this farming system, despite the inherent hazards. Kimbrell identifies the ‘seven myths of industrial agriculture’:

Myth One: Industrial Agriculture Will Feed the World
Myth Two: Industrial Food is Safe, Healthy, and Nutritious
Myth Three: Industrial Food is Cheap
Myth Four: Industrial Agriculture is Efficient
Myth Five: Industrial Food Offers More Choices
Myth Six: Industrial Agriculture Benefits the Environment and Wildlife

Myth Seven: Biotechnology Will Solve the Problems of Industrial Agriculture

These ‘myths’ outline the characteristic terms of validation employed to protect capitalist productionist logic and objectives (Kimbrell, 2002). However, the persistence of economic, social, and environmental problems in the dominant agricultural system indicate “that the whole farming system, as currently practised, is fatally flawed and ecologically unsustainable” (Watson, 1992, p. 19).

The Malthusian drive to feed a hungry world, as well as the motivations of the dominant capitalist mode of production (Bryer, 2004), encouraged expansion that took the form of crop specialisation and concentration of landholdings (Heffernan, 1998), inherently supporting broad-acre, mono-crop cultivation. As a basic component of the capitalist mode of agricultural production, mono-crop cultivation, while presenting its own unique hazards, facilitates and encourages other dangerous practices of industrialised agriculture. Monoculture farming creates a threat to biodiversity, inevitably occurring in this system given that “considerable effort is expended to minimize diversity” (Edwards et al., 1990, p. 125). While posing this threat to biodiversity and ecosystem health, mono-crop cultivation also facilitates other industrial farming practices recognized as hazardous to environmental and human health. Facilitated and simultaneously necessitated by monoculture farming, the application of agri-chemicals, clearing of land and destruction of ecosystems for agricultural production, use of machinery for heavy tilling and other
practices, and heavy irrigation (Glaeser, 1987), also contribute to a wide range of environmental and human health hazards in the context of industrial agriculture.

Concerns over the potentially negative effects of modern agriculture initially attracted attention several decades ago in relation to techniques and practices that posed threats to human and environmental health. Agri-chemical use became an initial concern for impacts on the health of wildlife and consequently the entire food web. Although now, over forty years since the publication of Rachel Carson’s controversial *Silent Spring*, which raised “an outcry about the impact that chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides were having across the whole web of life on this planet – including the dangers that it posed to human health” (Bawden, 1999, p. 10), conventional farming still uses synthetic pesticides and fertilisers that contaminate soil and water, subsequently endangering human and ecosystem health.

Agri-chemical usage poses threats to human and ecosystem health, and contributes to the creation of agricultural waste and sewage. Ultimately, the adoption of synthetic inputs, in the form of chemical pesticides and fertilisers, created an unsustainable system of resource use and waste production, replacing the soil-building capacity of organics so that “garbage and sewage became waste products to be discarded rather than soil builders to be reused” (Gardner, 1997, p. 5). Use of synthetic inputs, such as artificial pesticides, fertilisers, and herbicides, poses numerous health threats while simultaneously failing to reduce barriers of soil nutrient deficiency and pests. Agri-chemical usage, infecting soil, water courses, rivers, streams, lakes, and oceans, poisons wildlife, affects all levels of the
food chain, destroys ecosystems and threatens biodiversity (Kimbrell, 1999).

Simultaneously, occupational poisoning and potential health hazards associated with residues left on food raise concern over the dangers of agri-chemical usage on human health. The World Health Organization, reporting several million cases of occupational poisoning due to pesticides, further “provided evidence that pesticides are responsible for severely affecting many aspects of human health” (Skinner et al., 1997, p. 114).

In addition to these threats to wildlife and human health, critics point to the failure of agri-chemical use to maintain long-term effectiveness and viability in nutrient supply and pest prevention. Despite the use of over 2.5 billion kilograms of pesticides each year, mainly for agricultural purposes, pests such as insects, pathogens, and weeds destroy 37% of potential food and fibre crops. Between 1945 and 1989, although pesticide use increased tenfold, crop loss due to agricultural pests almost doubled from 7% to 13% (Bawden, 1999). Affecting soil acidification, soil nutrient loss, and heavy metal contamination, agri-chemical use also leads to cropland degradation that eventually destroys the suitability of land for cultivation (Watson, 1992). Threatening the viability of soil and water resources, the availability of suitable land for production decreases, while conversion of new land to agricultural purposes leads to deforestation and other forms of ecosystem destruction (Gardner, 1996).

Also characteristic of the industrialised form of agriculture, extensive irrigation and tillage practices employed and depended upon by this farming system present a further set of problems in their contribution to severe land degradation and ecosystem
destruction. Heavy tilling results in erosion and consequently a loss of organic matter and nutrient-rich soil (Anonymous, 1999). In recognition of these impacts, the practice of ‘conservation tillage’ and ‘no-till’ agriculture became popularised over the past two decades as a way of avoiding some of these negative consequences (Smil, 1987).

“Putting aside the plow leaves crop residue closer to the surface of the soil, where it decays. The organic matter that results is valuable for two reasons: The carbon it contains is more stable than the types formed deeper in the dirt (which makes it less likely to enter the atmosphere as carbon dioxide), and it yields more fertile soil” (Anonymous, 1999, p. 9). Heavy tillage practices of industrialised agriculture have come under further attack for their contribution to the problem of desertification. “Over-plowing and overgrazing are converging to create a dust bowl of historic dimensions. With little vegetation remaining in parts of northern and western China, the strong winds of late winter and early spring can remove literally millions of tons of topsoil in a single day” (Anonymous, 2003, p. 60).

Irrigation practices of conventional agriculture similarly cause an assortment of environmental health problems. Runoff from irrigated cropland brings agri-chemical pollutants and contributes to the sedimentation of rivers, streams, and other water bodies. Eutrophication, caused by sedimentation, and direct poisoning from chemical pollutants continuously threaten numerous species of aquatic and marine life, consequently affecting other species throughout the food web. Studies suggest that sedimentation, eutrophication, and chemical runoff caused by farmland irrigation and chemical use significantly endanger the wildlife of riparian and offshore environments (Shand, 1997).
Eroded sediments and runoff chemicals affect vital ecosystem functioning in areas such as the Great Barrier Reef. Here, a 6.87 times increase in nitrogen fertilization and 3.48 times increase in phosphorus fertilization, associated with a 1.68 times increase in the amount of irrigated cropland in Australia over the past thirty-five years, has caused significant harm by blocking out sunlight, affecting corals’ feeding patterns, and introducing harmful pathogens (Tillman, 1999).

Notwithstanding the problems associated with chemical runoff, erosion, and sedimentation, conventional irrigated agriculture presents a variety of other dilemmas. In arid areas, heavy irrigation findings show that dramatic changes to the hydrology, diversion and intensive application of water to croplands causes depletion of non-renewable groundwater resources and soil quality degeneration through salinisation (Bawden, 1999). “The availability of adequate supplies of fresh water for human direct use and agriculture is already critical in many regions, especially the Middle East and parts of North Africa where low rainfall is endemic. Surface waters, for instance, are often poorly managed, resulting in water shortages and pollution, both of which threaten humans and aquatic biota” (Pimentel and Wilson, 2004, p. 24). Competition with population centres for increasingly scarce and contaminated water sources, in part due to irrigation runoff, places pressure on the capacity to maintain irrigated agriculture. This depletion in available water resources, salinisation, and erosion caused by irrigation contributes to deterioration of the agricultural land base and subsequent pressure to convert more land for cultivation (Gardner, 1996; Trout, 1998). Altogether, the combination of agri-chemical use, heavy tillage resulting in erosion, and irrigation runoff
contributes to massive land degradation. “Between 1945 and 1990, erosion, salination, waterlogging, and other degradation eliminated from production an area equal to the cropland of two Canadas” (Gardner, 1996, p. 7).

In addition to these threats to farmland quality, urban expansion due to cities being situated in areas of prime agricultural land and surrounded by similar land, as well as diminishing supply of safe water, contribute to the issue of farmland loss and preservation. Since land is a finite resource, less available potential farmland also means greater pressure on yields which leads to more chemicals and irrigation to boost production levels (Gardner, 1996). This has created a ‘vicious cycle’ and downward spiral in ecosystem and agricultural land degradation (Bawden, 1999).

In the production of the agri-chemical inputs and in fuelling mechanised processes, such as tractor-tilling and irrigation pumps, industrial farming poses other risks, both in dependence on an unsustainable supply of energy 8 and in the production of greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. “When all activities associated with farming are accounted for worldwide, agriculture is responsible for approximately one-quarter of anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, nearly 60 per cent of methane emissions and up to 80 per cent of nitrous oxide emissions” (Goldsmith, 1999, p. 84). The activities concerned, including agri-chemical application to grasslands, land conversion of CO$_2$ sinks such as bushland and forest, disruption of soil in cultivation, livestock production, 

8 This dependence will be covered more extensively in the following section “eating oil”.

33
and burning fossil fuels to power farm machinery, indicate the contribution of industrial agriculture to the greenhouse gas emissions underlying global warming and climate change (Goldsmith, 1999).

Even as industrial agriculture continues to contribute hazardous greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, concern has arisen over the effects that climate change will have on agricultural production. Many are wary of the potentially crippling effects that changes in precipitation levels, average temperature ranges, and weather patterns will have on food, fuel, and fibre production (Bawden, 1999; Anonymous, 2002).

In addition to the environmental and human health hazards caused by industrial agricultural systems, concentration in land holdings and capital expansion to the point of agribusiness monopolization, as characterised by the contemporary “agri-food complex”, has led to problems in the health of rural farming communities (Whatmore, 1997; Winson, 1993; Beatley and Manning, 1997). One significant effect has been the migration of rural farming populations to urban areas. “As agriculture became more mechanized at the turn of the century, farm workers drifted to the cities, leaving a situation where less than 10% of the population is responsible for supplying the nation with food” (Watt, 1979, p. 201). This then leads to “to sub-optimally sized communities which are no longer able to support commercial or public sector services” (Watt, 1979, p. 201). Simultaneously, the difficulties experienced by farmers in managing the pressure for improved environmental management and public health concerns associated with industrial farming techniques have “led to a very wide spectrum of responses, which have
in turn impacted upon the socio-cultural environment …Personal economic stress has led, in cases, to family, and especially child abuse, as well as to substance abuse, and in extreme cases, to suicide and even homicide. Unemployment in rural areas has escalated also as a personal outcome with severe social implications. As regional income from agriculture declines, and unemployment increases, so the integrity of rural communities often declines” (Bawden, 1999, p. 8-9). In search of employment and improved social services, an out-migration from rural to urban areas has occurred, placing increased pressure on cities to provide adequate water, shelter, food, and other necessities.

Simultaneous to the market forces driving contemporary industrial agriculture and, consequentially, numerous social, environmental, and economic problems, the industrial paradigm, promoting technology as a means to improving or solving problems, and the Malthusian rationalisation for increased production, led to the development of genetic engineering of seeds and agricultural inputs (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Kimbrell, 2002). Although allegedly increasing productivity, these practices have created disastrous outcomes, such as ecological destruction and food poverty (Ayres, 2003; Clark and Lehman, 2001; Egziabher, 2003; Holderness, 2001; Howard, 2003). These outcomes, seen in the aftermath of the Green Revolution (Shiva, 1991), have heightened public concern over the safety of genetically modified organisms to environmental and public health.

The damage caused by agri-chemical use, broad-acre tractor tilling, irrigation practices, genetic modification of crop varieties, monoculture cultivation, cultural and socio-
economic decline in rural communities due to centralisation and consolidation by agri-
business, the effects of Green Revolution technology, and the persistence of worldwide 
hunger and growing population, together suggest an inadequacy in the farming system 
employed by the conventional food system.

While these environmental and human health hazards posed by industrial agriculture 
present significant cause for concern over the sustainability of the present farming 
system, they represent only one aspect within the larger framework of the conventional 
food system. Above all, food is meant to provide for healthy lives in the nourishment of 
a population. Systems of food production and distribution are driven to provide food as a 
basic health objective. While throughout the past two hundred years, the role of food in 
promoting health has been “assumed to follow from sufficiency of supply” (Lang and 
Heasman, 2004, p. 6), the conventional food system, according to the productionist 
paradigm, developed to focus primarily on increased quantity or production levels rather 
than food quality. Despite the success of the industrialised food system in significantly 
raising production levels it “has put quantity before quality” (Lang and Heasman, 2004, 
p. 4), displacing the importance of nutritional value and safety. The significance of 
distribution is also overlooked in the strong focus merely on increased production levels. 
An inadequate distributional structure, caused by the trend towards distancing production 
from the place of consumption, commodification, and rapid urbanisation, leaves a 
significant portion of the population hungry or malnourished. A focus on mass 
production has also contributed to a standardisation and homogenization of food and the 
food system, affecting dietary variety and consequently nutritional intake. The effects of
this prioritising of quantity over quality and appropriate distribution have become
apparent through a global public health crisis related to hunger, malnutrition and obesity,
and the resultant chronic diseases and illness.

2.5 The Public Health Crisis

2.5.1 Introduction

Currently, billions of people throughout the world suffer everyday from health problems
related to food. Under nourishment, malnourishment, and anxiety over food safety
plague the contemporary, mainstream food system. The past century has seen a
multiplication of the human and interrelated ecological health symptoms of a problematic
food system far beyond the concern of sufficient agricultural output. Despite a focus on
and success in elevating production levels over the past two centuries to provide food
output equal to the caloric needs of the world population, chronic hunger and under-
nourishment persist. These problems persist due to failures of the conventional food
system, relating primarily to the productionist paradigm and ineffective distributional
structure. Other human health symptoms of the problematic nature of the conventional
food system relate to the increase of diet-related illness and disease, such as diabetes and
obesity, in more industrialised nations.

Food safety issues associated with the industrial food system, have created new,
unprecedented concerns related to the structure and performance of the food industry. Increasingly throughout the past half century, inadequacies in the food system became apparent, through not only the continued failure of the industrialised food system to supply a sufficient, nutritious diet for the world population, but through increasing alarm over safety as well as the satisfactory and culturally acceptable provision of food. Over the past several decades the profile of diet-related illness and disease has risen to a level such that public health organisations have increasingly shown recognition for the significance of diet, nutrition, and other food-related human health problems. The concept of “food security”, as a consequence of inadequacies in the conventional food system, has evolved from the sole concern for providing adequate amounts of food to include the range of public health criteria involved in appropriate and complete nourishment of the world’s populations.

The evolution of the concept of “food security”, as discussed and defined below, occurred synchronously with increasing awareness of numerous emerging public health symptoms that indicated the failures of the dominant, industrial food system to meet these requirements. The health problems that appeared as a result of these failures have been categorized by critics of the food system as falling under three main categories. These categories, “the underfed”, “the overfed”, and “the badly fed”, refer to generalised groups suffering from diet-related illness in the context of the food system. It is important to note that the ‘badly fed’, or micro-nutrient deficient, overlap with the underfed and the overfed (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Gardner and Halweil, 2000). The problems associated with all of these categories “are closely linked to health, suppressing or
promoting diseases from the common cold to cancer”. Malnutrition, a symptom of all of these categories, is the top cause for loss of a year of healthy life (Gardner and Halweil, 2000, pg. 34). This affects a significant portion of the world population, with a World Health Organization report estimating that nearly half of the world’s population, over 3 billion people, suffer from poor nutrition (Tomeh, 1998).

2.5.2 Underfed, Overfed, and Badly Fed

As reported by the WHO, the ‘underfed’, those suffering from chronic hunger, total over 800 million worldwide (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2003). Contrary to the popular belief that insufficient levels of global food production cause inadequate access to food and hunger, food system critics frequently identify the root of the problem as poverty and poor distributional structure “which limits peoples’ access to food in the market or to land, credit, and other inputs needed to produce food”. Almost 80% of malnourished children in the developing world live in countries that produce food surpluses (Gardner and Halweil, 2000). Hunger still persists even though the quantity of food produced worldwide has proven sufficient to provide the entire world population with enough food to enjoy nutritional sufficiency (World Food Program, 2004). Numerous severe health problems occur due to chronic hunger include marasmus, cretinism or brain damage, blindness, and increased risk of infection and death (World Health Organization, 2004c).

The ‘overfed’ population, those suffering from obesity or overweight, has grown as a
result of the ‘dietary transition’ (Smil, 2000). The ‘dietary transition’, experienced by
industrialising, urbanising nations entering into an increasingly globalised economy, has
led in more industrialised nations to chronic diet-related health problems as a further
result of a problematic food system.

“This Rapid changes in diets and lifestyles that have occurred with industrialization,
urbanization, economic development and market globalisation, have accelerated
over the past decade. This is having a significant impact on the health and
nutritional status of populations... Food and food products have become
commodities produced and traded in a market that has expanded from an
essentially local base to an increasingly global one. Changes in the world food
economy are reflected in shifting dietary patterns” (World Health Organization,
2004b, para. 3).

This ‘dietary transition’ evolved due to the processes of industrialisation, urbanisation,
and globalisation, bringing changes in the distribution of wealth, demographic changes
(urban drift), changes in the availability of food stuffs (especially sugar-laden and fatty
foods), and demographic imbalance (death rates drop, but birth rates among the poverty
stricken continue to soar). This has led to an increase in diet-related illness, especially as
associated with obesity and the types of micro-nutrient deficiency induced by
consumption of highly processed foods with little or no nutritional value (Gardner and
Obesity affects over 300 million people worldwide in all strata of society, including those with limited access to appropriate food (World Health Organization, 2004b). Overeating, obesity, and being overweight “degrades the body gradually, with heart disease, cancer, and other chronic ailments striking typically in middle and old age” (Gardner and Halweil, 2000, pg. 34). Obesity and overeating also lead to micro-nutrient deficiency, a main characteristic of the ‘badly fed’ population. This group presents another area of health concern, where micro-nutrient deficiency, the deficiency in essential trace vitamins and minerals, affects well over 2 billion globally. Micro-nutrient deficiency results from lack of nutritious food as well as from sedentary lifestyles, overeating, and a predominance in the availability of unhealthy foods affected by nutrition transition (Gardner and Halweil, 2000). Due largely to trends towards the standardisation of food production to facilitate mass production and distribution of food, an increased availability of convenience and fast foods now affects every corner of the ‘food sphere’. Referred to as the ‘McDonaldisation’ effect, the standardisation of food has had a significant, detrimental effect on nutritional intake and social relations surrounding eating and meal preparation (Germov and Williams, 1999).

Chronic hunger, obesity, and micro-nutrient deficiency can result from dietary transition, food poverty, and food system standardisation; however, diet-related health problems of this nature also result from inadequate infrastructure or unacceptable means of
distribution, affecting not only the poor, but many people who are at risk of inadequate access such as the elderly, urban populations, disabled people, and minority or marginalised groups including women and children. Poverty stricken and low income households often face significant difficulty in gaining access to appropriate food due to transportation difficulties such as the inability to afford a car. “Public infrastructure that designates public, bicycle and pedestrian transportation as poor relatives to the car discriminates against low income communities’ ability to access the best prices and quality food shopping” (Bellows and Hamm, 2003, p. 108). In this respect, food shopping becomes an issue of “mobility restrictions” rather than preference or cultural acceptability (Gottlieb et al., 1996; Eisenhauer, 2001). The elderly, disabled, and marginalised groups also experience difficulty in accessing food shops placing them at greater “nutritional risk” (Wilson et al., 2004).

Food safety has also emerged in recent decades as a significant concern in relation to the food system. While this issue initially surfaced as a concern in the 19th century with the discovery by Louis Pasteur that harmful micro-organisms in food present health risks (Pimentel and Pimentel, 1979), more recently, severe outbreaks of food-borne illness such as Salmonella enteritidis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), and Escherichia coli (E. Coli), have caused significant public concern over the safety of the food system (World Health Organization, 2004a). Food safety also remains a concern in relation to the health effects potentially caused by certain forms of biotechnology used in agriculture and food-processing operations. In addition to the potential dangers linked to food irradiation, scientific communities and the general public have expressed significant
concern over the health hazards that may result from the consumption of food produced with the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (Newbury, 2004; Ayres, 2003). Although there exists a high degree of controversy in the debate over these issues, a great deal of substantiated evidence denotes health risks causing consumers to remain wary of the safety of food available in supermarkets (Gottlieb, 2001; Holderness, 2001; Clark and Lehman, 2001).

2.5.3 Evolution of Food Security

In the twentieth century, nutrition, and consequently food, “moved from the sidelines of public health to being central . . .to public health campaigns”. In the 1940s the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), established under the newly created United Nations, assumed the priority of promoting food security by increasing food supply in every nation (Lang and Heasman, 2004). Over the course of the century, the term ‘food security’ evolved from the WHO and FAO initial definition focusing on adequate supply, to the definition discussed below: one embracing appropriate and socially acceptable access as well as food safety.

‘Food security’, until the late 1970s and early 1980s, meant food sufficiency, generally concerning hunger on the macro-economic scale of providing enough food for the growing world population. After the World Food Summit in 1974, the term evolved to a multi-dimensional conceptualisation to include issues of nutrition and access. By the
1990s it was commonly perceived that appropriateness in quality and means of access, not just sufficiency, was part of the definition. By the time of the World Food Summit in 1996 food security for people was defined and widely accepted as “physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.9

This definition signified a shift from an objectively measured definition of meeting short-term nutritional sufficiency, as quantified in meeting adequate caloric intake, towards a more subjectively qualified sustainable “livelihood” definition aimed at preferences and acceptability. Recently, the definition of food security shifted to include further subjective measurements of food security such as the quality or cultural appropriateness of available food and people’s anxiety about the ability to secure food (Anderson and Cook, 1999). Embracing these objective and subjective criteria, ‘food security’ may be defined as:

The access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life and includes at a minimum: a) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and b) the assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing,

9 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (1996) 'Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action', In World Food Summit, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome
and other coping strategies). Food insecurity exists whenever [a] or [b] is limited or uncertain.\textsuperscript{10}

This concept of food security highlights the requirements for determining the adequacy of a food system to serve the basic function of appropriately nourishing the population. Issues of food safety, access, and malnutrition remain highly visible throughout the industrialised world. Focus on increased production levels at the expense of nutritional quality and appropriate distribution contributes to an inability of the conventional food system to perform the primary function of delivering food security. Attaching inadequate value to nutritional quality and distributional efficiency, a shortcoming inherent to the productionist oriented, fragmented structure of the food system, continues to contribute to chronic hunger and diet-related disease. The fragmented structure of the conventional food system remains problematic in other aspects, especially in the inefficiency of energy use and reliance on non-renewable sources. The problem of energy use plagues not only the agricultural base, but the entire the food system.

2.6 ‘Eating Oil’

For thousands of years, cultures have traded knowledge, tools, resources, and products associated with food production, processing, and consumption. This included trade on global and more regional scales of tools, seeds, plants, propagation methods, preservation methods, cooking methods, and food itself. Food trade, production, processing, distribution, and preparation have always relied on inputs of energy in various forms to fuel the processes involved. However, the scope and scale of energy required by the conventional food system is unprecedented and unsustainable due to its heavy consumption of and dependence on non-renewable energy.

The conventional food system from ‘paddock to plate’ relies uncontrollably on intensive energy inputs largely based on fossil fuel resources. Fossil fuel resources and associated technological innovations have enabled the augmentation of agricultural production, as well as enhancement in storage and transportation methods, to feed a growing, urbanising population (Pimentel and Wilson, 2004). Through the process of distancing and compartmentalisation fostered by industrialisation, urbanisation, and the productionist drive, the conventional food system became increasingly dependent on fossil fuel-based and other energy-intensive technologies that enable food to be produced, processed, packaged, preserved, stored, refrigerated, and transported in mass quantities over

increasingly long distances. Consequently, “fossil fuel energy has been used to subsidize human labour and solar inputs, creating a labour efficient, energy intensive food production system” (Watt, 1979, p. 201).

Despite greater efficiency in the reduction of human labour inputs, the overall energy efficiency of the food system has decreased. Whereas in 1945, one calorie of energy input to food production resulted in four calories of available food energy in the U.S., this figure decreased, depending on food type, to an average of 1.3 calories available for every calorie of input by 1979 (Pimentel and Pimentel, 1983; Leach, 1976). As a current indication of this relationship, studies estimate that one calorie from an average food item in the U.S. takes ten to fifteen calories to produce (Gussow, 1991).

The problem of energy inefficiency in food production initially drew a surge of attention in the 1970s and early 1980s when fuel shortages and a perceived energy crisis provoked interest and research in this area that evaluated all stages of the food system (Smil, 1987; Hendrickson, 1997). Although interest abated, renewed focus has emerged recently, especially in relation to transportation and the distance that food travels between producers and consumers. Jones (2002) outlines the several key ways in which the conventional food system remains energy inefficient. While indicating the substantial energy use required in industrial, as opposed to organic, farming systems, and that required by processing and packaging, Jones largely focuses on energy consumed in transportation and the resultant fossil fuel emissions. Jones (2002) and others offer new approaches to understanding the extent to which the conventional food system employs
long-distance transport and the implications of this use through the concepts of ‘swapping food’ and ‘food miles’.

Currently, the globalised food economy engages in a process of ‘swapping food’, so that an item produced in a particular country or region is exported while the same item is imported from a distant place of production. A study in the U.K. offers an example of ‘swapping food’ where, in 1997, the U.K. imported 126 million litres of milk while exporting 270 million litres (Jones, 2002). This engagement of the globalised food economy in food swapping necessitates long-distance transport, causing a heavy reliance “upon fossil fuels, creating pollution, increasing the need for packaging and preservation, and often reducing freshness and nutritional content” (SUSTAIN: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming, 2004).

In response to the issue of transportation in the food system, the concept of ‘food miles’ emerged in recent years to evaluate and offer some measure of the severity of this issue. Elaborating upon a definition provided by Pirog et al. (2001), food miles are the distance that a food item travels from where it, or its collective components, are grown or raised to where it is ultimately purchased or consumed by the consumer or end-user. Food miles can provide “a relative indicator of the amount of energy or fuel used to transport food from farm to store, with lower food miles signalling lower transportation fuel usage and cost” (Pirog, 2004, p. 3). If fossil fuels are the energy source then lower food miles mean lower emissions. However, this is not an unconditionally accurate measure of energy and
emissions since some forms of transport may involve more mileage but be more fuel efficient (Pirog, 2004).

Several studies in the U.S., U.K., and Sweden have calculated food miles for various food items. Pirog and Benjamin (2003) found that an average fruit or vegetable shipped from a source within the continental U.S. travelled an average distance of almost 1500 Weighted Average Source Distance (WASD)\(^{12}\) food miles. A study examining the food miles involved with providing a typical breakfast in Sweden, consisting of fruit, bread and butter, juice, coffee, cheese, sugar, and cream, estimated the distance travelled by the food items to be equivalent to the circumference of the earth (Gunther, 1993). One study of a meal consumed in London revealed similar findings (Lang, 2002). The transport of food over long distances continues to increase as well. In the past three decades, percentages of food imports have risen dramatically while road transport distances increased (Pirog et al., 2001).

While transportation plays a major role in energy and fossil fuel consumption in all sectors of the conventional food system, every stage in the industrialised ‘food chain’ also demands a significant amount of energy input. Several studies on the sources of energy input at different stages of the food chain focus on packaging, type of transport, or type of industry (Lang, 2002). However, to effect a more cohesive, complete evaluation

\(^{12}\) WASD, a method employed to calculate food miles accounts for a combination of the distance that products travel and the amount, or weight, of the product transported.
of energy use in the food system, such as that conducted by Watt (1979; 1982), the food chain can be divided into four sectors linked by transport: production, processing, retailing, consumption.

The production sector of the conventional food system, based in industrial agriculture, requires energy inputs to produce, operate, and distribute feed, fuel, seeds, machinery such as tractors, irrigation pumps, or mowers, fertilizers, pesticides, buildings and services, and transport within the agricultural sector (Watt, 1979; Leach, 1976). The use of fossil fuel-based fertilisers in industrial agriculture, compensating for shortages of arable land and severely eroded soils (Pimentel and Wilson, 2004), contributes a large percentage of energy use in food production (Smil, 1987). However, other energy demands for seeds, machinery, and irrigation also play a significant role in fossil fuel consumption for agricultural purposes (Watt, 1979). These demands demonstrate a trend towards increased use with global agricultural consumption of fossil fuel-based energy, not including the energy required to produce inputs, more than doubling from 1971 to 1995 (Price et al., 1998). Although energy use in this sector continues to expand, this no longer correlates with the increased yields initially gained in energy intensive agriculture. Exemplifying this trend, the energy input per hectare into U.S. maize production increased four-fold between 1945 and 1985 while crop yield per unit of input decreased during this same period from a ratio of 3.4:1 to 2.9:1 (Heilig, 1993).

While industrial agricultural production consumes and depends upon a significant amount of fossil fuel-based energy, this only accounts for a small percentage of energy
consumption in the conventional food system (Watt, 1979; Leach, 1976; Green, 1978). Presently, a vast percentage of crops do not reach the end-user without cleaning, packaging, and preparation or direct processing (Green, 1978). Although storage and long-distance transport demand processing, or preservation, and packaging in some form for hygienic and safety purposes, the industrialised food system employs an increasing amount of packaging energy for cosmetic and advertising purposes. Other recent developments in packaging that contribute to increased energy use result from trends towards multiple layers of packaging, more energy-intensive packaging, widening the range of foods packaged, and a trend away from refillable and recycled containers (Pimentel and Pimentel, 1979; Pirog et al., 2001). Food processing, the primary stage in the post-farm gate food chain consumes energy in the form of factory fuels, equipment and machinery, buildings and services, packaging materials, pesticides, cleaning materials, and transportation within the stage (Leach, 1976; Watt, 1982). Variations in the type of packaging and food type affect the energy input required at this stage of the food system. For example, a fresh, non-imported carton of food, such as produce, consumes only 9.0 MJ/kg while an aluminium can of the same product consumes 40.0 MJ/kg in packaging energy requirements (Lang and Heasman, 2004). Differences in the degree of energy input between different types of food result from the amount of packaging and processing required for a product. A loaf of bread, requiring inputs of various agricultural products and heavy processing, often necessitates more energy input in processing and packaging than a can of corn (Pimentel and Pimentel, 1979). Similarly, other more heavily processed products such as biscuits demonstrate a processing energy efficiency of 0.41 calories output for every 1 calorie of input while fresh fruit or
vegetables offer an input : output ratio of 0.70 : 1 (Green, 1978).

Beyond processing, preserving, and packaging of food, the retailing and consumption stages of the food system also contribute to food system energy use. Retail stores utilise non-renewable sourced energy inputs for display, packaging, including shopping bags, preservation for fresh produce and frozen goods, and shopping facilities. In the twentieth century, the number of local grocers dwindled, replaced by centralised supermarkets “where highly processed and packaged foods are displayed under bright lights in appropriately heated, chilled or frozen display counters. The large, uniformly designed complexes are reliant on artificial air conditioning, heating, cooling and lighting” (Watt, 1979, p. 205). Transport within this stage also plays a significant role where trips to retail outlets, especially made by fossil fuel-dependent vehicles, increased over the past century as supermarkets and hypermarkets became increasingly centralised. Studies in the U.K. found that distances travelled for food shopping rose by 60% while the trips by car doubled from 1975-1976 and 1989-1991 (Raven et al., 1995). ‘Far from hypermarkets being “convenient”, they in fact generate more, not fewer, trips for food shopping’ (Lang and Heasman, 2004, p. 237).

In terms of consumption, energy demands derive from materials needed for preparation and storage as well as for facilities maintenance and service provision in restaurants and food outlets. Domestic food storage and preparation consumes a significant amount of energy (Watt, 1979). The rise in the types and number of appliances for food in homes has soared in the past fifty years. Although home refrigeration and deep freezing of food consumes a large portion of this energy, the increasing abundance of other kitchen
appliances, such as toaster ovens, electric blenders, food processors, electric can openers, dehydrators, convection ovens, electric kettles, and microwaves, has also led to a significant increase in the amount of energy consumption in the food system (Watt, 1979; Hendrickson, 1997; Green, 1978). While food outlets or restaurants also consume energy through these applications, they also contribute to energy consumption in facility maintenance and service provision. Fast food restaurants utilise a large amount of non-renewable energy in this respect through a reliance frequently on “car driving customers whose attention they attract with brightly lit premises. The foods are highly processed and the packaging often includes throwaway serviettes, knives, spoons, forks, straws, and cups” (Watt, 1979, p. 205).

Outside of the transportation demand and activities in the various sectors of the food chain, food waste, collection, and disposal also offer a significant indication of energy inefficiency in the conventional food system. The actual loss of food through direct waste or spoilage causes a reduction in the energy input : output ratio for the system as a whole (Green, 1978). Losses due to spoilage or direct waste occur in all sectors of the food system largely due to problems associated with the storage necessitated by a highly disconnected and compartmentalised system. These losses also occur in relation to other factors such as waste in food processing for aesthetic and cosmetic purposes, inefficiency of handling and storage in retail, and ‘plate waste’ in restaurants and homes (ibid). Watt (1982) also notes the significance of non-renewable energy expenditure related to collection and disposal of this waste.
The energy expenditure and apparent inefficiency occurring due to transport dependence and activities in all sectors of the food system raises concern especially in relation to the pollution caused by the instability or vulnerability of relying upon non-renewable resources. The conventional food system uses four to seventeen times the amount of fossil fuels, especially for transportation, than local or regional food systems. An Iowa based study revealed that 280 to 346 thousand gallons of fuel savings, equivalent to the average annual diesel fuel use of 108 farms, could result from growing and transporting only ten percent more food in a regional or local food system (Pirog et al., 2001). Reduced reliance upon fossil fuel inputs to the conventional food system demands particular attention in relation to projections for a peak in world oil production. Authorities estimate that world production of oil and natural gas will peak in five to twenty years with absolute availability lasting only another 50 years at current global production rates (Pimentel and Wilson, 2004; Pirog et al., 2001). In addition to a lack of stability in energy resources, reduction in fossil fuel use would also result in comparable reductions in CO$_2$ and other greenhouse gas emissions (Pirog et al., 2001). In the U.K., a typical household of four people annually emits 8 tonnes of CO$_2$ from production, processing, packaging and distribution of the food it consumes (Jones, 2002).

The increase in fossil fuel dependency and greenhouse gas emissions aggravating global warming and climate change, and overall energy inefficiency are significant and problematic aspects of the conventional food system. As described by Lang and Heasman (2004) these problems derive from a basic focus and structure that promotes
intensive energy use as well as hazardous farming and processing techniques to meet the demands of the productionist paradigm for mass production and distribution. Similarly, as demonstrated above, this structure promotes the perpetuation of relationships, dynamics, and practices that lead to threats to economic, environmental, and social health. Despite the successes in raising crop yields through industrial and biotech innovation, “hunger continues hand in hand with excess. The optimism of 20th century food policy planners that, with good management and science, problems associated with food would disappear...food’s capacity to cause problems has not lessened” (Lang and Heasman, 2004, p. 12). Symptomatic economic, social, and environmental problems caused by the industrial agricultural production, inefficiency and excess in energy use, and those apparent in the prevalence of diet-related illness indicate that, as a whole, the conventional food system is ultimately inadequate and unsustainable.

While these issues denote a critically problematic system, attempts to redress this issue demonstrate a crucial failure in conceptualisation of the issues and problems. The conventional food system suffers from the absence of a systems approach among planners and policy makers that attempt to address food issues. To comprehensively solve food problems, it remains necessary to address the entire system, rather than individual links, and the interrelationships between various stakeholders and components (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999).
2.7 Movements for Food System Solutions

In recognition of the problematic nature of the conventional food system, practitioners and researchers have sought, throughout the past century, alternative, sustainable food production, consumption, and exchange systems. Agriculture, the foundation of the food system, demands particular attention when examining the potential for creating sustainability in the food system. A majority of literature focuses specifically on farming systems with an inherent belief that solving agricultural problems will solve broad-based food system issues (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). Solutions to agricultural issues have emerged in two different spheres. One sphere works within the current industrialised agricultural system. This approach remains critically problematic in that these attempts remain futile when operating from within a fatally flawed system (Kimbrrell, 2002). The other sphere engages ‘alternative’ farming systems that rely on methods outside those of the industrial counterpart. While the development of sustainable agricultural production in this sphere plays a vital role in sustainable food system development, a food systems approach is necessary in the attempt to solve broader issues. Recently, to counter the problems of energy use, health, waste, and disconnectedness, efforts have focused on re-localising food systems through development and support of ‘local’ or ‘community’ food systems. Decentralisation and re-localisation of the food system encompassing a political-economic model apart from productionist, consumption and profit-driven conventional models, as well as social and environmental concerns, offers a means to counteract many, if not all, of the problematic aspects of the conventional food system.
In the belief that augmentation of production levels and improved agricultural efficiency hold the key to solving problems in energy use, hunger, and malnutrition, agriculture has remained a focus of attention on dealing with food system inadequacy. Industrial and technological invention, of the nineteenth century to the present, that ostensibly raised crop yields while avoiding inefficiency in resource use, propelled research into food system improvement through further innovation of this kind. The ‘myth’ that technological innovation will solve the food system crisis persists through a reliance on evidence of initial success in production outcomes despite subsequent failures (Kimbrell, 2002; Kimbrell, 1999).

Dependence on technology to solve world food problems remains problematic in two main respects. The primary issue relates to the weakness of the productionist paradigm in that poor distribution rather than insufficient production acts as a principal cause of hunger and malnutrition.

“In an attempt to convince consumers to accept food biotechnology, the biotech industry has relentlessly pushed the myth that it will conquer world hunger. This claim rests on two fallacies: that people are hungry because there is not enough food produced in the world; and that genetic engineering alone can increase food productivity” (Kimbrell, 2002, p. 62).

In the case of the first “fallacy”, over the past forty years global food production has
outstripped population growth such that there is more than enough food produced
globally to provide everyone with enough calories to fulfil their daily caloric intake needs
(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2004; Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations, 1996). In relation to the second “fallacy”, outcomes
show that the use of agricultural biotechnology alone is not sufficient in that it does not
address other critical social, economic, and environmental issues (Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations, 2004; Shiva, 1991; Pimentel and Pimentel, 1990;
Kimbrell, 1999).

Another issue with agricultural technology concerns the manner in which the majority of
agricultural biotechnology has repeatedly proven, over the long term, to deplete the
viability and resilience of agricultural systems so that after initial yield increases, these
levels fall. Reducing resilience of agro-ecosystems for continued production through
physical, biological, and genetic pollution, biotechnological applications in farming
systems, from the discoveries of Rachel Carson to the aftermath of the Green Revolution,
prove ultimately unsustainable. This does not presuppose the potential for appropriate
technology to aid in improved system functioning. However, the confidence in the
 technological fix as the foundation of solutions remains insufficient.

Since Norman Borlaug was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his ‘miracle
wheat’, marking the onset of the Green Revolution that many believed would, and at first
appeared to, solve the hunger issue, genetic engineering has remained an underpinning of
the agricultural biotechnology industry. However, genetic engineering of agricultural
crops proved ultimately, in the aftermath of the Green Revolution, unable to offer solutions, while simultaneously creating further problems (Pimentel and Pimentel, 1990; Niazi, 2004).

Foundations for the failure of Green Revolution biotechnology lay in the paradoxical nature of the technology itself. The paradox emerged through the attempt to offer biotechnology as a substitute to nature and politics (an adequate distribution structure for food and agricultural supplies), while demanding increasingly more intensive resource use (Shiva, 1991). While Green Revolution activities attempted to solve, through agricultural technology, political issues related to hunger and farmers’ income, it failed to address the need for an equitable distribution structure for food (Perkins, 1990), land, resources, and tools (Feder and O'Mara, 1981; Chrispeels, 2000). Biotechnology, as applied in the Green Revolution, treats nature as inadequate and in need of a substitute or enhancement (Pimentel and Pimentel, 1990; Shiva, 1991). This fails to recognize the fundamental and ultimate reliance on natural resources for continued health and operation. Failure of the Green Revolution demonstrated that treating nature as “a source of scarcity, and technology as a source of abundance, leads to the creation of technologies which create new scarcities in nature through ecological destruction” (Shiva, 1991, p. 15).

Genetically engineered crop varieties, instead of offering a sustainable solution to the problems of industrialised agriculture, demonstrate further contribution to environmental pollution (Ayres, 2003; Benbrook, 2003; Egziabher, 2003; Falkner, 2004) while creating
new risks in ‘genetic pollution’ (Prakash, 2001; Altieri and Rosset, 1999; Reed, 2002). While proponents of agricultural biotechnology claim that genetic engineering of crop varieties reduces the need for agri-chemical pesticides and fertilisers, the opposite has proven to be true. Studies indicate that pesticide use actually increases with the use of genetically engineered crops (Benbrook, 2003). Presenting dangers of ‘biological’ and ‘genetic pollution’, biotech crops eventually reverse their ability to increase yields and, by implication, their potential to eradicate hunger. Production of sterile seeds, those that cannot produce after one growing season, and the tendency for genetically engineered species to out-compete others, consequently depletes biodiversity and inherently threatens the resilience of agricultural ecosystems. This in turn threatens the security of agricultural production in the face of new pests and of those dependent on saving seeds to produce the next harvest (Kimbrell, 2002).

Conventional agricultural ‘technology’ repeatedly reveals the inability to adequately feed the world without compromising ecosystem health and to sustain farming with continued application of its techniques. Consequences and failures of the Green Revolution, and the present lack of sustainability in the dependence on fossil fuels and agro-ecosystem destruction through environmental, genetic, and biological pollution, demonstrate this weakness. This begs the question: “are there not alternative strategies which have the same end [of alleviating hunger] but which employ other means to it?. . .This does not imply a return to traditional agricultural practices as such, but it does imply a return to the rationale behind them” (Glaeser, 1987, p. 4-5).
As a response to the inadequacy of conventional agricultural technology to solve the food system problem, many have sought to develop alternative, ecologically sound farming systems. Development of ‘alternative’ farming systems, occurring in parallel with the rapid evolution of industrial agricultural systems, took root in the early 20th century (Harwood, 1990). The first distinct and widely recognized alternative farming system appeared in the 1920s when Dr. Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian scientist, developed a system known as Biodynamic Agriculture or Biodynamic Farming (Harwood, 1990; Gold, 1999). The tenets of biodynamic farming, focussing on minimal agri-chemical use, closed loop systems, and holistic management balancing environmental and social concerns, formed a value basis for subsequent alternative farming systems, and eventually ‘sustainable agriculture’. The 1940s saw the development of ‘organic agriculture’ as a concept in opposition to the synthetic input reliance of industrial agriculture. Pivotal works of Albert Howard (1940), Lady Eve Balfour (1943), E. Faulker (1943), Rodale (1945), and Bromfield (1950) signalled the emergence of the organic agriculture movement and consequently a widespread opposition to the use of agri-chemical inputs. A variety of increasingly popular alternative farming systems, including ‘natural farming’ (Fukuoka, 1978) and ‘permaculture’ (Mollison and D., 1978; Mollison and Slay, 1994), continued to emerge, while industrial agriculture progressed into the initial success and eventual failures of the Green Revolution. In addition to these systems, a multitude of alternative farming terms and techniques evolved throughout the century in response to emerging problems in industrial agriculture. Gold (1999) outlines the different approaches of many techniques, including agroecology, bio-intensive gardening, biological or ecological farming, conservation tillage, farmland preservation,
holistic management, integrated farming systems, integrated pest management, intensive or controlled grazing systems, low input agriculture, precision farming, regenerative agriculture, and whole farm planning.

The aspiration towards (alternative) farming systems that do not threaten biodiversity and human health, poison the environment or compromise production output, became a widespread pursuit in the 1990s in response to recent, extensive failures of conventional agriculture to provide for social, economic, and environmental stewardship (Gold, 1999). In alignment with broader goals of supporting ‘sustainable development’ for the entire planet, as witnessed in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1998) and subsequent events, the term ‘sustainable agriculture’ emerged to denote this aspiration. Through a correlation with the goals of alternative farming systems, concepts of ‘sustainable agriculture’ embraced a variety of techniques associated with these systems. As interest grew in promoting ‘sustainable development’, ‘key individuals and organisations in agriculture have flocked to this term. After all, who would advocate a “non-sustainable agriculture”’ (Francis, 1990, p. 97).

In light of the widespread appeal of this concept and variability among approaches and techniques thought to promote agricultural sustainability, differing definitions emerged for the concept of ‘sustainable agriculture’. Despite the difference in focus and vocabulary for the definitions of ‘sustainable agriculture’, many share significant similarity in theoretical foundations. The underpinning concept of ‘sustainability’ or ‘sustainable development’ provides the foundation for these similarities. Supporting the
four ‘pillars’ of sustainability, definitions of sustainable agriculture commonly stress the
necessity for balanced ecological, social, economic, and cultural welfare.

Through engagement with the underlying conceptual framework of sustainability and the
history of opposition to the characteristics of industrial agriculture, many sustainable
alternative agricultural systems also share similar defining characteristics. The
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (Feenstra, 1997) highlights
several of these characteristics as common goals of farmers seeking to promote
sustainability. These goals include providing a more profitable farm income, minimizing
adverse impacts on safety, wildlife, water quality and other environmental resources,
promoting environmental stewardship through protection and improvement of soil
quality, reduction of dependence on non-renewable resources, such as fuel, synthetic
fertilizers and pesticides, and promoting stable, prosperous farm families and
communities (Feenstra, 1997).

Related to the main objectives of alternative agriculture, organic growing techniques
frequently characterise alternative farming systems as a goal and essential feature.
Organic agricultural production remains applicable across a wide variety of farming
systems from a broader theoretical focus on nature as a source of abundance to a rejection
of synthetic industrial inputs and reliance on natural methods of agro-ecosystem
improvement.

‘Although many single techniques used in organic agriculture are used in a wide
range of agricultural management systems, what differentiates organic agriculture is the focus of the management. Under the organic system, the focus is on maintaining and improving the overall health of the individual farm's soil-microbe-plant-animal system (a holistic approach), which affects present and future yields. The emphasis in organic agriculture is on using inputs (including knowledge) in a way which encourages the biological processes of available nutrients and defence against pests, i.e., the resource ‘nature’ is manipulated to encourage processes which help to raise and maintain farm productivity. The soil is a central part of that system. Most fertilizers and pesticides are considered to hinder that process and are, therefore, prohibited’ (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1998, para. 5).

Through rejecting the use of synthetic inputs, including genetically engineered material, organic agriculture can offer benefits over industrial agriculture. Non-use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers causes less environmental impact with simultaneously lower production costs.

“The simple use of composted organic manures increases soil microbiology and fertility, decreases erosion, and helps preserve wildlife habitats. Organic and diversified farming practices increase the prevalence of birds and mammals on farmlands and ensure biological diversity for the planet. In sum, in terms of preserving and augmenting soil productivity and the biodiversity of the planet,
small-scale sustainable agriculture is far more beneficial and efficient than its industrial counterpart” (Kimbrell, 2002, p. 60).

While alternative farming systems present potentially beneficial goals and advantageous outcomes over those of the industrial counterpart, alternative agriculture frequently faces criticism. Critics indicate shortcomings, especially in organic agriculture, citing a purported inability to provide sufficient yields comparable to that of industrial farming (Kimbrell, 2002). One argument asserts that alternative farming methods, relying on smaller farm sizes, are less productive. However:

“According to a 1992 U.S. Agricultural Census report, relatively smaller farm sizes are much more productive per unit acre (in fact two to 10 times more productive) than larger ones. The smallest farms, those of 27 acres or less, are more than 10 times as productive (in terms of dollar output per acre) than large farms (6,000 acres or more), and extremely small farms (four acres or less) can be over 100 times as productive” (Kimbrell, 2002, p. 57).

A myth also persists that refusal to use genetically engineered organisms and synthetic pesticides or fertiliser renders organic farms less productive. However, over time:

“ Increases in per hectare productivity for food crops and maintenance of existing yields for fibre have been shown. This is counter to the popular myth that organic agriculture cannot increase agricultural productivity. Evidence indicates that
productivity can grow over time if natural, social and human assets are accumulated” (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2002, Ch. 5, para. 7).

Although sustainable agriculture and farming systems remain vital to the health of food systems, numerous other problematic aspects of the conventional food system demand attention as well. Despite the fact that “food issues are generally seen as falling within the purview of rural policy, applying mainly to farmers” and consequently to agriculture, several recent trends emerged to address other features and holistic approaches to dealing with the food system dilemma. Movement towards ‘sustainable food systems’ includes sustainable agriculture while embracing a more holistic, broader, interrelated scope of food systems activities. These approaches acknowledge the relationships among food ‘subsystems’ and between food and other systems (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). This facilitates the involvement of a wide range of interests and knowledge so that although a more recent trend, “sustainable food systems research and practice has already benefited from the many contributions and theoretical analyses from the fields of nutrition, sociology, philosophy, community development, education, economics, and the agricultural sciences” (Feenstra, 2002, p. 99). In moving towards an integrated analysis and approach to food systems development, the social influences affecting food system dynamics demand consideration (Tansey and Worsley, 1995). Dixon (1999) offers a ‘cultural economy’ model for developing sustainable food systems that include considerations of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic class, and patterns of work and consumption.
Over the past two decades, food system analyses demonstrated an increasing interest in promoting decentralisation and localisation of food system activities and relationships. Following the Cornucopia Project, an investigation of the U.S. national food system in 1981, regional food systems analyses, focussing on local food activities, expanded as an important tool for examining sustainability in food systems (Feenstra, 2002). In 1991 Arthur Getz popularised the term ‘foodshed’, comparable to the concept of a watershed, referring to the geographic aspect of a sustainable food system theory, as well as the socio-cultural and economic aspects (Getz, 1991). Concepts of ‘community’ or ‘local’ food systems also surfaced as expressions to denote the social, economic, and geographic or ecological aspects of food systems. Definitions of these concepts frequently overlap in the characteristics and goals provided for each one. Gold (1999) offers a definition of local or community food systems as “a collaborative effort to integrate agricultural production with food distribution to enhance the economic, environmental, and social well-being of a particular place”. The Soil Association offers a commonly accepted, elaborated definition focussed on aspects of sustainability in local food systems, describing them as “A system of producing, processing and trading, primarily of organic and sustainable forms of food production, where the physical and economic activity is largely contained and controlled within the locality or region where it was produced, which delivers health, economic, environmental and social benefits to the communities in
those areas”.13 DeLind (2002) offers the concept of ‘civic agriculture’ that embraces these ideals of local food systems while supplementing the notion that local production and consumption systems may promote citizenship and sustainable environmentalist principles. In this sense, local food systems, as opposed to the conventional food system, pervasively incorporate the three pillars of sustainability, economic, social, and environmental health, as the primary goal, instead of increased production and profit at the possible expense of social, environmental, and other economic securities.

Localising food systems to suit a particular community or ecosystem offers several advantages over the globalised conventional food system. Beatley and Manning (1997, p. 92) demonstrate the potential importance of localised food systems to overall ecological sustainability stating that

“support for local agricultural activity—provided that activity is environmentally sustainable—can serve the dual purpose of preserving farmlands at the urban periphery and supporting a local economy that provides for the food needs of the regional population. . .local agriculture also holds greater potential for providing citizens with fresher, more healthful food.”

One important aspect that Beatley and Manning draw attention to here is that support for local food systems is not a standalone solution. Despite the potential benefits of local food production and consumption in terms of health, connectedness, energy, and economy, creating more sustainable food systems also requires attention to all aspects of production and distribution to ensure environmental (and social and economic) sustainability. Hird and Petts (2002) offer six key benefits of local food systems. The first three benefits focus explicitly on the three pillars of sustainability. Local food systems promote sustainable economic development through the creation of employment in environmentally sound activities, support for local farmers, and improved food access and affordability for the community. Food production and consumption systems in a local framework provide environmental benefits through reduction of the environmental damage, energy and resource use caused by long-distance transport, including packaging and storage, as well as through closing bioregional resource loops through recycling of food wastes. Public health benefits derive from increased availability, diversity, and affordability of fresh, less processed foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Through a reduction in storage time and emphasis on organic growing methods, local food often retains higher nutrient levels and less danger of detrimental health effects from agricultural residues. The three other primary areas of food systems benefits relate to community development, education, and land use. Focus on regional, seasonal foods and recipes and enrichment of food activities in the local environment fosters a greater sense of community and culture that crosses boundaries of gender, age, ethnicity, and class.

14 E.g. production methods; conditions for farm and food labourers; nutrition education.
Sustainable local food activities offer educational opportunities for all community members to learn about healthy diets, indigenous plants and animals, local ecology, and production methods. Local food systems help to regenerate rural landscapes through preservation of sustainable agro-ecological land-use patterns and revitalize urban settings through support of small, local retailers, gardens, and markets. These benefit themes run throughout research into the development of sustainable food systems (Halweil, 2002; Nichol, 2003; Pirog, 2003; Dahlberg, 1994b; DeLind, 1994).

Support for the localisation of (sustainable) food systems takes a variety of forms (DeLind, 2002; Hird and Petts, 2002). Activities supporting local food systems involve the establishment and involvement in community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, food co-ops or buying clubs, community gardening, direct farm marketing, food box schemes, allotment and household gardening, and support from local retailers and restaurants. Urban agriculture and the formation of local food policy councils have also grown dramatically in the past decade as crucial forms of support for sustainable, local food systems (Smit, 1996; Halweil, 2002; Hamilton, 2002b; Yeatman, 1994; Boron, 2003; Brown and Carter, 2003).

Reflecting on the various theories offered to support movement towards more sustainable food systems, as related to conceptualisations of sustainable agriculture, cultural economy, sustainable development, community and local food systems, another significant food systems movement emerged in the early 1990s. Allen (2004) traces the history of the community food security movement as follows. The origins of the
“community food security” movement can be traced back to the publication in 1993 of Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security in the Inner City (Ashman et al., 1993), the results from a University of California at Los Angeles research project. The publication illustrated that food quality, access, and affordability were the most pressing needs of the low-income, “limited-resource” community in central Los Angeles that was the focus of the study. In conjunction with the findings illustrated in this publication, a group of individuals (notably Robert Gottlieb, Mark Winne, and Andrew Fisher) and organisations came together with an interest in addressing food security issues through a broader food systems perspective than that of traditional food security, nutrition, and hunger work. This collaboration led to discussion of the ways by which an integration of social, economic, and environmental concerns in the food system could be addressed in upcoming United States Federal Farm Bill legislation. Consideration of the balance sought between economic, environmental, and social concerns denotes a strong inclination of this movement towards a theory of sustainable development. According to Allen (2004) one of the outcomes of the effort to influence the 1995 Farm Bill legislation was emergence of the term “community food security”, incorporating economic, social, and environmental considerations, “as the conceptual basis for advancing changes in the food system” (Allen, 2004, p. 45). The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), a U.S.-based non-profit organisation incorporated in 1997, has existed as a centre point for the movement. The organisation has supported research, programs, and projects associated with the broad range of concerns suggested by the term community food security (CFS), from farmland and skill-building for farmers to urban agriculture, community food assessment, and food-related policy. Community food security supports
the ideology suggested by local food systems discourse while incorporating additional social and cultural issues. While local food systems dialogue aligns to a greater extent with economic modelling, community food security incorporates this discourse into a focus on food – quality, equity, and justice (environmental/ social/economic) – as the central issue.

Allen (2004) describes the basic principles and foundations of community food security in greater detail and the relation of the movement to that of sustainable agriculture. These movements are dichotomised by Allen (2004), suggesting a difference between what are termed “alternative agrifood institutions” (AFIs) of the sustainable agriculture movement and those of the community food security movement. In this thesis, I am suggesting that there is a connection between these two movements, primarily in reference to an increasing number of collaborative projects between sustainable agriculture AFIs and community food security AFIs. The development of both movements has seen the creation of what the author terms new alternative agrifood institutions, such as institutional purchasing, community supported agriculture, famers’ marketing, and food policy councils, which integrate sustainable agriculture and community food security.

Conversely, CFS institutions demonstrate through discourse and practice, the inclusion of sustainable agriculture and the range of food system issues within the broader conceptual framework.

Throughout the development of community food security and sustainable agriculture movements, interest emerged in advocating for changes to traditional approaches to food-
related decision-making processes, policy, and planning (Smit et al., 1996; Smit, 2004; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; Hamilton, 2002b; Yeatman, 1994). Food-related policy development commonly occurs through a fragmented approach in which various government departments and industry sectors create separate, potentially conflicting policy (Dahlberg, 1994a; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). In the past three decades, growing recognition of food system synergies and the relationships between food-related industries and activities materialised through the establishment of more coordinated, cross-sectoral approaches to planning for the sustainable development of food systems.

Dahlberg (1994a) and Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) suggest that, as food systems relate to numerous integrated areas of concern such as transport, health, and agriculture, effective policy and program development demanded for the cultivation of healthy food systems requires cross-sectoral cooperation, communication, information-sharing, and mutual education. Yeatman (1995, p. x) also suggests that “local government provides the location for a comprehensive system-based approach to food and nutrition issues” which can be accomplished by “bring(ing) together the requirements of the different government sectors, private organisations and community.” The concept of a council, committee, or coalition engaging members from a diversity of food system sectors and employing a food systems approach has increasingly drawn interest as a method for promoting planning for sustainability in our food systems. Over the past two decades several such groups known as “food policy councils” (FPCs) have been created in the North America and Australia. These groups engage with government, the private for-profit and not-for-profit sectors, educators, community groups, industry associations, and
the public including members from a diversity of food system sectors. Inclusion of representatives from a diversity of sectors leads to a development of innovative programs, policy, and planning approaches that might not have been created without the synergistic effect created through cross-sectoral communication. In addition to program and project development, as a less tangible yet significant outcome FPCs use this collaboration to build upon, communicate, and educate throughout the various sectors and the public on ideas related to the sustainable development of food systems.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has set out to answer research question 1\(^{15}\) through a review of relevant literature. It has been proposed in this research that an underlying or root cause of problems in the conventional food system is the problematic foundation and framework of this system: operating within a productionist paradigm\(^{16}\) (Lang and Heasman, 2004; Stone, 2001; Campbell, 1998) which serves to ignore many of the significant social, environmental, cultural, and other economic values relevant to food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. As a result of this problematic framework, a

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\(^{15}\) What are the detailed problems of the conventional food system and proposed solutions to these problems?

\(^{16}\) The productionist paradigm as outlined in Section 2.3 is: “the focus on increasing production levels, meant to provide for both a growing population and increasing profit for capitalist objectives”.

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set of three significant areas of concern within the food system have been identified, along with several more detailed problems within each of these areas. These areas, and some of their detailed problems, have been identified as follows:

1. Industrial agriculture
   a. Risks posed to environmental and human health through the use of synthetic inputs, or agri-chemicals, broad-acre tractor tilling, widespread irrigation, genetic modification of crop varieties, and monoculture cultivation
   b. Cultural and socio-economic problems related to farmers and rural communities, the effects of the first Green Revolution, and the persistence of hunger and growing population leading to pressures to produce more

2. Public health
   a. Chronic hunger, under nourishment, malnourishment/malnutrition, and obesity leading to epidemics of diet-related illness and disease
   b. Food insecurity, food access, and affordability
   c. Food safety

3. Energy use
   a. The scope and scale of energy required throughout all sectors of the conventional food system is unsustainable due to its heavy consumption of and dependence on non-renewable energy

With these issues in mind, this research also identified several solutions that have been presented to address and potentially solve some of these problems. The use of biotechnology to solve food systems problems, such as that applied during the first Green Revolution, has been noted as an insufficient solution due partly to its inability to
address underlying political and social food systems issues. Other proposed solutions, described in this chapter as “alternative food movements”, include sustainable agriculture, promoting community food security, and support for ‘local food’. Within and across these movements exist a variety of more detailed programs, projects, and institutions aimed at supporting their implementation. While these projects form a vital part of promoting the development of more sustainable food systems, it has been suggested that there is a need for the transformation of the political realm surrounding traditional food and agriculture institutions, policies, and procedures. A transformation of these institutions may aid in addressing some of the root causes of food systems problems, including the aim to alter the traditionally fragmented approaches to food system policy and planning. One such mechanism proposed for aiding in this approach to the political side of food issues is the food policy council (FPC). Over the past three decades, several of these organisations have been created in North America and Australia. To better understand the activities and role of these organisations, the next chapter, in answering research question 2, will examine the origins, history, and prior research conducted on FPCs.

17 Food that is produced, processed, distributed, and consumed within a local area. The size of the local area is not strictly defined here. Given different ecological, social, and other factors “local food” may vary from that grown and consumed only within municipal or county limits to that grown and transported over larger distances, perhaps within a larger bioregionally defined area.

18 E.g. community supported agriculture (CSA); urban agricultural projects; community gardening; nutrition promotion and education programs or campaigns and; farmers’ markets as well as many others aimed at promoting community food security, local foods, and sustainable agriculture.
3.1 Introduction

Support for and interest in food policy councils has grown significantly since the creation of the first of these organisations in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1982. Several more food policy councils were created in the U.S. over the past decade. While some of these remain in existence, several dissolved due to changes in political, social, and economic circumstances and difficulties associated with organisational structure, role and procedures. The following decade saw an even greater increase in interest for the food policy council (FPC) concept. The first FPCs were established at the local government level in Australia and Canada while the U.S. saw the creation of the first of these organisations at the state government level.

In contrast to the organisations created during the 1980s, several of the FPCs established in the following decade remained in existence for over a decade and continue to operate. The 1990s also saw FPCs, alternatively known as (local) food policy coalitions or organisations, draw some attention from academics. Gradually some collated information emerged on the concept of FPCs, their locations, organisational structures, activities, and challenges they face in terms of organisational and external pressures (Roberts and Scharf, 2002; Dahlberg, 1994a; Yeatman, 1994).
Research on FPCs still remains minimal, leaving many gaps in knowledge as to the role of these organisations concerning the ways that they can and do contribute to the sustainable development of food systems. Research to date on the organisational structure of FPCs lacks consideration of organisation theory and the relatively substantial body of literature dealing with evaluation of collaborative, interagency organisations, an organisational type closely related to FPCs. Prior examinations of FPCs leave other areas, related to the placement of FPCs within alternative food movements, not fully explored or unexplored. There is a lack of consideration as to definition of the role of FPCs within the broader context of sustainable food systems movements and the procedures and protocol for effectiveness in achieving outcomes and fulfilling these roles.

This chapter explores research question 2\(^{19}\) through a review of available information on changes in the FPC population since 2000, their current presence in geopolitical and social landscapes, and previous research on their creation, structure, activities, and challenges. This investigation reveals some of the gaps in knowledge concerning food policy councils leading to questions concerning their organisational structure, activities, procedures, their relationship to other food-related organisations, and organisational role. These questions, stated previously in Chapter 1, are recapitulated at the end of this chapter to demonstrate their emergence from a more detailed examination of FPCs than

\(^{19}\) What are the origins, history of, and prior research conducted on FPCs in relation to these problems?
that described in the first chapter. They form the basis of the empirical research undertaken in this dissertation.

### 3.2 Food Policy Councils since 2000

#### 3.2.1 Introduction

Since 2000, there has been a rapid increase in the number of FPCs formed at the state level as well as at regional and local levels. There are several factors that may have contributed to this increase. The first factor may be related to an increased dissemination of information on FPCs especially through more widespread use of information technology and internet use coupled with growth of the community food movement in North America. Existing FPCs, those in formation, and related organisations and academic institutions, e.g. World Hunger Year, Community Food Security Coalition, West Michigan University, and Ryerson University, began to make information on FPCs more readily available through websites, e-mail communication, listservs, and other electronic publications.

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20 A FPC “in formation” refers to the stage at which the organisation remains focused on and in the process of establishing organisational structure without focusing primarily on project, program, or policy development.
A second significant factor is related to an increase in funding dedicated to the community food movement and food policy councils. Prior to 2000 most FPCs received funding and resource support from local government or from local non-profit organisations. However as described below, especially within the past five to seven years, federal funding and program partnership initiatives in the United States and Canada emerged to support the formation of new FPCs.

Several divisions within the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have begun to play a significant role in the provision of federal level funding and support for FPCs. The USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Economic Research Service extend occasional support in the form of funding to aid in the creation of FPCs, project-specific funding, and other forms of research, extension, and communications support. The Community Food Projects Grants of the USDA’s Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) have provided more regular, and high profile, competitive grant funding directly to food policy councils as well as to other organisations and projects directly supporting and researching FPCs. While the CSREES grants offered occasional support since at least 1996, the 2002 Federal Farm Bill amended the community food program to expressly allow for grants to

21 State Food and Nutrition Action Plans (SNAPs) of the Food and Nutrition Service; Farmers Markets and Direct to Consumer Marketing of the Agricultural Marketing Service; Food Security programs of the Economic Research Service.
create local FPCs (Hamilton, 2002a), such that funding in this area significantly increased in 2003.

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) of the USDA has also displayed considerable interest specifically in relation to funding, research, and other forms of support for the creation and maintenance of FPCs. Interest from this agency stems primarily from a recognition of the ability of FPCs to aid in environmental, social, and economic risk management for farmers and other agricultural labourers. The RMA has partnered with the Drake University Agricultural Law Center in Des Moines, Iowa, to operate the State and Local Food Policy Councils Project. As one primary aim of the partnership, the project has worked to support the creation of state FPCs and the programs of existing state FPCs in Iowa, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Utah, New Mexico, Illinois, Kansas, Oregon and other states (Hamilton, 2002a), as well as some local and regional FPC initiatives. Another primary aspect of the project has been the enabling of research, creating a hub of information services and a network devoted to FPCs. Two major outcomes of this have been the maintenance of a website featuring information resources and publications and an annual conference bringing together the FPC coordinators, members, and other interested parties.

In 2005 the RMA funding directed to FPC support was redirected from the partnership with Drake University to the Community Food Security Coalition, funding the position for a Food Policy Council Coordinator staff position and project. The project is currently examining the existing status, resources, and needs of FPCs (Bournhonesque, 2005).
following the overarching goals of the agency, which are directed at risk management, the project has also focussed on providing and improving resources to support ‘limited resource’ producers.\(^{22}\)

In Canada, federal funding initiatives have emerged although to a lesser extent than those of the USDA. The Population Health Division of the Public Health Agency of Canada has promoted a great deal of activity related to food policy in Canada centred around food security concerns, with the most notable project and program funding occurring through the Ontario Food Security and Nutrition Network and the Manitoba Food Security Project (Lobe, 2005). While the agency has provided support for the development of community food projects related to FPCs, funding criteria focus primarily on health promotion (Kalina, 2001), leaving constraints on the ability to engage with a broader food systems approach.

### 3.2.2 Identifying and Defining Food Policy Councils

Currently, there appear to be thirty-five to fifty or more FPCs in existence. The exact number of FPCs currently in existence remains difficult to determine precisely due to a

\(^{22}\) ‘Limited resource’ producers are “producers that are women, people of color, new immigrants, or other socially disadvantaged producers” (Bournhonesque, R. (2006b) FPC Conference Call Notes September, 2006, unpublished, Venice, Ca).
lack of any clearly identified and universally recognised central contact point and clearinghouse for information on FPCs. While websites of the State and Local Food Policy Councils project (State and Local Food Policy Councils, 2005a) and World Hunger Year (World Hunger Year, 2004a) demonstrate an intention to act as clearinghouses or central contact points, these organisations provide different and sometime conflicting information, calling into question the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the provided information.

Another related source of difficulty in determining the number and location of FPCs takes root in what could be called the FPC contact lists provided by these organisations and several others. Although these contact lists purportedly provide the location, and usually contact information, for all or virtually all FPCs, there is a lack of consistency in the number and location of FPCs reported as well as incomplete, incorrect, or missing contact information.23

These inconsistencies are exemplified when comparing the FPC contact lists provided by the State and Local Food Policy Councils project (2005b), the Dane County Food Council (2005b), Zodrow (2005), and World Hunger Year (2004a) and may exist for three significant reasons. The first cause of inconsistent information may be related to the

23 Despite apparent discrepancies among comprehensive FPC lists, a fairly accurate working list of FPCs, those either in operation or in formation, has been developed through communication with the Food Policy Council Project Coordinator of the Community Food Security Coalition (Appendix 2).
recent change in the rate of formation of FPCs. Several councils have formed without
drawing any attention, so that their existence is not recognised or known by those
compiling comprehensive lists. Another related issue is that of councils disbanding or
discontinuing activities and meetings without this being recognised by others. The change
in formation rate has also meant that some councils move from being “in formation” to
being “in operation” quickly, while others proceed at a slower rate or never advance
beyond the formation stage. Although those still being formed are included in
comprehensive lists, it remains debatable as to whether or not they are formally
considered to be a FPC.

A second source of inconsistency exists due to the irregularly updated contact
information for food policy councils. In several instances outdated contact information
has led to extensive searches by the author to determine whether or not a particular FPC
exists and to identify the current contact details. The third cause of inconsistency is due to
differences between various definitions of FPCs. More precisely, differences among
definitions relate to discrepancies between the criteria that can be said to define whether
or not a particular organisation may be recognised as a FPC. In respect to these
discrepancies definitions will be examined from three significantly notable sources of
information on FPCs:

24 Several FPCs also provide definitions in their publications and on websites that demonstrate some of
these differences.
Definition 1

“An officially sanctioned body of representatives from various segments of a state or local food system, and selected public officials, asked to examine the operation of a local food system, and provide ideas or recommendations for how it can be improved. A council initiative tries to engage representatives from all components of the food system – consumers, farmers, grocers, chefs, food processors, distributors, hunger advocates, educators, government, and consumers – in a common discussion to examine how the local food system works” (Hamilton, 2002b).

Definition 2

“A Food Policy Council (FPC) is comprised of stakeholders from various segments of a state or local food system. Councils can be officially sanctioned through a government action such as an Executive Order, or can be a grassroots effort. The primary goal of many FPCs is to examine the operation of a local food system and provide ideas or recommendations for how it can be improved” (World Hunger Year, 2004a).

Definition 3

“An officially sanctioned body comprised of stakeholders from various segments of a food system. FPCs are innovative collaborations between
citizens and government officials which give voice to the concerns and interests of many who have long been under-served by agricultural institutions” (Zodrow, 2005).

The significant criteria or key characteristics surfacing in these definitions commonly address three issues. The first characteristic is the status of the FPC in relation to government. Some definitions such as those provided by Hamilton (2002b)\(^{25}\) and Zodrow (2005) indicate that official sanction by government is a determining factor in defining FPCs, while others such as that provided by World Hunger Year (2004a) indicate that a council may be officially sanctioned or a grassroots effort.

The second characteristic relates to the membership of FPCs. Hamilton specifies that members are drawn from “all components” of the food system, while definitions 2 and 3 indicate that participants will represent many sectors but not necessarily all sectors. The third outstanding characteristic addressed in these definitions relates to FPCs’ roles in respect to their activities or goals. Definitions 1 and 2 specify examination of the “local food system” as the activity of FPCs. However, Definition 2 additionally specifies the provision and recommendation of ideas for improvement of the food system as a role of

\(^{25}\) It should be noted that definitions currently provided by the State and Local Food Policy Councils Project of which the author is the current Director allow for official government sanction to be optional in defining FPCs. See for example State and Local Food Policy Councils (2005a) Food Policy Council Questions & Answers, Vol. 2006 http://www.statefoodpolicy.org/profiles.htm, Des Moines, Iowa.
FPCs. In contrast, Definition 3 does not specify examination of the food system or the provision of recommendations for improvement. This definition indicates a social justice component in use of the term “under-served” and refers to “agricultural institutions” rather than the food system perspective. One commonly agreed upon characteristic of food policy councils is that they are “councils”, “committees”, or “commissions”, at least in the sense that they are not a one or two person operation but consist partly of members drawn from different areas of the food system. This characteristic is represented in all three definitions.

The lack of consensus among definitions of FPCs, or the flexibility of the concept, may have contributed to the early strength and growth of FPCs. However, a continued lack of clarity as to the definition of FPCs may ultimately create a barrier for existing and new organisations in creating and understanding their organisational role and structure.

Outdated contact information, and the change in numbers of councils in formation, in operation, and disbanded, present barriers to determining the presence of FPCs in relation to number, location, and other details. The differences among definitions complicates this barrier while also raising questions as to how to define FPCs as a unique type of organisation, what their role is in relation to other alternative food organisations, and how to characterise these groups in terms of organisational structure and process. In addressing these questions, the presence of these organisations, in terms of geopolitical representation and related organisations, will be summarised to provide a basis for
understanding and exploring the literature which examines the organisational structure and processes of FPCs and related types of organisations.

3.2.3 Geopolitical Representation of Food Policy Councils

As previously mentioned, the first FPCs were originally created in the U.S. with several existing today in this country as well as in Canada and Australia. Interest in forming a food policy council in the United Kingdom has recently emerged (Barling et al., 2002; Lang, 2002) although none appears to have formed at present. Similar organisational types, based within local government and demonstrating an integrated food systems approach, have been noted in Brazil (Rocha, 2000; Rocha, 2001) and the Department of Urban Agriculture in Havana, Cuba (Funes, 2002; Murphy, 1999). However, these organisations more closely resemble the concept of the formally arranged, embedded, and institutionalised ‘Department of Food’. Over the past two to five years, several state ‘Departments of Agriculture’ in the United States and Australia have changed their names to include the term ‘food’, e.g. in 2006 the West Australian Department of Agriculture changed its name to the Department of Agriculture and Food. However, the inclusion of the term ‘food’ in these name changes reflects an inclusion only of food industry issues. This differs from the terminology of FPCs and the ‘Department of Food’ where the term is meant to reflect a broader food systems agenda, encompassing food security, nutrition, hunger and other issues in addition to specifically agricultural and
food industry issues.

The councils in North America and Australia exist in about twenty-five different states in the United States, two states in Australia, two Canadian provinces, and two North American first nations. As mentioned earlier, FPCs exist at various geopolitical levels, i.e. in reference to those governments’ respective geographical regions. Four different geopolitical levels/types of FPCs have emerged to date: state/provincial; regional/county; local; hybrid.

Although as discussed previously, the number of FPCs is difficult to determine, an estimation of the number as well as description of each type may help to clarify the presence of the various types at different geopolitical levels. The first type, of which there are currently about ten in existence, is state or provincial councils which operate at this geopolitical level. The second type is regional councils, operating neither at the state/provincial nor the local level. These can be exemplified through food policy councils at the county level in the United States. An estimated nine regional councils exist. The third type is hybrids which bring together two different levels of government, for example an local/urban and a regional/county government. Only two hybrid councils have been identified. The fourth type, and most numerous with twenty-three having been identified, is local food policy councils which operate within the geopolitical boundaries of a local government area or municipality such as a city or town.
As organisations that work closely with, help to develop, and promote FPCs, it is worth
mentioning again the Community Food Security Coalition and the State and Local Food
Policy Council projects. These organisations are based in the United States and may be
seen, especially for their advocacy role, as contributing significantly to the FPC presence
within the North American cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political
landscapes. These organisations have in the past and present supported individual FPCs
in organisational and project development, while also acting as clearinghouses and
central points of information for other interested organisations, institutions, groups, and
individuals.

3.3 Background to Organisational Structure, Processes, and
Creation of Food Policy Councils

3.3.1 Introduction

The examination of geopolitical distribution, history over the past decade, and current
sources providing contact information and definitions raises two significant and
conflicting issues concerning understanding the nature of the FPC as an organisation.
One notable characteristic of FPCs is that several of these organisations initially emerged
in the 1980s and 1990s and have increasingly been replicated elsewhere, specifically self-
identified as FPCs and not as some other type of organisation. This indicates that FPCs
are identified as a unique type of organisation, with a distinctive type of mission,
structure, and processes.

In conflict with this is the lack of consensus in defining FPCs, or in what qualifies an organisation as a FPC, as a distinct type of organisation. The definitions discussed above, provided on websites and by various organisations, are a primary source of this confusion and conflict. The following discussion examines some of the previous, in-depth research that focuses solely on the organisational structure and processes of FPCs. This looks at the research describing various profiling models that identify different key characteristics for defining FPCs, the processes and activities of FPCs, challenges that FPCs face often as a result of organisational structure and process, and suggested pathways to creating a FPC.

Research to date leaves several gaps in our knowledge concerning food policy councils. As with the definitions discussed earlier, the research also demonstrates inconsistencies or conflicting conclusions on the key characteristics and qualities of FPC structure and process. The contrasting conclusions similarly demonstrate a failure to utilise in any systematic way the foundation for organisational evaluation provided by certain facets of organisation theory. This may be a source of these gaps and inconsistencies. Following the examination of FPC-specific research on organisational structure, process, and challenges, this chapter analyses some related facets of organisation theory and the intersection between this theory and food systems theory and aims to highlight and clarify some of the gaps in knowledge and potential avenues for research concerning food policy councils.
Several sources indicate that food policy councils vary greatly in their organisational structure in many respects. According to the State and Local Food Policy Councils project (2005a) FPCs are not a “one-size-fits-all” type of organisation. The rationale for this lies in the theory that:

“A Council's structure and stakeholder representation should reflect the political culture and climate of a given area and for this reason, FPC models while (they) may share similarities, do not typically form to mirror other Councils in operation. For example, the State Food Policy Council structure and stakeholder membership in Connecticut may not be able to address the unique cultural food and agricultural policy needs in a Native American Nation. Councils need to reflect and focus upon the needs of the communities in which they are formed” (State and Local Food Policy Councils, 2005a, para. 17).

Along these lines it was noted even as early as the mid-1990s that “FPC structures and activities have varied, with the two most prevalent models involving those functioning within municipal governments and others operating as non-profit organizations” (Fisher and Gottlieb, 1995, p. 12). The previous body of research focusing on FPC organisational evaluation indicates that there does not even exist any agreed upon method for categorizing or evaluating the various aspects of organisational structure of food policy councils. This lack of consensus further supports the ambiguity surrounding FPCs.
as illustrated in the definitions previously discussed.

Significantly, a large gap in this research reveals a lack of consideration of the knowledge and tools provided by literature on organisation theory and more particularly for community collaborations to which FPCs may be said to be closely related. This literature can help clarify and reconcile some of the ambiguities revealed in previous research. It can also help to explain the current absence of a “one-size-fits-all” definition due to the ambiguity that new types of organisations exhibit: in this case the FPC as an alternative food institution (AFI), as they emerge and attempt to define their unique qualities and most effective modes of operation.

A lack of consensus as to the defining qualities is revealed through an examination of previous evaluations of FPCs. Discrepancies among these evaluations leave gaps in failing to attend to certain organisational characteristics of FPCs. These evaluations also overlook potential contributions of organisation theory to moderate the discrepancies and lack of consensus, leading potentially to more harmonized definitions for these groups. To illustrate this point, evaluations of FPCs developed by Dahlberg (1994a), Yeatman (1994), Boron (2003), and the State and Local Food Policy Councils (2005b) will be examined. Each of these reports profiles several FPCs and in doing so presents a different model for categorizing the structure and defining characteristics of food policy councils.

Dahlberg (1994a) provides a table that distributes and describes some of the common or defining aspects of FPCs. These aspects can be classified within eight key categories of
FPC attributes: (1) regional values; (2) city/county size and demographics; (3) historical and political context; (4) mandated roles and power; (5) organisational position and degree of integration in government; (6) staff and budget support; (7) consultants and advisors; and (8) overall program leadership and management. Within each of these categories, different FPCs maintain different arrangements (e.g. for staff and budget support some FPCs will employ a staff person and others will not).

Yeatman (1994) describes five models for the establishment of FPCs. In describing the differences among these models, eleven categories are utilised for classifying FPC characteristics: (1) initiation of the council; (2) background information (such as demographics, social, political, and environmental characteristics); (3) key external events influencing establishment of the council; (4) key food policy advocates or “Champions”; (5) relationship with city government; (6) membership; (7) structure of the council as related to institutional alignment and subcommittees; (8) presence of staff; (9) use of external consultants; (10) focus of the council’s activities; and (11) funding.

Boron (2003), although providing a somewhat inconsistent model for classifying FPC characteristics, suggests a few main categories as well. In addition to history of the FPC, the author describes membership numbers, diversity of representation, and length of terms. Boron also discusses staff, funding, institutional alignment, use of consultants, and committees.

The State and Local Food Policy Councils’ profile (2005b) provides a table for
distributing and categorising six main FPC characteristics. These categories include: (1) council structure (whether it is state, regional, or city based); (2) council administration in respect to status either as an NGO or government organisation (whether the council operates under a validating government document, e.g. municipal ordinance or executive order); (3) diversity of involved stakeholders; (4) task forces or main issues as the focus of councils’ activities; (5) methods to engage policy makers; and (6) recent projects and activities. One further model, although only applied by the author to one FPC, is that provided by the Portland-Multnomah County Food Policy Council (2004). This structure chart outlines the number of members, length of terms, representation reflecting council diversity, appointment process, grounds for removal, officers, committees, and staff support.

While the models described above differ in many respects, there also exist some similarities. Table 3.1 provides a list of the various categories used in the above profiling models for comparison of similarities and differences between each author’s method of categorization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Dahlberg</th>
<th>Yeatman</th>
<th>Boron</th>
<th>S&amp;LFPCs**</th>
<th>P-MFPC***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Context</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Attributes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Alignment</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NE*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-committees</td>
<td>N/NE</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers</td>
<td>N/NE</td>
<td>N/NE</td>
<td>N/NE</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Use of categories in differing food policy council profiling models
* Y indicates use in the corresponding research publication; N indicates not used in the corresponding research; NE indicates not explicitly used/stated in the corresponding publication **

State and Local Food Policy Councils

** Portland-Multnomah County Food Policy Council

The State and Local Food Policy Councils (2005a) indicate that political climate affects the structure and outcomes of various FPCs. In respect to this factor the profiling models of Dahlberg (1994a), Yeatman (1994), and Boron (2003) include various aspects of political climate that may affect the formation and development of FPCs’ structure. Boron offers only a general overview of the history of each FPC. In contrast, Dahlberg and Yeatman engage in further detail including information relating to demographics and regional values as well as historical context that may reflect on key events or aspects of political climate leading to the initial formation and subsequent structuring of the FPC.

In relation to more traditional organisational structure characteristics, all of the profiling models report on aspects of membership, staffing, and relationship to government or institutional alignment. These aspects are generally discussed (respectively) in terms of number and diversity, degree of support, and external validation or recognition. Several of the models, although not all, profile funding sources and amounts, external consultants, and the use of subcommittees or task forces. Due potentially to the scope and breadth of the project, the State and Local Food Policy Councils (2005b) includes a category to address the geopolitical level at which each council exists. The existence of these similarities among these classification models suggests that food policy councils, while varied in some respects, may share a great deal in common as related to organisational structure.
3.3.2 Processes and Activities of Food Policy Councils

The processes of FPCs relate to fulfilling an organisational role through involvement with the development and sometimes implementation of programs and objectives, such as local food guides, school food service programs, and local food labelling. These types of programs, however, are not exclusive to the work of food councils. Similar programs are also created under the auspices of non-profit organisations and independent government agencies, sometimes with the advantage of occasional collaborative work.

The similarity of FPC programs and projects to those of other groups calls into question the differences between food policy councils and these other organisations. This leaves some question as to what unique aspect or approach of food policy councils differentiates them from other types of organisations or makes their work and contribution distinctly different.

In contrast to the work of these other organisations, campaigns of food councils exhibit a few key differences. The first difference is that of a “food systems perspective”. This allows the structure and implementation framework for projects to avoid the pitfalls and gaps encountered in approaches based on a fragmented perspective of food system activities.
Another advantage of the food council approach relates to the expertise, support, funding, collaboration, and promotion gained through inclusion and integration of a variety of government departments and non-governmental organisations. This alliance of knowledge, tools, resources, and collaborative relationships provides insight into avenues for structure and promotion not readily identified in other minimally or non-collaborative efforts. For example, local food guides and farm maps may benefit from the mutual inclusion of resources from departments of agriculture as well tourism, transportation, planning and infrastructure, agencies where connections would not normally be seen or utilised. As another example of this unique cross-sectoral, public-private collaboration, school food and farm programs may benefit from relationships with farmers’ cooperatives, urban gardeners, and departments of health and transportation in logistical planning, infrastructure development, cooperative management, and curriculum development.

Food council models also have the advantage of inviting and including a wide variety of public and private stakeholders to formally participate in decision-making processes. This allows for a more informed perspective of the potential reception of program initiatives by the wider community, as well as increased understanding of and consideration for the attitudes, judgements, and needs of broad cross-sectors of the population in question.

The conventional fragmented approach to food policy and programming is widespread. Associated with this remains the obscured assumption of and belief in the urban/rural and
urban/agriculture dichotomies. Planning processes conventionally fail to recognize the relationship of agricultural production to various other food-related (non-agricultural) sectors, missing out on potentially valuable collaborative partnerships with education, health, housing, tourism, transport, and other government agencies or industry sectors. Definitions, reports, and other evidence in practice collectively reveal that the activities of FPCs significantly vary. While the general focus or interest of food policy councils lies in a comprehensive or integrated approach to the entire food system, individual councils target particular aspects or issues within the food system (Yeatman, 1994). Emerging from a background of community food security, FPCs engage with a wide variety of food system activities such as hunger, nutrition, other aspects of food security, and sustainable agriculture.

While activities may vary between individual councils, as a result of the common whole-of-food-system approach and information sharing FPCs become involved with many similar or similar types of projects. Following is a compilation of some of the more common projects associated with various food policy councils:

- farmers’ markets
- community and allotment gardens
- school and institutional gardens
- urban farming
- buy local campaigns
- institutional food purchasing such as farm-to-school and farm-to-cafeteria
- improving access to food through public and other modes of transportation
• meal delivery service
• community kitchens
• food system assessments
• price monitoring of prices in food stores
• composting programs
• municipal food policies and food charters
• rooftop gardening
• project feasibility studies
• extension services for new, existing, and immigrant farmers
• farmers’ cooperatives
• conferences and events such as World Food Day

In all of the above activities FPCs may also be involved with publishing educational materials and background research on the issue. World Hunger Year (2004b) provides further descriptions of these projects as well as a variety of other projects associated with community food security and food policy councils.

In a more generalised sense, Boron (2003) highlights the “tasks” of FPCs as gathering information about the food system, educating the public, developing collaborative projects, providing support or acting as facilitators to other organisations, advocating for local, state, or federal issues, and above all educating “themselves, policymakers, and the public” (Boron, 2003, p. 7) about the food system. It is also suggested that with all of
these different kinds of tasks, food policy councils must strike “a balance between running projects and writing policy” (ibid.). In contrast to this statement, and despite the title of these organisations (i.e. “food policy councils”), the question of whether or not FPCs actually do any significant amount of policy work remains unanswered (Rubins, 2005).

3.3.3 Challenges in Relation to Organisational Structure and Processes of Food Policy Councils

The lack of a previously concretely defined and unambiguous classification model may reflect upon the difficulty of defining FPCs as discussed previously and on the numerous challenges these organisations face in relation to organisational structure. In several respects challenges related to organisational structure may have to do with the lack of set structure, process, and guidance in these areas for emerging and newly formed FPCs.

Lang (2002) discusses several disadvantages that FPCs may encounter due to this lack of organisational structure and process stating that ‘they could lack any institutional “leverage” and be just another talking shop; they could be seen as a threat to politicians and civil servants if they gave unwelcome advice; they could be lost in the committee jungle; they could lack core focus and suffer from the “tyranny of structurelessness”.’ In addition to these overarching structural challenges FPCs face several other barriers relating to more specific aspects of organisational structure.
Specific organisational structure issues have been discussed by Clancy (1988), Dahlberg (1994a), Yeatman (1994), and Boron (2003) especially in respect to their models for classification of FPC characteristics. Clancy, Dahlberg, and Yeatman address organisational structure issues or challenges in terms of “success.” Success is defined by Dahlberg and Yeatman, respectively, in terms of either the organisation’s individual interpretation of “success” or alternatively, the ability to establish, maintain, and implement a FPC and food and nutrition policies. Clancy does not define the term “success” but rather simply offers a set of eight criteria seen as “critical to the success” of food policy councils. Boron discusses the challenges of organisational structure and process in terms other than those of “success” or “failure.” Table 3.2 identifies the ‘challenges’ of FPCs that are identified by each of these authors. Boron (2003) identifies numerous challenges that are unique and relevant to only individual FPCs. Other challenges common to most FPCs are also identified. These common issues are summarized and categorized in Table 3.2. Given the focus of Table 3.2 on presenting categories of challenges, and that Boron discusses a multitude of unique, individual challenges, these particular issues are included in the more detailed discussion below, but have been excluded from the table.
Clancy Dahlberg Yeatman Boron

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clancy</th>
<th>Dahlberg</th>
<th>Yeatman</th>
<th>Boron</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. official sanction by government</td>
<td>1. regional values</td>
<td>1. significant events or</td>
<td>1. limited resources and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>work prior to establishment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. paid staff – for a “significant” amount</td>
<td>2. city/county size and</td>
<td>2. an ordinance or executive</td>
<td>2. lack of continuity in resources and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of time per week</td>
<td>demographics</td>
<td>order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. funding – for staff and projects</td>
<td>3. historical and political</td>
<td>3. appointment of all or</td>
<td>3. inconsistent leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>context</td>
<td>most of the members by the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mayor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. external legitimacy***</td>
<td>4. mandated roles and</td>
<td>4. significant staff</td>
<td>4. Determining whether to integrate into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>power</td>
<td>support</td>
<td>government or exist as a non-profit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. knowledge base</td>
<td>5. organizational position</td>
<td>5. external consultants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and degree of integration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. power-sharing</td>
<td>6. staff and budget</td>
<td>6. member diversity</td>
<td>6. which government department(s) would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
<td>help gain more support and stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. vision - for the future of the food</td>
<td>7. consultants and</td>
<td>7. key food policy “champions”</td>
<td>7. relationships with government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system i.e. “what it might look like in</td>
<td>advisors</td>
<td>or advocates.</td>
<td>administrators and politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the future” (pg. 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. leadership</td>
<td>8. overall program</td>
<td></td>
<td>8. how much time should be devoted to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>leadership and management</td>
<td></td>
<td>fundraising for administrative or program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Challenges in relation to organisational process and structure of food policy councils as summarised from Clancy (1988), Dahlberg (1994a), Yeatman (1994), and Boron (2003)

*** measured according to “(a) representativeness of the council; (b) council's identity (how perceived); and (c) council's function in the community (catalyst? program initiator? convener? other?)” Clancy (1988, p. 1)

As mentioned previously, Clancy (1988) does not provide any definition for “success”. However, as in Dahlberg’s and Yeatman’s discussions, Clancy’s eight elements can be reframed as challenges faced by FPCs as follows. In regards to element 1, FPCs face the challenge of gaining legitimacy through secure and constant political support. According to Clancy, acquiring adequate staff and funding (elements 2 and 3) are challenges for
FPCs in that councils trying to function with only volunteers and in-kind support are likely to face difficulties and be unable to make significant accomplishments. FPCs also need to gain “external legitimacy” in terms of how they are perceived by, function in, and are accepted by “the community”. Having an adequate knowledge base is also a challenge in terms of the amount of time required for the education of council members. Power-sharing, element 6, can be difficult for groups such as FPCs where participants with a wide range of sometimes diverse and conflicting viewpoints are brought to work together. Similarly, this diversity in participants’ (stakeholders) viewpoints may pose difficulties in terms of element 7: creating a common and unified vision. Element 8, “leadership”, is identified as the most important element. In relation to this element, FPCs may find it challenging to find and foster leaders who “have vision, personalities that encourage sharing and community building, major management skills, significant time commitment, and incredible patience” (Clancy, 1988, p. 1).

Dahlberg (1994a) discusses the apparent “success” or “failure” as related to each of the categories indicated in Table 3.2. These are the same categories used by Dahlberg in classifying the structure characteristics of FPCs. Although not explicitly addressed, it seems implicit that these organisations face the challenge of selecting appropriate and effective structural characteristics in order to be “successful”.

According to these criteria of “success” (or what I have identified as challenges faced in determining effective organisational structure), issues within the first four categories (regional values; city/county size and demographics; historical and political context;
mandated roles and power) lie primarily outside of a FPC’s ability to influence or change. The organisation then must be responsive to these factors and structure itself accordingly. The issues related to these factors as highlighted by Dahlberg are as follows.

With respect to what Dahlberg identifies as “regional values”, the author highlights the difficulty in determining what these values are and consequently their influence on FPCs. In respect to demographics, the threat of an area’s foodshed being fragmented due to boundaries defined by government, i.e. geopolitical boundaries, may influence a council’s effectiveness. This could also be interpreted as a challenge as to how a council may work most effectively despite fragmentation. Dahlberg also concludes that larger cities, in terms of population, may experience more difficulty in organising for effectiveness. Although this may have been the case with the groups profiled in Dahlberg’s study at the time, the current activity and accomplishments of FPCs in large cities, such as Toronto and Portland, Oregon, may contradict this conclusion.

Historical and political contexts affect FPCs according to the role that advisory groups play in the government and the role of the mayor in the area’s government as either a “strong” position or in a council/manager context. Continuity in government structure, elected officials, and staff and the mayor’s interest can also influence FPCs’ effectiveness. The mandated roles and power of councils profiled were minimal which was credited to the fact that “food” was noted in the study as being a “new issue” and therefore lacking government structures that can understand and process problems and solutions in an integrated manner.
The last four categories affecting “success” (or challenges in determining organisational structure) are more directly within a FPC’s sphere of influence. These categories are: organisational position and degree of integration in government; staff and budget support; consultants and advisors; and overall program leadership and management.

Organisational position and degree of integration in government is seen as a significant factor related to FPCs’ effectiveness. This category reflects on what government department (if any) the FPC is located within and also considers which departments are represented on the council as liaison, staff, or members. This affects the way in which a council’s agenda is shaped and to what degree the organisation is seen as a citizen advisory body or as a government agency.

Composition of the council in terms of member diversity plays an influential role. Dahlberg asserts that councils dominated by hunger, health and nutrition professionals or advocates develop agendas focussing primarily or exclusively on these, their own professional, public health oriented interests. According to Dahlberg’s study, FPCs dominated by certain sectors in this manner are less effective in terms of their abilities to remain active and in existence. Dahlberg also advises that city staff should serve liaison roles and not participate as members.

Staff and budget support were minimal among the councils profiled due again to the newness of “food” as an issue. Liaison staff support from various government
departments can help to counteract this challenge. The background and previous experience of staff is also an important consideration as it shapes the interests and abilities of staff members. External consultants and advisors potentially play an important role as a source of research capability, ideas, and avenues for gaining an outside, broader perspective and source of evaluation.

Factors contributing to success in establishing and maintaining a council as presented by Yeatman (1994) can also conversely be interpreted as challenges faced in determining an effective organisational structure for a FPC. Seven principal issues are identified as significant determining criteria. According to Yeatman these necessary criteria are: (1) significant events or work prior to establishment; (2) an ordinance or executive order; (3) appointment of all or most of the members by the mayor; (4) significant staff support; (5) external consultants; (6) member diversity; and (7) key food policy “champions” or advocates. The reasons offered by Yeatman for why these criteria are important in maintaining a FPC can be condensed or narrowed down to two primary explanations. The first three criteria are crucial for their contribution to clearly identifying and instigating widespread and formal recognition of the role of the council in the community. These criteria relate to the stability created through formal establishment in government. The last four criteria relate to the resources of FPCs. They are critical to providing the financial and human resources and support needed to operate, decide, and act upon decisions related to the broad food systems agenda of FPCs.
Boron (2003) identifies a few significant challenges that FPCs face, not all of which relate to organisational structure, but rather to the actual activities of the council as well. Challenges are presented in generalised sections dedicated to membership, structure, tasks, and an overview of challenges. However, as opposed to summarising and finding commonly faced challenges, Boron discusses the unique membership, structure, and task-related challenges faced by individual FPCs.

Boron identifies the following as unique challenges of individual FPCs: having only one leader causes instability when that leader departs; lack of staff can cause lapses in activity and a lack of the continuity and connection to a government department; members are often too busy for tasks and meetings; poor meeting attendance leads to lack of stability and cohesion among members; difficulty finding time outside of meetings for group and individual work can lead to lapses in activity; identifying the next project can lead to a lapse in activity; part-time staff from various different government departments causes a lack of continuity and inconsistent leadership; once the excitement of forming the council waned it was difficult to maintain members’ interest; difficulty in bridging to a new administrative structure, e.g. government to NGO, can cause the council to disband; poor funding creates difficulty in day-to-day operation and in acting upon goals and decisions; insufficient staff causes instability or inability to meet council goals. In respect to issues and characteristics common to most FPCs, Boron identifies commonalities among some of the challenges identified above and presents some new issues as follows.

In close relation to issues of organisational structure, FPCs are seen to face challenges in
dealing with limited resources and staff, continuity in these resources, and consistent leadership. Determining whether to integrate into government or exist as a non-profit organisation also appears to be an important factor for consideration. Challenges also relate to freedom in determining the agenda, determining whether a particular government department(s) would help gain more support and stability, relationships with government administrators and politicians, and how much time should be devoted to fundraising for administrative or program costs. According to Boron’s findings, existence within a government agency or department, avoidance of fundraising activities as much as possible, networking with government administrators, and building flexibility into a council’s initial structure, can help to avoid or mitigate some of these challenges.

The diversity of members’ interests and backgrounds typical of FPCs’ interagency, cross-sectoral structure also presents challenges due to a lack of familiarity with others’ areas of expertise or lack of “common ground”, unfamiliarity with the “food system” approach, and different ideas about what constitutes food security and what should be priority action areas. Approaches to managing this challenge are also presented:

‘Initial meetings of a food policy council must thus include time to develop common ground both in knowledge and in vision. A neutral, outside facilitator can be ideal for this process (Winne, 2002). It can also be valuable to develop common definitions for terms such as “food security” and “local food,” as the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council is doing in its first year. The common definitions will then allow

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for clearer policies and educational tools. It is important that members, regardless of background, have a vision for what the food policy council can accomplish so they will bring their expertise to bear in a meaningful way (MacRae, 2002). The selection process can be designed to identify those with vision. Thorough job descriptions were developed for Toronto Food Policy Council members to make their roles clearer’ (Boron, 2003, p. 5).

As more of a conceptual challenge relating strongly to council activities, the need for FPCs to “prove their usefulness to the government and the public” (Boron, 2003, p. 8) is highlighted. Balancing policy-oriented activity, “running programs,” and networking may also present challenges. These activities can be valuable in gaining support and political capital. The issue of foodsheds in relation to political boundaries also emerges in the discussion. As FPCs at a local level often exist within boundaries smaller than that of the foodshed, Boron recognizes the potential value of regional or state-level councils or of networks between local councils.

3.3.4 Creating a Food Policy Council

As with issues of defining food policy councils, describing organisational structure, and delineating activities and tasks, the processes involved in creating food policy councils
vary significantly. Yeatman (1994) suggests a few criteria that must be in place, prior to creation, in order to create a FPC. One criterion is “work prior to the establishment of the food policy council” (Yeatman, 1994, p. 20).

Two main types of work done prior to establishment are considered here. The first type involves background research such as a needs assessment focussing on food insecurity in the respective area or a study of the food system such as that conducted in Knoxville, Tennessee, prior to establishment of the FPC. The second type concerns “related events with external significance.” Examples of such events include the World Fair hosted in Knoxville in 1982, and the United States Conference of Mayors (1984-1985) which urged mayors to become more involved in food policy. Examples given by Yeatman of other such events include: significant rises in the demand for emergency foods; and in Toronto the creation of the Healthy Toronto 2000 plan influenced by the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and World Health Organization Healthy Cities program which outline nutrition and food as key areas for action.

Concerning other processes involved in establishing or creating a food policy council, Roy (2005) outlines ten key steps. These steps are undertaken by a group of stakeholders interested in forming a food policy council. The first step involves identifying goals such as what the vision is or could be, what reasons there are for developing a council, and what could be the potential outcomes. The second step is to create a short, single page statement on what a FPC is, what it can do, what the benefits would be, and the identified vision and potential outcomes. Following this, a list of potential participants should be
compiled of government agencies, non-profit organisations, and individuals with interests in the food system. Step four involves visiting and speaking with the identified participants to explain the council concept and win support and interest. Another step that may add to or complement the fourth step is to host a workshop, potentially at a conference, to reach a wider audience and find out about interests outside of the participants already contacted. The next two steps suggested are to begin working with interested parties on developing a common vision and goals and preparing to host a “statewide” forum. The “statewide” forum can act as a tool for bringing together an even wider range of interests and participants, educate, build structure for the council, and begin to develop priority areas.

During the course of my research on food policy councils a unique opportunity emerged to examine the process of creating a food policy council. On October 6, 2005, Dane County, Wisconsin adopted a resolution creating the Dane County Food Council. For over a year prior to this a subcommittee of the County government examined food issues in the region and potential for creating a food policy council in the county. Minutes of the meetings of this subcommittee made available to the public have been compiled and reviewed. The process of creating the council as apparent in the minutes is as follows (Dane County Local Food Policy Advisory Subcommittee, 2005a).

In 2004 the regional government of Dane County established a Local Food Policy Advisory Subcommittee (LFPAS) to explore and develop strategies to strengthen the local (Dane County) food system. The LFPAS was given a deadline from the start: in one
year, to develop a set of recommendations for improving the local food system. This
deadline informed and shaped the timeline and work decisions of the LFPAS but may
prove useful in the development of other food councils. The following outlines the work
scheme of the LFPAS over the course of that year.

At the first few meetings the work focused on setting process, structure, function,
timeline, and leadership structure for the committee. There were also introductions made,
including a discussion of personal expectations from involvement with the committee.
These meetings also looked at developing a vision/mission statement, goals or principles
(for example, guiding ‘principles of a just and sustainable food system’), and highlighting
available resources. A workgroup was created to develop a LFPAS mission statement and
principles as well as structure and work plan.

The committee then looked towards activities aimed directly at creating the final
recommendations report. This included identifying and discussing what data and
previous research on the regional food system were available at the time. It also involved
discussing a list of issues, and potential priority areas under which these issues fell. Two
more workgroups were developed; one focussed on food system data and one on the
concept of “Why Local?”

The idea of holding a “local food summit” emerged to become a predominant focus of the
LFPAS. It was hoped that, by bringing together all of the key people and organisations in
the region’s local food system, the LFPAS could gain not only support and understanding, but ideas for priority issues and recommendations.

Based on the outcome of the one-day “Local Food Summit” event and committee members’ views, four workgroup areas were identified to work towards gathering information and creating recommendations to provide in the final report to Dane County Board. These groups were: Food policy council; Land use policy; Buy local food campaign; Central agriculture and food facility. Other cross-cutting issues were identified for all categories to consider. These included education, regulatory barriers, and networking, i.e. who should be involved with each category. From these workgroups and committee discussions, a report and recommendations were developed.

Summarising the process of the LFPAS a few key steps can be identified as informing the development of the food council. These steps include development of priority areas for council work, collection of relevant background data on the regional food system, and holding events such as the Local Food Summit to gain support for council initiatives and community consultation.
3.4 Collaboration Theory and the FPC Knowledge Gap

3.4.1 Introduction

The present body of research indicates a diversity of views and some lack of consensus in regard to defining, steps to creating, models of organisational structure, activities and processes, and the overall mission or organisational roles of food policy councils. The absence of organisational theory as a foundation for this body of prior FPC research may have led to the sentiment that FPCs are a unique, unprecedented type of organisation demanding unique and unprecedented theory and tools for evaluation. Although FPCs are, in some respects, a unique type of organisation, especially through their relationship to food systems theory, they also in many ways resemble the community collaboration, a government or non-government type of organisation which has recently received a great deal of attention within its own, developing facet of organisation theory. Research and theory on community collaborations attempts to understand and describe, or model, their function in relation to other social services organisations, the structure of these organisations, their processes of establishment and operation, and the challenges that these organisations face in maintaining their continued existence and success.

Similarity of the FPC to the community collaboration suggests that tools for understanding and evaluating these organisations may be relevant and applicable to researching, understanding, and evaluating food policy councils. Definitions for FPCs and the evaluative research of Dahlberg, Boron, Yeatman leave significant gaps in utilisation of these tools and recognition of the supporting organisation theory on
community collaborations. These tools can help to identify and potentially resolve some of the sources of ambiguity produced through prior evaluative research while identifying some of the gaps in knowledge related to understanding the organisational structure, role within food systems movements, and “best-practice” approaches to fulfilling this role for food policy councils. In the following section I will examine the collaboration theory relevant to food policy councils, subsequent gaps in FPC research to date, and questions remaining from this examination.

3.4.2 Similarity of Food Policy Councils to Community Collaborations

As mentioned above, given their resemblance to community collaborations, FPCs are not an entirely unique, unprecedented type of organisation. In two significant ways these organisations indicate their alignment with and similarity to a more broadly defined type of organisation, one that reaches beyond the food system into other areas such as other facets of health promotion (not focussed on nutrition), mental health, substance abuse, and crime prevention. This more broadly defined type of organisation, the social network organisation (SNO), is also referred to variably in the literature as the community collaboration, coalition, or partnership although all of these terms, and terms not mentioned here, may be said to represent different types of SNOs. This type of organisation, in particular the interagency “collaborations” and “coalitions” has,
especially since the early 1990s, received a significant amount of attention in terms of defining this type of organisation and evaluating its structure, processes, and outcomes.

One essential and defining characteristic of SNOs is that “members collaborate not only on behalf of the organisation they represent, but also advocate on behalf of the coalition itself” (Butterfoss et al., 1993, p. 316). Backer defines a collaboration as an organisation that “brings together two or more agencies, groups, or organisations at the local, state, or national level to achieve some common purpose of systems change” (Backer, 2003, pp. 3-4). Although using two different terms (coalition and collaboration), from these descriptions we can see two common characteristics of this type of collaborative SNO. One characteristic is that of interagency membership while the other, in the spirit of collaboration, is that of identifying a common agenda among these diverse organisations. In the case of food policy councils, members work for their individual or organisations’ interests, whether hunger prevention or farmland preservation, while also working for the FPC’s goal of food system sustainability. FPCs also share a great deal in common with some of the other defining characteristics and evaluation issues, in terms of structure and process, for some of the more formalised collaborative SNOs. This will be discussed in more detail later with specific attention to defining the organisational structure of FPCs and the context set by the previous research of Dahlberg, Yeatman, and Boron.

Another aspect of FPCs which indicates their kinship with the “community coalition” or “collaboration” is the historical evolution of the FPC. The first of these organisations emerged out of the background of not only food systems and food planning theory, such
as that proposed by Blakey and Wilson (1977) and others later, but also out of a strong movement towards and interest in interagency collaboration for nutrition and health promotion. Yeatman (1994) notes the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and the Healthy Cities movement as significant factors influencing the initial formation of FPCs. From the late 1980s through the 1990s cross-sectoral collaboration gained popularity as a vital tool for several areas of health promotion, from combating tobacco use to increasing physical activity and improving community nutrition. Out of this arose cross-sectoral “food and nutrition” councils or coalitions which focussed predominantly on the food security, public health side of food issues. FPCs, demonstrating an interest in nutrition and food security through a strong connection to the public health arena, also evolved as a factor of the environment supporting interagency collaboration for public health promotion. Reflecting on food systems theory, FPCs expanded beyond the public health focus to consider issues related to agriculture, food processing, and other community food security issues. Hawe and Stickney (1997) exemplify this connection, evaluating a single food policy council, the Penrith Food Project, from a theoretical and evaluative standpoint based in organisation theory for community collaborations. Unfortunately, this research appears to be the only, or at least one of very few, evaluations of FPCs which take collaboration theory into consideration in any outward, noticeable, or significant way. The research also focuses on only one FPC, leaving little basis to expand towards an understanding of the nature and organisational issues of FPCs in any categorical or more generalised sense.

Butterfoss et al. (1993) discuss seven advantages that collaborative organisations
uniquely hold over other types of organisations. These advantages can also be said to characterise collaborations. These advantages focus primarily on those of social networks, including the ability to (1) develop broader common agendas through co-management, (2) develop widespread public support, (3) maximise the power and capacity of individuals and groups, (4) avoid duplication, (5) gather more resources, knowledge, skills, and talent, (6) recruit from diverse or disparate sectors, (7) have the flexibility to adapt to changing situations. All of these advantages can be said to characterise a part of the pursuit of FPCs. These organisations espouse the advantages of networking and drawing from diverse constituencies to create new and innovative solutions with respect to agri-food issues.

Food policy councils can be seen as a sub-type of community collaboration, in that their structure and processes can be said to fall within those broader structural definitions of these types of organisations as described above. Given that FPCs may in fact be recognised as a type of community coalition / collaboration, discourse concerning the structure, process, and outcomes of this latter type of organisation can be said to reflect on that of the “food policy council” as well. Community collaboration theory offers a significant basis for evaluation in terms of setting out general forms for the structure, processes, and factors affecting the success of these organisations. These factors, affecting and reflecting the characteristics of structure and process will be discussed, providing a newly informed basis for evaluation of FPCs.
A preliminary factor affecting an understanding of community collaborations is the existence of different stages of development for these organisations. These stages, similar to Tuckman’s (1965) “forming, storming, norming, performing” are identified by Butterfoss et al. (1993) as “formation”, “implementation”, “maintenance”, and “accomplishment of goals or outcomes.” At each stage different aspects of structure and process affect the functioning of the collaboration and its ability to move to the next stage (Butterfoss et al., 1993). Several process and structural issues are present in the initial formation stage that should be fully addressed to facilitate movement towards accomplishing goals. The significance of this stage lies in its establishing the basis for the organisation’s future operations and protocol for structure and process.

Following the formation stage, organisations proceed to implement and to use, for accomplishment of goals, the organisational structure and protocol established during this initial stage. The second, third, and fourth stages test the effectiveness and capacity of this structure and process to meet organisations’ goals. Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) discuss this in terms of four levels of organisation where capacity is needed. These four levels concern (1) members; (2) relationships external and internal; (3) organisational structure; and (4) programs or what is termed “programmatic capacity.” The findings of Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) in terms of characteristics that contribute to effectiveness at each of these capacity levels are discussed below.

Members are the heart of the organisation and basis for its collaborative nature. In terms of member capacity there are several characteristics that contribute to or are necessary for
effectiveness at this level. One primary characteristic is the need for diversity in member representation. This ensures access to a diversity of skills and resources. Diversity in the types of employment and types of organisations (government agency, NGO, community group, industry association, for-profit business) that members represent increases the likelihood that the collaboration will have access to the diversity of skills necessary to running the organisation and carrying out program-related activities.

Collaborations also need to maintain members’ interest. Since members and the organisations they represent usually have different, but closely related, missions and goals, maintaining members’ interest in the goals and vision of the collaboration is critical to its success. In working to maintain the interest of members, the organisation will ensure continuity and a stable, and above all, active membership base.

Two final characteristics through which member capacity can be bolstered include the existence of incentives for participation and continual skill and knowledge building. Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) discuss three types of incentives for participation: material; solidary; purposive. Material incentives involve members gaining material return, monetary or otherwise, through participation. Solidary incentives refer to gaining or increasing favourable status for an individual member or their organisation through participation in the collaboration. While solidary and material incentives are most common, purposive incentives, which relate to intrinsic value where achieving the collaboration’s goals is perceived as meaningful, can also be found as the primary reason for members’ participation in collaborations.
Continuous skill and knowledge building also serves as a critical aspect of member capacity. Collaborations need to pay attention to building members’ knowledge base around the issues and changes related to the goals and missions of the organisation. Skill building also serves a critical function in ensuring a continuous availability of members with the necessary skills to carry out the functions of the organisation. Skill and knowledge building can also relate to maintaining members’ interest by ensuring that members understand and stay engaged with the issues.

Building these four areas of member capacity provides a basis for another crucial capacity level in organisational function, that of healthy relationships both internally and externally. Creating healthy internal relationships for collaborations involves creating a positive working climate, implementing effective conflict resolution processes, and striving to meet the diversity of members’ and staff interests. Another cornerstone of positive internal relationship building involves establishing a common vision and agenda among those involved in the collaboration. Collaboration participants need a common vision to unite around which may be affected by the extent to which there exists shared interests among members and positive attitudes about collaboration as a tool for meeting these interests.

Collaborations also need to build and maintain healthy relationships with external groups. While collaborations are typically limited-resource organisations, building healthy external associations helps to garner more resources and other forms of external support.
(Butterfoss et al., 1993). Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) indicate four types of external groups with which collaborations need to foster and maintain healthy relationships. These types include (1) groups from sectors not represented in the collaboration; (2) the community, in respect to the broader public; (3) the community, in respect to officials and policy-makers; and (4) other communities or collaborations facing similar issues. Building relationships with this fourth type of organisations can help a collaboration to identify innovations and best-practice approaches to the problems at hand.

Healthy internal and external relationships and an active, engaged membership are important components in building capacity in collaborations for increased effectiveness. Building capacity for collaborations however extends beyond these components to include a cultivation of what Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) term ‘organisational capacity’, that which provides the foundation and framework for an organisation’s operations. According to Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) there are five characteristics affecting the organisational capacity of collaborations: strong leadership; formalized processes and procedures; effective internal communication; human and financial resources; continuous learning. A viable, firm, and robust leadership base encompasses several of its own key characteristics. Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) indicate that leadership for collaborations needs to be central to the organisation and comprise persons skilled in facilitation, negotiation and administration, and who are politically knowledgeable and connected. Given that leadership is so central to their effective operation, collaborations also need to focus on continually fostering and developing new and emerging leaders. This is a crucial
factor in building stability so that collaborations avoid vulnerability to dependence on and
loss of a singular source of guidance.

Another factor which accompanies strong leadership is a clear definition of roles and
responsibilities, especially for paid staff leadership, in relation to the rest of a
collaboration’s participants. This is a crucial factor in building healthy staff-member
relationships. Feighery and Rogers (1990) recommend that staff roles and responsibilities
be clarified as soon as a coalition is formed. Coalitions operate more effectively when
“staff and members are clear about their respective roles, and if staff are given latitude to
carry out daily tasks” (Butterfoss et al., 1993, p. 324). In addition to establishing staff and
member roles, the other processes and procedures of collaborations should be formalised
to build the clarity and stability needed for sufficient organisational capacity.

The third characteristic of organisational capacity concerns internal communication.
Although related to (internal) relationship capacity, this characteristic also plays a role in
this capacity level in that, as a process, communications are a product of organisational
structure and procedures. Healthy internal communications ensure effective channels for
information sharing, conflict resolution, and creating satisfaction and commitment among
members. Creating organisational capacity for collaborations also requires significant
human and financial resources since these groups usually possess little or no means,
outside of external funding and grants, for creating profit or revenue. A final
characteristic of organisational capacity involves attention to continuously evolving
internal and external conditions. Creating an environment of continuous learning enables
collaborations to respond to changing contexts and to feedback or evaluation.

Programmatic capacity, the final level of capacity building for collaborations, relates to the programs sponsored by these organisations. While some collaborations implement their own programs, others act as catalysts by providing the network connections and some of the other resources needed by other organisations to run the programs.

Programmatic capacity requires attention to the time and resources involved in creating and implementing programs. Butterfoss et al. (1993) cite ‘quick wins’ as an important component of programmatic capacity. Meaningful tasks that can be (and are) accomplished within a relatively short timeframe help to build credibility for an organisation along with member motivation and pride.

3.4.3 Differences Between Food Policy Councils and Community Collaborations: FPCs as a Unique Organisational Type

Defining the FPC as a unique type of organisation suffers from a lack of consensus upon the characteristics of collaborations that define FPCs and upon those associated with their relation to food systems theory and existence as alternative food institutions (AFIs).

What class of social organisation (Backer, 2003) and approaches to collaboration, in terms of organisational structure and process work best for FPCs? What role do FPCs most appropriately fulfil in relation to food system theory and definition as AFIs?

One of the most basic premises of the FPC, as of nutrition coalitions and other public health promotion collaborations, lies in the assertion that seemingly disparate
organisations sometimes share some common interests and goals. Attainment of these goals may rely on systems change to alter or supplant conventional approaches which have proved inadequate. The resources, financial and knowledge based, needed to achieve these goals may be limited and out of reach for individual organisations. The pooling of resources and knowledge such as occurs through interagency collaboration can help to counteract these limitations. As a type of organisation, collaborations also have a basis in network theory, as social network organisations. Backer (2003) defines seven types of these organisations, with the “informal network” placed as the least formalised type. As these organisations move increasingly toward formalisation and hierarchical structures they become a committee, coalition, collaboration, strategic alliance, joint venture, and merger. Food and nutrition or food policy committees, coalitions, and collaborations fit somewhere within these defined areas with varying degrees of formality and hierarchy. The absence of clear association with one specific organisational type reflects the previously discussed lack of consensus on FPC profiling/modelling and how the organisational structure and processes of the FPC as a unique type of organisation can be defined.

Similarities between the “community collaboration” and the “food policy council” indicate significance for community collaboration theory when evaluating FPCs. With the exception of an evaluation of the Penrith Food Project conducted by Webb et al. (1998) lack of recognition for any organisation theory in the majority of previous FPC profiling/modelling and how the organisational structure and processes of the FPC as a unique type of organisation can be defined.

Interagency and cross-sectoral are being used interchangeably.
organisational evaluations points to a significant gap in research and demands a consideration of the relevance of collaboration theory to FPC evaluation. While the similarities between “community collaborations” and FPCs demonstrate significance in creating a basis for investigation, food policy councils are quite different from other types of community collaborations and demand unique evaluation approaches. As with community collaborations, FPCs involve assembling diverse constituencies, those from a range of different types of organisations such as government agencies, businesses, non-profit organisations, individuals, and community groups. FPCs differ by extending membership diversity even further than other types of community collaborations such as tobacco use prevention coalitions, crime prevention collaborations, or physical activity councils. What sets FPCs apart from other types of community coalitions is the fusion created between community collaboration theory and food systems theory. Food systems theory, demanding an amalgamation of disparate sectors, extends the community collaboration to create a membership basis composed not only of representatives from a diversity of agency/organisational types, but also of those from an incredibly broad spectrum of sectors, from agriculture and industry to education, health, and urban land use planning. In this respect, FPCs are both very similar to the model of the community collaboration and a unique type of organisation with distinctive challenges related to managing diversity. These challenges appear especially in the form of establishing an understanding of the role of the organisation in relation to its constituencies. FPCs need to manage this diversity by identifying their relationship, as a “food systems” organisation, to their constituent sectors and the movements for “sustainable agriculture” and “community food security.” In relation to these movements, FPCs especially need to
establish a unique identity in relation to other food organisations, recognising their unique place within and contribution to these movements, avoiding conflict and competition with the other related, and perhaps constituent, organisations.

Considering this and the knowledge offered by community collaboration theory, FPCs face two significant organisational issues. One issue lies in the ability of FPCs, as a unique type of organisation, to identify their defining characteristics and to establish effective organisational structure and process. Previous FPC research states that FPCs are not “one-size-fits-all,” that each FPC has a unique structure, and that each FPC in its distinctiveness needs to create a structure to fit with the unique needs of the community. In regards to some aspects of collaboration theory, this assertion seems appropriate, in that FPC structure needs to respond to certain variables such as the unique concerns of the community (what are the most significant food system issues in a particular location) and to appropriate representation (representation of farmers or of urban planners in the community is reflected in FPC membership). In contrast to these variable characteristics, collaboration theory suggests that certain characteristics of structure and process, regardless of individual political, social, or economic circumstances, will function more effectively and can be said to characterise unique types of organisations. The other issue related to identification as an unprecedented type of organisation concerns establishing and creating a firm understanding for the distinctive role and contribution of FPCs as a unique organisational type in relation to their position within alternative food movements. Investigating the grounds for establishment of FPCs as a unique organisational type demands consideration of both the community collaboration theory and the food systems
theory out of which food policy councils have emerged.

FPCs fit with collaboration theory but are also a distinct, unique type of organisation. This is a reflection of their creation out of food systems theory and what Allen (2004) terms “alternative food institutions”. As AFIs, FPCs are partially, in some structural terms, a community collaboration while also a completely new kind of organisation in terms of content and other structural components. One significant difference is that community collaborations typically work within a single sector or with a particular issue, e.g. tobacco use prevention, HIV prevention, or childhood violence prevention. The majority of community collaborations appear to be focussed within the public health domain. In contrast, the broad food systems interests of the food policy council appear to include a much wider range of sectors and stakeholders, and a diversity of issues, as opposed to just a single issue. FPCs are “food system” groups, a type of organisation emerging to challenge traditional compartmentalising of food issues and related sectors. However, the similarity and relationship to community collaborations partially defines their organisational structure. This theory, the recommendations of Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), Butterfoss et al. (1993), and others, together provide a background to some structural and process approaches that may work well and others that may lead to failure. As several FPCs have developed independently of one another, they demonstrate a considerable degree of variability in the importance of certain characteristics of collaborations, especially as they appear to align with the different classes of social organisation defined by Backer (2003).
FPCs demonstrate varying degrees of formality and emphasis placed upon staff, leadership, communication protocol, and resource and member management. The profiling of FPCs (such as that of Yeatman, Boron, Dahlberg previously discussed) also indicates a lack of consensus as to the defining characteristics and approaches necessary for success previously defined by collaboration theory. Despite claims that this variation of structure is a characteristic of FPCs such that they are not “one-size-fits-all” organisations, these variations may be due to the relative youth of the food policy council as a type of organisation. This relative youth suggests that the establishment of the common characteristics of FPCs, and what might be considered ‘best-practice’, still remains in the process of development.

The existence of FPCs as a type of AFI also determines their organisational structure and processes. As a “new” and “alternative” type of organisation, FPCs have needed to define these characteristics for themselves, although as the present body of literature and research suggests, there is as yet, no consensus regarding these characteristics. These characteristics relate to the dilemmas of creating alternatives to traditional institutional forms with special focus on the concerns of food systems theory. A basic premise of this theory insists that several sectors, which find concern for various food issues, operate in a disconnected fashion. This disconnection is apparent in the lack of existence of an institution, agency, or sector which draws all of these disparate sectors together. This is what the FPC (or the ‘department of food’) is proposed to do. Another premise of this theory insists on the need for policy and legislative change (from within government) to counteract the disconnected approach to food issues and to embed the “systems”
approach. The FPC and ‘department of food’ are also proposed as government structures to initiate this change. This leads to two key questions about FPCs. Are FPCs a government organisation? What sectors and traditional institutions are FPCs aligned with (e.g. agriculture, health, planning, transportation)? This second question also draws on the question of whether FPCs are agriculture or public health, “sustainable agriculture” organisations or “community food security” organisations. In addition to defining characteristics provided in collaboration literature, FPCs also need to be defined according to their relationship with government, focus on policy/legislative (or alternatively program) development, and institutional or sectoral alignment.

These questions all fall as subcomponents of the primary research questions, discussed in the following section, which focus more broadly on defining the role(s) and structure of FPCs as unique types of organisations.

3.5 The Research Questions for Empirical Inquiry

This research looks to investigate the structure and process characteristics of FPCs, as informed by collaboration theory. This will take place through an examination of the recommendations of various FPCs on what defines the mission or roles of the FPC as an organisation and what contributes to best-practice in fulfilling this mission. This aims to establish a clear definition for best-practice organisational structure and process for FPCs. An integral component of this will be determining the “organisational role” of FPCs, or in other words, what could be an agreed upon role for FPCs in their relationship to
alternative movements and food systems theory. This ‘organisational role’ will dictate some of the necessary structural and process characteristics especially as they relate to institutional alignment, relationship with government, and other aspects of building collaborative capacity necessary to fulfilling this role, especially as it concerns degree of formality and social organisation type.

The present body of research focussing explicitly on FPCs indicates a diversity of views in regards to understanding the unique organisational characteristics of FPCs and an absence of consideration for certain key issues identified in the theory on building collaborative capacity. Defining food policy councils, the effective steps to creation, the models of organisational structure, and the activities and roles of food policy councils in light of collaboration theory may help to resolve some of this ambivalence, providing a clearer understanding of the outcomes sought by these organisations and the challenges they face. A clear definition of the mission or roles of FPCs provides a basis for investigating some of the previously unexplored organisational characteristics of FPCs as suggested by collaboration theory and a foundation for identifying what may lead to ‘best-practice’ organisational structure and process in fulfilling these roles.

This leads to the second set of research questions that form the basis for the next stage of research:

3. What is the organisational role and function of food policy councils in relation to alternative food movements?
4. How is a food policy council created?

5. What is/are the most effective model(s) of FPC organisational structure and process for fulfilling organisational role and function?

Drawing from these questions, several specific questions related to details of organisational structure and process emerged. These specific questions were incorporated into the research methodology, and are now discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 on methodologies for the research.
Chapter 4: Methodology and Design for Empirical Research

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 3, food policy councils may be considered and evaluated as a type of, or similar to, community collaborations or coalitions. Developing methodology to address the second set of research questions therefore warranted an examination of methods for evaluating and classifying components of organisational structure in collaborations, councils, or coalitions relevant to and in conjunction with previous research on food policy council models. However, since there is limited information and prior research specifically on FPCs, a qualitative and more specifically grounded theory approach was taken to provide an exploratory and reflexive research design framework. Grounded theory is “a methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data, systematically gathered and analysed” (Cutcliffe, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

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27 Although FPCs may be partially understood through collaboration theory, their uniqueness as discussed in Section 3.4.3 also suggests and justifies the use of a grounded theory approach.
Contrary to other qualitative methodologies and the process of “exampling”\textsuperscript{28}, the methodology utilised in this research aims to develop theory as derived “from data and then illustrated by characteristic examples of data” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 5). This research design, therefore, incorporated a continuous, interactive layering of data collection, classification, counting, and analysis.

While an in-depth literature review is not needed for grounded theory, “general reading of the literature maybe carried out to obtain a feel for the issues at work in the subject area, and identify any gaps to be filled in” (Smith and Biley, 1997, p. 20). Therefore, following a preliminary literature review, the inquiry focussed primarily on the gathering of information directly from FPCs involving several different types and sources of data. Approval for the methodology in accordance with recognised standards was sought and granted from the Human Research Ethics Committee. This chapter examines some of the literature and methodologies shaping the research and approaches to data collection, categorisation, and interpretation.

\textsuperscript{28} Exampling is a process where the researcher finds “examples for dreamed-up, speculative, or logically-deduced theory after the idea has occurred” (Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. L. (1967) The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, Aldine, Chicago.)
4.2 Evaluating Structure and Process of Food Policy Councils as Community Collaborations

Organisation theory suggests structuring analyses of organisations around a basic framework for organisational evaluation consisting of three components: structure (organisational structure/administrative structure); process (operations); and outcomes. The second set of research questions demonstrates a primary interest in the structure and process, and not necessarily the outcomes, of food policy councils. Organisations can often be evaluated in terms of outcomes such that accomplishments (program implementation and efficacy) can indicate the overall effectiveness of organisations’ structure and processes. As the following discussion reveals, it may be inappropriate for this study to evaluate FPC structure and process in terms of outcomes. For this reason, it becomes necessary to identify other bases for evaluation.

Some previous research on community collaborations (Backer, 2003) and on FPCs (Dahlberg, 1994a; Yeatman, 1994) suggests that, in contrast to outcome-based evaluation, the effectiveness or “success” of these organisations can be measured in terms of their ability to remain in existence. As mentioned above, effectiveness can also be measured in terms of the outcomes or the productiveness of organisations through the output of programs or activities and maintenance of member interest. According to Butterfoss et al. (1993), these bases for evaluation (outcome-based; maintenance of existence) may be inaccurate for assessing the “effectiveness” or “success” of an
organisation. Collaborations may demonstrate outcome effectiveness by producing numerous programs, activities, and maintenance of member satisfaction and commitment but fail to meet their objectives. Butterfoss et al. (1993) demonstrate that the ultimate indicator of a collaboration’s effectiveness lies in the attainment of the organisation’s mission, goals, and objectives. Instead of traditional outcome-based evaluation, examining the output of programs and activities, organisations’ effectiveness can be measured in terms of the ability to fulfill their mission and role.

Effectiveness of FPCs’ structure and process then can be evaluated in terms of their ability to meet their mission, goals, and objectives. As a unique and specific type of collaborative organisation, food policy councils share a set of common goals and objectives some of which have been identified by the FPC definitions discussed in Chapter 3. These common objectives are framed in this study as the “organisational role” of FPCs within alternative food movements. Investigation in relation to research question 329 seeks to establish the organisational roles by testing and building upon the FPC definitions. Once established, these organisational roles can provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of structure and process as sought through research questions 430 and 531.

29 What is the organisational role and function of food policy councils in relation to alternative food movements?

30 How is a food policy council created?
Having identified a basis for assessing effectiveness, based on fulfilment of organisational roles, the relevant structure and process characteristics of FPCs need to be identified. Previous FPC-specific research, as discussed in Chapter 3, provides a basis for understanding aspects of structure and process that are characteristic of food policy councils in particular. Collaboration theory provides further direction for investigation by offering, instead of outcome-based inquiry, the framework of structural and operational capacity building for evaluation (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001). Therefore, while organisation and collaboration theory could provide a framework for inquiry, they were not utilised as a measure for analysis.

Previous FPC evaluations, such as the profiling approaches employed by Yeatman (1994), Dahlberg (1994a), and Boron (2003), identify some of the key characteristics of organisational structure and process specific to food policy councils. These characteristics include:

Structure:
1. Organisational type (Government/NGO)
2. Staff/Leadership
3. Members/Diversity

31 What is/are the most effective model(s) of FPC organisational structure and process for fulfilling organisational role and function?
4. Funding

5. Relationship to government/Institutional alignment

Process:

6. Program/Policy orientation

7. Relationship with external organisations

A formative evaluation conducted by Hawe and Stickney (1997) at the request of a food policy council in Australia also informed the identification of process characteristics. They suggest aspects of FPC process that may be relevant in evaluating the effectiveness of these organisations. These issues revolve around:

1. The expectations and perception of staff and members as to their roles and the role of the organisation
2. Methods for engaging and satisfying staff and members
3. Project decision-making and actions protocol

Hawe and Stickney (1997) suggest that conflicts among perceived roles and responsibilities, decision-making protocol, and managing the goals, incentives, and diversity of involved parties may affect the outcome of a FPC. This was informed by previous research on community coalitions, cross-sectoral collaboration, and community participation in advocacy groups.
Following the suggestion of Hawe and Stickney (1997) and Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) that FPCs are similar to collaborations, some consideration was given to previous research on organisational structure and effectiveness of collaborative organisations (Hardy et al., 2003; Thompson et al., 2002; Johnson et al., 2003; Webb et al., 1998; Fishman et al., 2000; Backer, 2003).

Butterfoss et al. (1993) identify factors that affect the functioning of community coalitions. These factors can define the structure and process characteristics of these organisations and have the greatest influence on the ability of the coalition to fulfil its mission, goals, and objectives (organisational role). The characteristics are similar to those derived from FPC-specific research and include:

Structure:
1. Formalised rules, processes, and procedures
2. Leadership characteristics (e.g. strong; central)
3. Member characteristics (e.g. diversity)
4. Benefits and costs of participation
5. Satisfaction and commitment
6. Skills and training

Process:
7. Member relationships
8. Sharing resources openly
9. Member- staff relationships
10. Role clarity
11. Staff reduce burden of members to accomplish tasks
12. Communication patterns
13. Open meeting
14. Decision-making, problem solving, conflict resolution
15. External supports – resource exchange and community linkages

These factors, provided by Butterfoss et al. (1993), which affect the functioning of coalitions present a basis for understanding the key characteristics of structure and process for FPCs (given that FPCs are a type of collaboration or coalition). The characteristics indicated in FPC-specific research, as outlined above, are for the most part reiterated here. However, there are some additional characteristics and some that receive special emphasis in the FPC literature. These include the issues of organisational type (NGO/Government), institutional alignment, funding, an emphasis on diversity, and the choice between policy or program orientation. Taking these additional characteristics and areas of emphasis into account, an aggregate framework of these FPC-specific characteristics and those of capacity building can be compiled for the investigation and evaluation of the structural and process components of FPCs:

**Structure:**

1. Organisational type
2. Relationship with government
3. Institutional alignment
4. Formalised processes (organisational documents; evaluation)
5. Staff
6. Members
7. Diversity and relationships with external organisations

**Process:**
8. Decision making/Priority setting
9. Priority areas
10. Long and short-term planning
11. Function in catalysing or implementing programs or policy
12. Task forces and subcommittees
13. Expectations and roles of members
14. Staff roles
15. Roles of external organisations

The above factors, relevant to FPC structure and process, can be evaluated in terms of the previously discussed basis for measurement, that is: which arrangements for each characteristic (e.g. choice between NGO and government-based) are most effective for meeting the organisational roles of food policy councils. However, some of these characteristics are not specifically related to organisational roles, but more broadly to the structural and administrative nature of collaborations in general. These more broadly applicable characteristics include issues/factors such as whether there is a need for formalised processes, staff, and various levels of funding. The capacity-building framework of Foster-Fishman et al. (2001) as discussed in Chapter 3 provides a basis for
measurement of these factors. This basis for evaluation stems from an assessment of the relative ability of different arrangements (e.g. no staff or several paid staff) to build relationship, member, organisational, or programmatic capacity.

While FPCs share the structural and process characteristics of collaborations, they remain a unique type of organisation with their own distinct set of needs and objectives. The arrangements of structure and process which aid in building capacity and effectiveness then may differ from those established capacity-building components of collaborations in general. Since there exists little knowledge or previous research to establish the most effective arrangements for these organisations, this warrants an investigation of the unique capacity-building components of FPCs as revealed through the needs and experiences of food policy councils. Therefore, the basis for measuring capacity building and for determining the unique organisational roles will be investigated in terms of the relevant structural and process experiences of food policy councils.

After these bases for measurement and the relevant structural and process characteristics for evaluation have been established, there needs to be determined the appropriate tool(s) for investigation. The following section outlines the tools, data collection and evaluation methods, employed to evaluate these aspects of food policy councils.

4.3 Theoretical Approach and Research Design
Different research questions and purposes demand different methods of inquiry, data collection, and evaluation. In some cases, quantitative methods may offer significant strengths and benefits such as when there exists a standardised instrument of measurement and categorisation or when aggregation of data for statistical analysis is required (Patton, 2002). In other cases, qualitative approaches will be more valuable and useful in meeting research objectives. Morse and Richards (2002) indicate five instances in which qualitative research methods may be the most effective way of responding to researchers’ questions and purpose. The first of these instances appears especially applicable to aspects of this study.

Morse and Richards indicate that in this first instance where “the purpose is to understand an area where little is known or where previously offered understanding appears inadequate” that qualitative methods are “the best or only way of addressing” some of the associated research purposes and questions (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 27). Such is the case with the rapidly growing population of food policy councils where little previous knowledge or few classification systems exist to understand their unique characteristics of organisational structure, process, and roles.

For these and other reasons discussed below, research questions 3, 4, and 5 demand qualitative inquiry. In relation to research questions 4 and 5, specific categories and components of structure, process, and objectives are known to some extent through theory on collaborations and some previous FPC-specific research. However, the existing and potential arrangements within each of these categories (e.g. how many
members does an FPC have – 5, 10, 50?) remain to a large extent unknown. Should standardised options for arrangements be established, it may be possible to apply quantitative methods in assessing the use and effectiveness of different structure (and process) arrangements. For the purposes of this study then, qualitative data gathering methods will seek to establish standardised sets of arrangements for each category to which will be applied both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysing the existent use and effectiveness of different structure and process components.

Question 3, while also relating to areas where little previous understanding exists, additionally demands qualitative inquiry due to its focus on complex and changing situations (i.e. the complexity and continuous change involved in the evolution of social movements). As Morse and Richards (2002, p. 28) indicate, another instance where qualitative inquiry is the best or only method for investigation occurs when “the purpose is to make sense of complex situations, multicontext data, and changing and shifting phenomena” as is the case with FPC formation and process.

Qualitative research is replete with sources and types of data and data gathering techniques (e.g. in-depth conversations; interviews; observation; diaries; photographs). To address the research questions, data collection needed to focus on the gathering of information on administration, process, and formation. Within each of these areas, data

\footnote{32 What is the organisational role and function of food policy councils in relation to alternative food movements?}
collection also needed to gather information, reflections, and experiences related to
perceptions of effectiveness and fulfilling objectives. Since they are in the most frequent
and closest contact with their activities and experiences, FPCs are the most direct and
usually the only source of information in these areas. Seidman (1998) also indicates that
gathering information directly from participants is the best way to investigate the
experiences of organisations. For this reason, the study gathered information directly
from FPCs.

At all stages of this inquiry, including the writing up of findings, particular consideration
was given to the rigour and validity of the research. Seale and Silverman (1997) note five
significant ways in which researchers can ensure rigour and validity in qualitative
inquiry. Table 4.1 highlights these five methods and the ways in which rigour and
validity in this research are supported through adherence to four of these guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Application in this study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting conclusions by counts; to avoid selecting anecdotes or generalisations that support generalisations</td>
<td>Counting instances of the occurrence of events or recommendations to support conclusions for categories of structure and process characteristics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring representativeness such as through random or theoretical sampling**</td>
<td>Use of theoretical sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing hypothesis in data analysis through deviant case analysis, analytic induction, or grounded theory</td>
<td>Application of grounded theory approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using computer programmes to assist data analysis</td>
<td>Not used; A strict system of coding was employed to ensure “systematic analysis of representative instances of data”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective and full recording of data through audio or video tapes</td>
<td>Full audio recording and transcription</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 33 Five methods for ensuring rigour and validity in qualitative research

* Theoretical sampling, in which participants are purposefully sought out for participation in accordance with emerging theory, will be discussed further in Section 4.5.1.

Although these methods by no means ensure reliability in any absolute sense, when “used with due regard to their limitations” they can advance the cases for validity in research methods (Seale and Silverman, 1997, p. 380). The limitations of each of these methods have been taken into consideration such that in discussing the application of these different methods below (e.g. grounded theory; theoretical sampling) the use of supporting methods to compensate for limitations is discussed as well.

A grounded theory approach, while appropriate in terms of ensuring rigour and validity, offers other advantages which proved beneficial to the research design. Among various epistemological bases, grounded theory is the most frequently utilised qualitative method in organisational research, especially due to its value in examining complex social phenomena about which little is known or understood (Lee, 1999). The techniques of this approach allow for continuous and interactive processes of data collection, ongoing interpretation, coding, analysis, and categorisation.

In grounded theory, “analysis begins with the first exploration of the topic and literature and is ongoing throughout the study” (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 156). This ongoing process of analysis, much like conducting a “qualitative factor analysis,” involves “a) creating categories (i.e. concepts) that explain or underlie empirical data, b) coding empirical indicators into these categories, and c) collecting sequential data sets with which to test and improve the fit of these empirical indicators” (Lee, 1999, p. 47). For this study, analysis began with a review of literature and documents on collaborations and FPCs out of which evolved a framework of categories for evaluating FPC structure and process. This framework provided the basis for the development of subsequent stages of data gathering, interpretation, categorisation, and analysis as described in the following sections.

4.4 Data Gathering

Following the preliminary stage of analysis, other sources of data were needed to evolve and test this framework and concepts related to FPC formation and administrative effectiveness. Data collection in a grounded theory for organisational research sometimes involves a preliminary gathering of information from published documents (e.g. organisational documents) and private documents (e.g. journals). However, interviews and participant observation are usually the main source of the data.

Two primary data collection methods were employed in this research: 1) objective review
of relevant existing documents; and 2) semi-structured interviews with key informants. Other methods included: interviews and information exchange with food policy council experts; collecting information and opinions from experts and other key informants in attendance at a conference designed for the specific purpose of bringing together and exchanging information on FPCs. The use of each of these methods is described below followed by a discussion of sampling, coding, and analysis methods.

Documents “constitute a particularly rich source of information about many organisations and programs” and “provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed” as well as important background information to stimulate “paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing” (Patton, 2002). This methodology was employed to gather background information on fundamental administrative components prior to interviews. For investigating FPCs, data relating to all structure components, several process components, and mission, goals, or objectives can be gathered through organisational documents. These components included information on the age, organisational type, institutional alignment, membership profile, staff profile, funding profile, decision-making protocol, activities, and the degree to which structure and process was formalised. The review of relevant documents

involved the collection of data from organisational documents, unpublished records, and other materials provided upon request from FPCs represented in interviews.

As indicated previously, documents can provide important information for directing paths of inquiry in interviews and observations. Documents reviewed for this study provided direction in establishing some standard themes in the administrative arrangements and operations of FPCs. Options were identified for each of the structure and process categories such as: establishment as a government entity versus establishment as a non-government organisation; or use of subcommittees versus no use of subcommittees. This secondary level of categorisation provided a basis for in-depth inquiry concerning the relative effectiveness of different arrangements.

Interviews provide opportunity for an in-depth exploration of the information provided in documents and of other information not available from those sources. Of the several different ways of interviewing (e.g. unstructured; semi-structured; interactive; focus group; conversations), certain methods are particularly useful for organisational research (Seidman, 1998; Morse and Richards, 2002; Patton, 2002; Lee, 1999). Seidman (1998) illustrates that an excellent way, or the best way, that:

‘a researcher can investigate an educational organization, institution, or process is through the experience of the individual people, the “others” who make up the organization or carry out the process’ (Seidman, 1998, p. 4).
Among the various interviewing techniques available to the qualitative researcher, certain types function differently and offer strengths or weaknesses according to the kind of research questions being asked, the existence of previous theory in the field, or the availability of background information. Semi-structured interviews are a valuable method of data collection when “a researcher knows enough about a phenomenon or the domain of inquiry to develop questions about the topic in advance of interviewing, but not enough to be able to anticipate the answers” (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 94).

Semi-structured interviews allow for the following of pre-determined themes such as, in this research, the targeting of questions related to each of the structure and process components, FPC creation, and the organisations’ objectives. At the same time, this type of interviewing provides room for more in-depth, complex responses and the tailoring of questions to the unique circumstances and experiences of each informant. In other words, this approach allowed for the collection of standard sets of data but the ability to adapt to the unique characteristics or experiences of different FPCs and informants.

Semi-structured interviews also allowed for interaction with and response to issues relevant to or of particular interest to the various interviewees. Expressions of interest or emphasis placed on certain issues by the interviewees informed analysis as to the more significant or concerning aspects of FPC structure, processes, and organisational function. In-person interviews additionally allowed for audio-recording, which when analysed in contrast to unrecorded telephone interviews, secured more detailed responses, opinions, and viewpoints that might otherwise have been missed. All interviews were audio-
recorded with the exception of four cases where recording devices failed or were unavailable. In these cases, and for informal conversations where audio-recording was not available, field notes were compiled of responses to each of the interview questions. Interviews provided the main body of data for analysis.

In order to address the components of organisational structure, process, and outcome raised in collaboration theory and previous FPC research, questions were formulated to investigate these issues in light of this theory. Backer (2003) presents a set of questionnaires and surveys (interviewee questions) which target investigation of effectiveness and satisfaction with administrative arrangements and functioning of community collaborations. The series of questions utilised in interviews found in Appendix 1 was created through the guidance and adaptation of this suite of surveys for evaluating community collaborations presented in Backer (2003). Of this set, surveys 1 through 4 and 8 were primarily utilised.

However, there were several limitations with these surveys for the purposes of this research. One primary limitation was the intent of these surveys to test satisfaction among coalition members or conduct program outcome evaluation while, in contrast, a purpose of this study is to understand effectiveness in terms of meeting the organisational roles of FPCs. Another limitation related to the assumption in these surveys of relatively standard, well-established administrative arrangements already known to the researcher while for FPCs many of these are not completely known or understood. Given these primary limitations, interview questions needed to elicit information on what structure
and process arrangements were utilised by each FPC and views on the effectiveness of different approaches.

The assumption that FPCs operate under the same, or highly similar, set of administrative arrangements raised other limitations as well. Since the surveys are constructed to address a standardised set of administrative components, they cover some aspects not related to FPCs (e.g., executive boards - not commonly found in FPCs). This also causes a failure to stress or to address some of the previously established, important categories of administration, process, and objectives. Examples of this include investigating the importance of diversity and extensive food system representation, relationship with government, institutional alignment, and organisational type. Adjustments were therefore made to the contents of Backer (2003) to take account of these limitations.

Two further limitations concerned the construction of these evaluation tools as questionnaires (as opposed to semi-structured interviews) and the absence of material related to research questions 3 and 4. Questions provided by the surveys needed to be adapted into a semi-structured interview format which could be responsive and adjustable to the unique characteristics of individual FPCs and to elicit in-depth responses concerning effectiveness in meeting goals. The interviews also needed to include material to address how the FPC was created and ideas related to mission and objectives. Examples of additional questions that related more broadly to perceptions of the role, function, and general concept of FPCs included a soliciting of viewpoints on alternative
food organisations and the “department of food” concept, community food security, sustainable agriculture, sustainable development.

To complement the information collected from documents and through interviews, a secondary data collection technique was employed. This technique involved the collection of information through informal conversations held by means of email, telephone, or in person. From these conversations and in reflection following interviews, field notes were created primarily to document information provided through the conversation. In some cases, field notes aimed to highlight issues, thoughts, and concerns emphasised by the interviewee to aid in coding and analysing interview content following transcription.
4.5 Sampling Food Policy Councils

Three different sampling techniques emerged through this research: 1) theoretical (as is common in grounded theory research); 2) nominated; and 3) convenience. The primary sampling technique (theoretical) was to deliberately search out “persons to be invited to participate according to the emerging theory” (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 173). As described below, the nature of this study necessitated a targeting of FPCs directly for data collection and, more specifically, deliberate selection of FPC coordinators and long-time members as representatives of the organisations. This technique also involved the selection of FPCs to represent the wide range of possible administrative arrangements such as those according to location, organisational type, and age. A process of nominated sampling arose as some of those already included in the study voluntarily recommended contacting other FPC members and experts for interviews. These recommendations were followed although it was not possible in all cases to arrange for interviews with the nominated persons. The technique of convenience sampling was employed due to time and funding constraints. Limitations on time related to the availability of only two months for travel within North America to conduct interviews. Funding restraints limited travel time and options. Interviews were arranged according to those constraints and also according to the availability and interest in participation of the FPC representatives.
4.5.1 Representative Sampling – Sample Size and Geography

The nature of this study and of the organisations being investigated indicates a need to gather data directly from FPC participants. Food policy council members and experts therefore formed the primary sample of those selected for interviews, gathering of documents, and other data collection methods. Given the more extensive history and extent of FPC presence in Canada and the U.S., evaluation focussed on North American FPCs. The limitations discussed in Chapter 3 as to the knowledge concerning the number of FPCs in existence, definitions of what can be considered a FPC, and difficulty in obtaining accurate contact information, played a significant role in shaping the sample size. FPC contact information was obtained from individual FPC’s websites and through the Drake/RMA State and Local Food Policy Councils’ website (State and Local Food Policy Councils, 2005c).

Twenty FPCs were contacted to request organisational documents and at a later date to arrange interviews. In two cases, responses indicated that the organisations contacted were not yet fully established (e.g. lacking government ordinance or articles of incorporation). These organisations felt that they would be inappropriate for this study and were therefore left out of the sample. Three organisations provided preliminary information on administrative arrangements but key respondents were not available for interviews within the data-gathering timeframe. These organisations were excluded from the interview sample but the preliminary information provided was utilised in formulating
The selection of sample participants also aimed to include a variety of FPCs with different administrative arrangements, histories, and social/cultural contexts. Preliminary investigations on FPCs and community collaborations, which established the categories of structure and process described previously, indicated the existence of two fundamental arrangements distinguishing different types of FPCs: 1) geopolitical level (e.g. local, regional, or state) and 2) relationship with government (e.g. government entity or non-government organisation). For this reason, FPCs representing each of these arrangements were sought for inclusion in data collection. The sample therefore included several government (12) and some non-government (3) aligned organisations and FPCs at the local (town; small city; large city) (9), regional/county (2), and state (4) levels. These were distributed across the east and west portions of Canada and the east, central, west, south and southwest of the U.S. Table 4.2 provides a visual summary of the information on the geopolitical distribution, organisational type (government; non-government; hybrid), number of Canadian and U.S. councils, years since initial establishment of the FPCs in the sample. Since the majority of FPCs currently in existence preside at the local level with some support received from the relevant level of government authority, this sample reflects current proportions of geopolitical distribution and organisational type. For investigation relevant to research question 3, several FPCs which had been recently

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35 Hybrid FPCs are counted for both the local and regional levels. Two hybrid FPCs were included in this study.
formed were selected to provide information on the steps taken to establish the organisation. These recently formed organisations were selected due to the immediacy of their experience and the resultant ability to recall with ease and clarity (relative to older organisations) the events or steps involved in creating a FPC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geopolitical distribution</th>
<th>Number FPCs representing each aspect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local/municipal</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional/county</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. FPCs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian FPCs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years since establishment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective and full recording of data through audio or video tapes</td>
<td>Full audio recording and transcription</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 Distribution of the Sample across foundational organizational aspects

FPC coordinators (staff persons or chairpersons) were chosen as representatives for interviews for two primary reasons: 1) they are usually the principal and only contact provided for the FPC in their publications and websites, or in FPC contact lists provided by other organisations (State and Local Food Policy Councils, 2005c; World Hunger Year, 2004a); and 2) as leaders or administrative centrepoints, coordinators are usually required to work daily on FPC issues and therefore hold a significant amount of
knowledge about the organisation, its members, objectives, history, previous
accomplishments, and challenges. In order to gather information about FPCs from
several different viewpoints, a request was made by the researcher to speak with another
participant such as a FPC member with a great deal of knowledge and history with the
organisation. In several cases the primary interviewees offered to provide contacts or
arrange multiple interviews with other FPC members. In one location, interviewees also
invited the investigator’s attendance at the FPC meeting to reflect upon some of the
current issues and challenges of the organisation which revolved around meeting
agendas, communication, and staff/member roles. Table 4.3 provides information on the
number of interviewees (interviews conducted) at each location (for each FPC) and the
type of print materials provided at each location. For the purpose of this research, the
only information utilised for analysis was the information provided in interviews, and in
the organizational documents of each FPC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th># interviewees/ (interviews)</th>
<th>Organizational documents provided</th>
<th>Informational materials published by the FPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Number of interviews and informational materials provided at each location

160
4.6 Coding, Analysis, and Interpretation of Interview Data

A precursory consideration within the context of classifying the data concerns a few issues related to terminology associated with food policy councils. The first and most significant issue concerns the term “food policy council” itself. Several of the organisations interviewed employ the phrase “food policy council” in their name. Various others employed what I would call “alternative” terminology in their names. As is common among the broader population of those organisations generally considered to be FPCs, “alternative” terminology appeared among the names of those interviewed, e.g. terms such as “food systems”, “food security”, “food and agriculture”, “committee”, “commission”, “alliance”, “coalition”, and “advisory.” The use of these terms can be demonstrated from samples among the wider FPC population in names such as: Hartford Food Policy Advisory Commission; New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council; Utah Food Council; Ottawa Food Security Council; San Francisco Food Alliance; Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council. Although several of the organisations using this alternative terminology insist that they are not a “food policy council”\(^36\) they are generally considered by other organisations to be food policy councils, e.g. the Community Food Security Coalition; World Hunger Year; other FPCs. Moreover, their goals, activities, and organisational structure, as revealed through preliminary research

\(^{36}\) This insistence was commonly based on an assertion that the terminology of “food policy council” was unsatisfactory and would be misrepresentative of the organisations’ work.
and organisational documents, suggest that these organisations fit the fundamental aspects of the FPC definitions discussed in Chapter 3.

For the purpose of this study, the term “food policy council” (FPC) is therefore used for all. Reasoning behind the use of alternative terminology was explored through the research and will be discussed later in reference to interviewee responses and other research findings. It should also be noted that although the terms are sometimes used synonymously, my use of the terms “food security” and “community food security” are not used in an interchangeable manner. The term “food security” is considered in light of the traditional definitions described in Chapter 2 as reference primarily to health and nutrition issues of individuals. In contrast, use of the term “community food security” corresponds to the movement described in the previous chapter which encompasses a broader food systems perspective and includes issues relating to sustainable development, sustainable agriculture, community development, and community participation.

One further terminology issue concerns the use of phrases such as “task force” and “subcommittee.” Variable application of these terms among FPCs to organisational structures and procedures that are fundamentally identical in function suggests that these terms can also be used interchangeably. This also serves to protect the confidentiality of interviewees. These considerations as to the understanding and use of different terminology in this study are an important precursor to establishing techniques for coding, analysis, interpretation, and classification of the data.
As previously indicated, grounded theory involves an ongoing process of analysis where concepts are continuously categorised, tested, revised, and re-tested. During analysis, data are coded according to some “theoretically meaningful structure” (Lee, 1999, pp. 47 - 48). A first level of categorisation was established prior to interviews through the analysis of documents and preliminary information obtained from participant FPCs. Data obtained from interviews was prepared for coding and subsequent analysis. Following this preparation, interview data were coded topically and axially and interpreted through several subsequent layers of analysis and categorisation.

The first step in the interpretation of data involved preparing audio-recordings, documents, field notes, and any other data sources for coding and analysis. For audio-recorded interviews, complete, direct, typed transcriptions were created by the investigator. For purposes of maintaining confidentiality and to facilitate coding and analysis, each of the food policy councils in North America selected for evaluation was assigned a unique identifier: a randomly selected number from 1-13. Interviewees were assigned a corresponding number and in the case of multiple interviews in one location, representatives were assigned a corresponding letter as well (e.g. “A” corresponding to the first (time chronological) interviewee of a given FPC, “B” corresponding to the second). These numbers were utilised in the writing up of findings (in the following chapters) in referencing the responses of each interviewee. Interviewees are purposefully
not identified in this thesis by their geopolitical representation. This measure was taken to protect the confidentiality of interviewees.37

For all transcriptions, field notes, documents, and other data sources, a process of axial coding (Lee, 1999) was utilised to create correspondence between data and relevant research question and component of structure or process with which they were associated. This coding technique involves the selection of a category and evaluation of “all the data as to whether or not they fit within that selected category….this process is repeated until all data have been evaluated against all categories and classified, each datum in a single category” (Lee, 1999, p. 48). Categories for coding corresponded to: 1) each component of the structure and process framework as developed through literature review and document analysis (e.g. institutional alignment; organisational type; staff roles; priority setting); or 2) the relevant research question (e.g. organisational role; steps to creation). These coded data were subsequently reviewed for the identification of subsidiary categories or options. As is common to grounded theory research methods, the labels for these subsidiary codes were “taken directly from the language that participants themselves used” (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 158). Examples of these subsidiary themes include: education, networking, or implementation versus facilitation as themes related to organisational role; NGO versus government agency for organisational type; or networking or “other work” as expectations of members and components of their roles.

37 This measure is especially critical in the case of “hybrid” FPCs where so few of these organisations exist that identification of their geopolitical level may serve to reveal their identity.
For interviews, field notes, and documents, these subsidiary categories provided the basis for identifying themes of effectiveness as related to components of FPC administration and operation.

As previously noted, interviews and field notes provided the main body of data for analysis which built on that established through literature and document analysis. Interviewees relayed objective information regarding administrative arrangements for each organisation (e.g. the FPC does/does not have a staff person; the FPC has 20 members) and where applicable the steps involved in creating the FPC. They also communicated subjective information on FPC experiences which highlighted their perceptions of the relative importance and effectiveness of certain organisational roles, structures and processes. Themes in the experiences and recommendations of interviewees were evaluated within each coding category in relation to effectiveness of certain administrative and process arrangements as described below.

4.7 Analysing and Establishing Themes of Effectiveness and Capacity-Building

After establishing the different options or possible arrangements for each category of administration and process, addressing research questions 438 and 539 demanded a process

38 How is a food policy council created?
of analysis which would aid in establishing: 1) the organisational roles of FPCs; and 2) which structure and process arrangements are most effective in terms of capacity building and meeting organisational roles. The experiences and recommendations of interviewees and the frequency with which certain options were utilised (e.g. how many FPCs use subcommittees) formed the basis for establishing the relative effectiveness of different arrangements.

Although qualitative research often “involve(s) counting at some stage, and many questions are best answered by quantification” (Morse and Richards, 2002, p. 27), the nature of a project may still remain primarily qualitative. This stage of analysis called for two stages of counting of data to establish themes of effectiveness and organisational roles. A process of counting at this stage of research also avoided “exampling” as described earlier in this chapter in Section 4.1. The first stage of counting involved establishing the frequency with which: 1) certain structure or process arrangements were utilised by FPCs (e.g. how many FPCs have 1 full time staff); or 2) certain objectives were cited as critical to the organisational role or function of the FPC. Since the research revealed that many FPCs make deliberate choices to employ certain structure and process arrangements, this counting can reveal a base indication of preference for certain

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39 What is/are the most effective model(s) of FPC organisational structure and process for fulfilling organisational role and function?

40 This excludes certain arrangements which FPCs are often unable to have complete control over such as funding, staff, and organisational type.
arrangements. This also provided a basis for identifying and investigating why certain arrangements were found to be utilised by the significant minority (or majority). A tabulation of counts for the questions examined in each section of Chapters 5, 6, and 7 is provided in Appendix 3.

FPC coordinators, who were the interviewees for this study, have an intimate relationship with and understanding of the challenges and benefits associated with their different approaches to administration and the relative importance of different organisational objectives. For this reason, the experiences and recommendations of interviewees formed a basis for evaluation in these stages of data counting and analysis. The second stage entailed counting the frequency of certain types of responses of interviewees (e.g. positive/negative/recommendation). An example of this would be the counting of how many interviewees felt positive about or recommended: having one full-time staff person; or the role of FPCs as government-based alternative food institutions. This same counting technique was applied to investigating the different stages of creating a food policy council in terms of their efficacy in helping the group to become formally established. Following this stage of analysis, establishing the terms of effectiveness, organisational roles, and steps to formal establishment, the research findings were prepared for presentation and writing.
4.8 Structure of the Chapters Reporting on Empirical Research

The following chapters explore the research findings as rendered through application of the above methods of data collection, preparation, interpretation, classification, and analysis. Findings have been structured and presented in relation to each research question and subsequently to the data classification frameworks.

Chapter 5 examines findings and conclusions in relation to research question 3. Chapter 6 discusses findings in relation to research question 4. This chapter and Chapter 7 also address the fifth research question. The first of these chapters presents findings on FPC structure while the latter discusses those related to FPC process and operations. These chapters communicate findings and conclusions related to the primary and secondary stages of data analysis such that they examine the existence of common structure and process components of FPCs. The advantages, disadvantages, and recommendations related to each of these components, as conferred by interviewees, is also presented here. However, no conclusions are drawn in these chapters regarding the relative effectiveness of different structure and process arrangements. These first three chapters (5, 6, and 7) are structured with subheadings corresponding to the established categories of administrative and operation components and of organisational roles.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions from Chapters 6 and 7 in regards to structure and process effectiveness. This chapter also looks at these conclusions in terms of establishing ‘best-practice’ (i.e. most effective) models for FPC creation, structure, and process. Chapter 9
reviews the findings of these previous four chapters to highlight and summarize the conclusions related to each individual research question.

Since documents and interviews with food policy council representatives were primary sources of data, the material presented in the following chapters predominantly derives from these sources with additional and supplementary information derived from the other data collection methods. In examining themes of effectiveness, quotations from interviews are frequently employed to describe in their own words the experiences, successes, and challenges of food policy councils.
Chapter 5: The Definition and Organisational Roles of Food Policy Councils

5.1 Introduction

Understanding the nature of food policy councils involves understanding the overall purpose and definition of these organisations. This entails an understanding of the objectives and goals of FPCs and of their “organisational role(s)” (role(s) as an organisation) in relationship to other individuals, organisations, and institutions. These organisational definitions and roles, which define the purpose and objectives of these organisations, are fundamental to understanding the nature of food policy councils. This provides the basis for understanding administrative structure and operations as will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

The discrepancies among definitions of “food policy councils” discussed in Chapter 3 demonstrate a broader uncertainty and divergence in understanding the overall concept of “the food policy council.” Discrepancies relate more specifically to understanding whether food policy councils actually work on policy, implementing or recommending changes, their status as government or non-government organisations, and their relationship to alternative food movements such as community food security or sustainable agriculture. In addition to these aspects of the nature of food policy councils, views expressed by various individuals, organisations, academics, and interviewees suggested a necessity for understanding the degree to which these groups function as
networkers and facilitators, educators, and potentially new or alternative institutions, including the concept of the “department of food.” In an even broader sense, questions arose through the course of research regarding the general food policy council concept in respect to terminology, and the overall value of these organisations in terms of their ability to effect change towards more sustainable food systems.

This chapter examines the role of food policy councils in respect to these uncertainties, in the light of information and opinions gathered through interviews, email, telephone conversations, primary documents and websites of food policy councils, and views expressed in other academic research. The first section considers the overall, general concept of the “food policy council.” It then moves on to examine the actual relationship of FPCs to policy, government, networking, facilitation, and the function of these relationships in defining mission, goals, and organisational role. The following section considers the AFI and department of food concepts in relation to FPCs. Finally, this chapter examines what may be considered one of the most fundamental functions of FPCs: their role as educators for the development of more sustainable food systems. All of these aspects can be considered together as defining the organisational role of FPCs, which provides a basis for determining the most effective administrative structure and operations management for fulfilling this role.
5.2 The “Food Policy Council” Concept

The terminology and value of the food policy council concept remain debatable. One concern raised by interviewees relates to the overall value of the food policy council concept. Interviewee 1 questioned in a general sense “why it is that the food policy council concept is one that has taken off.” Conversely, interviewee 11A questioned the value of food policy councils and whether, considering the challenges faced by these organisations, the concept remained one worth pursuing:

‘The things we’re working on, you know, there’s inherent challenges, huge ones in both of them and food policy councils is the same thing. I mean people are starting to understand that, “hmmm maybe we,” I mean, can you accomplish the same things and maybe not try to create something that can’t be supported.’

This question may relate to the values, interests, and ability of this type of organisation to function in different government structures and areas. Undoubtedly, food policy councils have remained valued in some areas for several years (e.g. Knoxville, Toronto, Connecticut) and have produced unprecedented program and project ideas, which might not have occurred without the engagement of a food systems perspective and diverse food systems stakeholder representation.
The value of these organisations to different geopolitical areas, and their associated discrepancies in government types, is also reflected in the use of terminology to describe the function and purpose of these groups. A great variety of terminology is used by those various organisations that fit the criteria set by definitions of “food policy council.” As suggested by several interviewees, the term “food policy council” remains inaccurate in several respects. When the first FPCs emerged this particular terminology may have offered some advantages:

“It had a certain advantage, which is that it allowed the early supporters of this to fit the thing into a little niche that the established civil service was familiar and comfortable with, which is a policy (writer) and so therefore, by calling it a food policy council, and with the emphasis on policy, they were able to find a place that wasn’t challenging to the system” (Interviewee 7).

This interviewee also suggested that despite the incredible inaccuracies implied, the term has become so well founded in the past fifteen to twenty years that changing the name “food policy council”, especially for particular organisations, would not be worthwhile:

“I find the word food policy council problematic. However, I’m not in any, until somebody comes up with a better name, I’m not trying to change it. It would take a big rukus to change it. I’d have to make a strong case for it. It’s not important enough for me to change, but if I were starting new, in a new continent I don’t know that I would go with that.”
The variability among terms used by these organisations became more pronounced with the rise in the number of FPCs in existence. The names of these organisations have become increasingly variable, mainly in respect to the terms “policy” and “council.”

With respect to the term policy those creating “food policy council” type organisations over the past several years have employed names such as “food systems council,” “food security council,” or simply “food council” to omit the “policy” qualifier. The names of these organisations also vary with respect to “council” replacing this part of the terminology with “commission,” “committee,” “coalition,” “alliance,” or “advisory group”. Interviewee 7 again addressed inherent challenges in this aspect of the terminology relating to concept of a “council”:

“Many people structure a food policy council around the concept of a round table and I am very dogmatic about the fact that we are not a round table. We are a mandate driven organisation.”

Also addressing the difference between the “food policy council” and a coalition, Roberts and Scharf (2002) say that a food policy council may be “different from a typical coalition, where members are expected to represent an organisation’s or interest group’s point of view, and where members often have to delay decisions until they can go back to their sponsoring organisations for an okay.” Three of the organisations represented in interviews which used some of this alternate terminology stressed particular opposition to the qualifier “policy” stating explicitly that they did not do policy work and therefore
were not “food policy councils.” This opinion remained despite the fact that these groups demonstrated adherence to a majority of the aspects defining food policy councils in existent definitions. According to lists of existing food policy councils (Bournhonesque, 2005; Zodrow, 2005; State and Local Food Policy Councils, 2005c) these groups are still considered as “food policy councils” despite the questionability of their work on policy issues. The organisations fitting with definitions of “food policy council,” whether using this particular name or not, do not appear to solely concentrate on policy work or operate as a council to advise or recommend. The following sections examine the degree to which FPCs: are involved with policy or program development; function as government or non-government organisations; function as networkers and facilitators; are poised to function as alternative food institutions (AFIs); and function as educators in sustainability and food systems.

5.3 Policy or Program Orientation

As indicated in the above discussion of “food policy council” terminology, the accuracy of the qualifier “policy” remains debatable. However, the term “policy” itself is debatable. Therefore, prior to determining whether or not FPCs actually work with policy, it is necessary to define the term.

Broadly stated, “policy” can be understood as a statement or plan of government, businesses, private sector organisations, or individuals intended to determine or guide
decisions and actions. FPCs however focus specifically on food system issues, or “food policy”. Food policy then would focus the definition of “policy” on those decisions and actions related to issues throughout the food system. There are many definitions of food policy usually indicating the creation by government of statements or actions which affect activities throughout the food system. One such example is that provided by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 1981). However, as the broader definition of “policy” provided above indicates, policy can be created by and affect private sector organisations, businesses, and individuals. The State and Local Food Policy Councils project (2005a) acknowledges this facet of policy making, providing a definition which encompasses this wider range of organisations. However, this definition defines food policy merely as decisions made by these organisations without indication of the relevant types of implementation mechanisms or the relationship of this type of policy to the broader field of public policy. The most broadly applicable and comprehensive definition found in this research was that provided by Wikipedia (2006) where “food policy” is defined as:

“A plan or course of action intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, behaviour, and perceptions to enable people [to] access enough food for an active, healthy life. It consists of the setting of goals for food production,

\footnote{This could be contrasted to “agricultural policy” which would focus primarily on agricultural issues and not, or only peripherally, on those issues related to distribution, consumption, and other aspects of the food system outside of production.}
processing, marketing, availability, access, utilization and consumption, as well as the processes for achieving these goals on a local, national, regional and global level. More specifically, food policy comprises the mechanisms by which food-related matters are addressed or administered by governments, by international bodies or networks, or by any public institution or private organisation. As a subfield of public policy, food policy covers the entire food chain, from natural resources (such as soils, water, and biodiversity), to production (crops and animals), to processing, marketing, and retailing, as well as food consumption (including food safety) and nutrition (including nutrition-related health). Food policy shapes the structure and functioning of the food system in the direction of the intended goals” (Wikipedia, 2006, para. 1).

For the purpose of the present research then, this definition provides for the wide range of activities and organisations that FPCs might engage with when doing policy work. The debate over the term policy when applied to FPCs stems from the perception that these organisations do very little in terms of creating, changing, and implementing food policy. Rubin (2005) suggests that food policy councils do very little policy work and instead focus on programs or projects from within existing government and private organisations’ policy frameworks. It is important to recognize here that the policy process and environment vary between local, regional, state, and national levels. Among local governments especially, management structures are often different, thereby affecting policy processes within individual government and government organisations (Yeatman, 2003), and the associated work of the respective food policy council. The focus of this
line of inquiry is not to examine the differences among FPC policy work in varying local
government structures and state government structures. This investigation aims primarily
to examine whether FPCs engage with policy processes, their potential organisational
role in relation to policy-making, and the successes or difficulties that they encounter.

Several of those interviewed indicated a minimal involvement and even disinterest in
researching, writing, or recommending new policies or changes to existing policies.
Interviewees 1 and 7 discussed engaging primarily in food policy work as problematic
because of the tendency for this type of activity to distract from or evade implementation:

“I would say we deal…with programs rather than policy. Program, to me, is how
you translate a policy into actionables and deliverables. How do you budget it?
What’s the cost? What’s the parameter? Who’s responsible? ...So to have food
policy, I’m not particularly interested in making a contribution to food policy any
more than I am into literary analysis. It’s just an academic area. I’m interested in
developing programs that can be delivered” (Interviewee 7).

“I think you could easily choke off the creativity and overly bureaucratize the
issues. . .by trying to just do some policy stuff” (Interviewee 1).

Conversely, several interviewees described interest in policy issues in terms of
researching, amending, recommending, and writing new food-related policy as an
important focus or direction for their work. For those organisations operating initially
under government mandate, their primary responsibility commonly remains developing 
policy recommendations as directed by the sponsoring agency/agencies. Two FPC groups 
felt that, during the stages of forming a food policy council, obtaining a government 
mandate specifically to work on policy recommendation was of primary importance in 
forming the organisation:

“In order to make change the big picture has to change. So a group that can look 
at policy and will be respected for policy, that is actually their mandate: for 
changing policy; seemed like it’s the next step” (Interviewee 2A).

These FPCs often begin with a focus on policy development and shift to a greater focus 
on programs (policy implementation) once recommendations have been submitted. 
Organisations without this type of mandate usually operate in an opposite manner, 
focussing initially on program implementation and moving later into policy. The 
perception that FPCs do little actual policy work may be attributed to the fact that most of 
these organisations, when in the first few years of existence, do not possess the resources, 
stability, networks, and respect to pursue making policy recommendations to government. 
Once the resources and reputation are established, organisations can then shift focus:

“Where we are right now is needing to sort of simultaneously do the actual project 
work to build the expertise from which policy would be developed” (Interviewee 6).
“We will need some things that are more like policy statements, like with farmers’ markets we need something there. We need a policy statement on them that brings with it some specific code changes….But I think a comprehensive policy will probably come after we’ve knocked off some specific pieces like that” (Interviewee 1).

The degree to which FPCs can focus on policy issues also changes in relation to cycles in government and the amount of support available from elected officials. A lack of sufficient support can prevent FPCs from being able to focus on policy change:

“I think it changes every six months…and six months from now the group could have a much stronger relationship with the mayor or twelve months from now. All of that stuff is constantly dynamic and constantly changing. But in the two and a half years I’ve been here…I haven’t seen them do much in terms of change policy in the city” (Interviewee 3A).

Although as described by this interviewee, some FPCs encounter difficulties in approaching policy work due to relationships with government, several organisations still maintained an intention to engage with food policy. Ten of the FPCs interviewed, including those expressing some disinterest in policy work, had previously worked with or intended at some future point to engage in policy work. While an investigation of the activities and programs of FPCs reveals minimal involvement in amending and recommending changes to food-related policies, interviews revealed contrasting interests
and sentiments. Even for those FPCs without a history of this type of activity, the focus often remained on building credibility and resources to eventually allow for greater focus in this area. One potential role for FPCs to fulfil is to raise the awareness of government as to policy, changes to policy, and implementation mechanisms that can enhance food systems sustainability.

5.4 Food Policy Councils as Government or Non-government Organisations

As noted in previous chapters, relationships with government and existence as either government or non-government organisations play a significant role in structural development and operation of FPCs. Given the significance of these issues, FPCs can be seen to be created as NGOs or government entities for different reasons especially in respect to the different roles played by these two different types of organisations.

The initial premise of the food policy council concept included a strong relationship with and basis in local government. Early FPCs such as those in Knoxville, Toronto, and Hartford, were created under orders, ordinances, and mandates to function primarily as a government organisation. Over several years as the number of FPCs increased, several of these organisations were developed as non-government, often non-profit, organisations (NGOs). The development of these two different types of organisations raises the debate over the importance of government involvement and whether or not food policy councils
can or should operate as NGOs. Considering the value and reasoning behind creating FPCs as government entities or otherwise includes reflection on what roles and functions FPCs play as non-profit organisations as compared to government entities. The following section first examines some of the more general literature on the tensions between NGOs and government in the power to direct structural and institutional change. Subsequently, this section will report on the opinions and viewpoints revealed by interviewees as to the importance and significance of their relationship to and involvement with government.

Over the past several decades, the role of, and relationship between, government and non-government organisations in local, regional, national, and international governance has changed dramatically such that government agencies and departments have become increasingly reliant on NGOs for the delivery of programs, goods, and services (Kettl, 2000; Fisher, 1997). NGOs have also evolved to the point where some of these organisations influence and help to shape government and industry policy from the local to national and international levels.

Fisher (1997) offers a fairly comprehensive overview of the perception of NGOs’ role in development, governance, policy making, and processes of democratisation. FPCs may play a role in all of these activities through: sustainable development of the food system; governance of food-related activities; food policy making; and democratisation of institutions, processes, and governance in the food system. A summary of some of the arguments presented by Fisher are as follows, with some reflection on the relationship of
FPCs to these arguments. According to Fisher, there are two critical approaches to understanding the role of NGOs in development: 1) that the development process is imperfect but still constructive and inevitable such that NGOs “provide a means to mitigate some of the weaknesses in the development process”; or 2) that the development process is fundamentally flawed such that NGOs are a “source of alternative development discourses and practices” (Fisher, 1997, p. 443).

Within each of these two critical approaches, there exist two different sets of tensions between NGOs and the state. In the first approach, NGOs are seen as:

“Everything that governments are not: unburdened with large bureaucracies, relatively flexible and open to innovation, more effective and faster at implementing development efforts, and able to identify and respond to grass-roots needs” (Fisher, 1997, p. 444).

In this capacity, Fisher notes that these organisations are a tool to be utilised by government or a valuable alternative where government programs or processes face limitations. However, in this role they also possess little capacity to instigate political change. The second approach described by Fisher demonstrates a quite different and opposing view of the role of NGOs in political transformation. From this viewpoint, NGOs possess the ambition and ability to challenge traditional power structures: to transform the social and political institutions and relationships.
For FPCs, both of these roles could benefit an aim to promote sustainable development of the food system, especially due to the flexibility of NGOs through their placement outside of unwieldy bureaucratic systems. In the first case, FPCs may be valuable both in responding to grass-roots interests and in implementing programs to promote food security and agricultural sustainability where government intervention has failed. However, this would miss the necessity to resolve the underlying foundational problems in the conventional food system.\(^{42}\) In the second case, FPCs can present a challenge and alternative to the “fundamentally flawed” nature of the food system; they can instigate a transformation in governance and conventional approaches to food-related policy and program development (and implementation) both through politicization of food issues and implementation of programs that act as an alternative to state-led approaches. While these activities could make FPCs important vehicles for food systems change, there still exist certain pitfalls associated with the actual and perceived roles of NGOs in systems development and change.

One of the central problems facing NGOs is that they may have become “antipolitics” organisations; that they have been imagined and imaged as organisations that are separate from and outside of politics (Fisher, 1997). In this case, the state can utilise NGOs to provide technical solutions rather than to address underlying structural issues, providing “band-aid solutions” instead of the long-term planning and change. This presents a tension between the power, capabilities, and objectives of non-government organisations.

\(^{42}\) See Chapter 2, Section 2.3.
Since they are unburdened by bureaucratic structures, NGOs can be a source of innovation in the transformation of political structures and institutions. However, since they are outside of political bureaucracies, they are imaged as existing outside of politics and therefore may lack the power to influence these same institutions towards that change and transformation. As is discussed in the following section, interviewees revealed some similar viewpoints to those discussed above and some new insights as to the strengths and weaknesses of FPCs operating as NGOs. The viewpoints expressed in interviews in some cases also reflected on the role of FPCs in government as opposed to other food-related NGOs.

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6, the majority of interviewees indicated that recognition under a government ordinance was a critical and deciding factor in the creation of the FPC. One interviewee suggested that in the initial stages of formation of the FPC, the organising group considered the advantages and disadvantages of creating the organisation as a government or a non-profit entity. This group, as did the majority of those interviewed, decided that association with government or being created as a government entity was the preferred method for operation of a FPC in their area. Several interviewees indicated the reasoning behind operating as a government organisation, with a majority claiming that this strategy helped gain legitimacy for the organisation:

“I think being affiliated with (a government department) has given us legitimacy within the city” (Interviewee 11).
“That’s kind of the beauty of the council, is that we’ve been given the mandate and kind of the authority and the connection to the (government) to look at these things and to move these ideas up” (Interviewee 8).

In contrast to this viewpoint, one organisation felt that ratification as a government organisation would create obstacles in working with other non-government organisations. In this particular case, farmers and other organisations felt apprehensive towards government interests due to recent government activities that had been perceived as threatening.

“We specifically say that we’re not city rato because a lot of farmers are quite opposed to the city...because through (changes to government) there’s been a lot of change for the rural area that hasn’t been welcomed” (Interviewee 6).

Despite the advantages and disadvantages of government ratification this group still maintained a formal relationship with government through funding and in-kind resources including an office in a government department. The provision of these resources by the government also encouraged the development of working relationships between the FPC

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43 'rato': ratified by the municipal government as an institution of that government.
and various government agencies. This “hybrid” model, including some formal relationship with government through funding, resources, or otherwise while maintaining some NGO or non-profit status, can offer some of the advantages of status as both a non-profit and a government entity. One interviewee commented on some of these advantages with special consideration given to networking and liberty to discuss and voice opinion in respect to controversial issues:

“That’s been the power of this particular model: is the fact that it straddles both the community-based organisation, non-profit model, and the government-bureaucracy-institution model and because it straddles both worlds I think it has the opportunity to be able to articulate a very specific stance without having to deal with the politics all the time or with the non-profit side all the time”

(Interviewee 11B).

While this “hybrid” model may prove advantageous in some respects, certain situations and approaches to organisational structure may enable FPCs to maintain autonomy and strong relationships with the non-profit and with the government sector without use of the “hybrid” model. One interviewee suggested that one significant advantage of operating primarily as a government entity included the ability to develop stronger, more trusting

44 Most food policy councils, even those created under government ordinances, are said to demonstrate aspects of both government and non-profit organisations. For the purpose of this research, government mandate is considered to separate government entities from hybrid and purely non-profit FPCs.
relationships with non-profit organisations. This interviewee felt that there already existed too many NGOs competing for the same grants and funding. Since the FPC did not operate as an NGO it would not be seen as a competitor. In contrast to the threat posed as a competitor, through the ability to function as a central organisation with connection to government and a wide variety of food system sectors and resources, non-profits view the FPC as an organisation that works to further their interests and aids in acquiring funding and other resources:

‘When I walk into a room of NGOs they all know: “This guy works to get us more money.” Then they are real nice to me. If I was walking into the room and they say: “this guy is looking for the same pot of money that we are” it would be a totally different relationship. Totally. So that’s why I wouldn’t even entertain the notion. You add no value to the system. You’re just another drain on an overexpanded system’ (Interviewee 7).

Interviewee 13 expressed a similar sentiment, indicating that the strength of the non-profit sector in North America, including a considerable history of involvement in advocacy work, dilutes the effectiveness of FPCs created solely as non-profit organisations. When speaking to the nature of operating as government organisations, several interviewees indicated that, as a government entity, the ability to translate wider perspectives and citizen voices and gain authority to implement recommendations through food policy and planning, remained one of the more significant roles of the government-mandated FPC:
“We need the people that are on the ground, who know the issue really, really well and have dedicated themselves to just that issue but might not necessarily have the connection to get what they want to get done at the (government) level done. So that’s hopefully kind of the role that we’re trying to fill” (Interviewee 8).

The role that government FPCs fulfil in this respect relates strongly to that of acting as a citizen voice and facilitator for the advancement of public interest. Whether functioning as a non-profit, hybrid, or primarily government-based organisation, all of the FPCs interviewed described one of their primary roles as being that of a voice for recommending new ideas or changes to government activities surrounding food policy and planning. While operating as a government entity can provide some degree of authority to aid in fulfilling this role, creation strictly as a non-profit or as one of numerous committees or councils in a local government can lessen the strength and effect of this voice.

In contrast, suggestions of Interviewees 9A and 9B indicate that formal association with government may restrict the ability of these organisations to propose changes to government structures and policy. In other words, it may be difficult to “to operate within a system and at the same time propose alternatives to that system” (Interviewee 9B). The importance of maintaining perspectives from “outside the system” will be considered in further detail in the section considering the “Department of Food” concept and FPCs as new or alternative institutions. In fulfilling the role of citizen voice to
government, food policy councils need to strike a balance between authority within
government, freedom of expression, and ease of communication across a wide variety of
non-profit organisations and stakeholders in the food system. As the majority of interests
expressed in interviews revealed, a significant role for FPCs to fulfil involves bringing
together and raising the visibility of a broad spectrum of food system interests in
government policy, planning, and decision-making activities.

5.5 Food Policy Councils as Networkers and Facilitators

An aspect of, and addition to, the role of food policy councils as voices for system-wide
changes in governance for food policy and planning, is the role that FPCs fulfil as
networkers across the spectrum of food system interests and facilitators in the networking
and implementation capacity of other organisations. Networking is central to the food
policy council concept in that the role of networker allows the FPC to draw connections
between disparate stakeholders in the food system. As articulated by Interviewee 9A, “the
goal is to create a system out of which people can communicate their ideas, talk to each
other and that’s sort of part of the idea.” Interviewee 12 indicated that information
exchange and the networks created among members through the operation of the FPC
was one of the most valuable and lasting legacies of the organisation. In this context,
FPCs relate to the concept of the learning organisation “where people continually expand
their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of
thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are
continually learning to see the whole together” (Senge, 1990, p. 3).
Bringing together this diversity of viewpoints, expertise, and experience can create tensions among members such that staff, meeting chairpersons, or other organisational leaders need to fulfil roles as facilitators to unite and develop innovative ideas out of sometimes conflicting interests:

“We’ve got a wide range of people who have a different finger on different pulses of a food system. We’re not all agricultural people, we’re not all foodbanking people. We’ve got nutritionists, we’ve got gardeners, we’ve got a wide range of folks. So yeah, I kind of think facilitating is really a large part of what we need to do” (Interviewee 3B).

In this capacity, the FPC as a whole fulfils the role of facilitator and convenor for inclusiveness of viewpoints from across the food system. This aspect of facilitation at the most basic level involved the members and their viewpoints as individuals. At another level, this sort of networking facilitation relates to the businesses, organisations, institutions, and community groups that members represent. As will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, one role that members may play is in bringing the interests and activities of the FPC to their own constituencies for implementation or to help these ideas “come alive.” What the FPC is asking members ‘is: will you take our ideas to your constituency and make them come alive?’ and then bring their problems to us so we can wrestle with it in this broader context.’ The FPC asks members “to serve here as the dynamic, experienced people who can bring (the FPC) issues” (Interviewee 7). In this
manner FPCs serve to create new networks among members’ organisations and facilitate the expansion and implementation of their interests by bringing them into the broader food system context. This role carries through, outside of facilitating communication between members’ networks and organisations, to facilitation and networking among other organisations with which the FPC develops relationships. Developing connections and capacity for communication with organisations external to the FPC involves building relationships with and among businesses, non-profit organisations, government institutions, and community groups. Drawing ideas from and facilitating these networks is a crucial role for FPCs to fill especially with respect to the need to include a much wider range of participants than membership structure might allow for and draw connections between all of the various aspects of food systems:

“It’s good for us to see ways that we can connect…I think that’s the best thing we can do and not work in a vacuum. I mean that’s not what a food system is”

(Interviewee 3B).

Through these interests, FPCs also fulfil a role as facilitator for community consultation and voice for the concerns of community interest groups. Interviewee 2A discussed this activity as one of the most significant roles of the FPC in that it is “critical to get into it with other community groups absolutely…it’s the very heart of what we’re about.” Working with community groups and other types of organisations in this respect not only helps to create and broaden networks but also eases the implementation of the FPCs planning and policy interests. The most successful programs, as described by
interviewees, involved situations where the FPC developed program or project ideas and worked with members’ constituencies and other organisations for implementation and continued work. Interviewee 1 indicated that for the FPC, a critical role “is trying to be an instigator, that can successfully move some projects forward, help others in the community” to move forward with implementation and project maintenance. Working with other organisations in this manner was highlighted throughout interviews as the most advantageous approach to implementation. This approach offers two benefits. One benefit relates to the limited capacity for FPCs to independently implement all project ideas due to, most significantly, the broad spectrum and multitude of food systems projects and to funding or other resource limitations. As Interviewee 3B described, facilitating other groups to manage these activities removes from the FPC some of the difficulties of project implementation and managing all the finer details of multitudinous projects:

“Those things are the kinds of things we can do: take a project on, give light to it, and then sort of pass the torch a little bit because we can’t carry all the torches and our job is to coordinate how we respond to a number of different issues.”

This allows the FPC to avoid redundancy in duplicating the work of others while adding to those activities already in place:

“We are formed to research, investigate, and develop recommendations…they get
farmed out to who needs to be doing those recommendations. And so it’s not our job to duplicate what other groups are doing but to enhance them” (Interviewee 8).

Another benefit of this approach involves the much-needed recognition gained for partner organisations. This type of facilitation allows for politicians, community groups, non-profit organisations, academic institutions, and others to gain some of the much-needed or sought after credit for these projects. Enabling these individuals and groups to carry out or implement the innovative project proposals produced by the network of food system stakeholders, and to take credit for these activities, also helps the FPC to avoid being seen as competition to other organisations and build much-needed political capital. Food policy councils can “get things done” and fulfil the roles of networker and facilitator by leading “life as a linktank” (Roberts and Scharf, 2002, p. 29). In this capacity, FPCs operate as a centrepoint for the convergence, coordination, networking, and facilitation to enhance and implement goals which meet the broad range of concerns among food system stakeholders.

5.6 Alternative Institutions and the “Department of Food”

Through examination of the history and activities of the community food and sustainable agriculture movements, several authors have drawn links between the “food policy council” and the creation of new institutions or institutionalisation of the food system approach. The activities and new institutions related to these movements propose
alternatives to the current types and administrative organisation of institutions dealing with food system issues. Allen (2004, p. 64) suggests that

“‘top-down’ efforts to create reforms within traditional agrifood institutions is complemented at local levels by ‘bottom-up’ efforts to create new, alternative institutions that can serve as the basis for rebuilding the agrifood system in ways that are more environmentally sound and socially just.”

In addition to several other types of activities supported by these movements, the author discusses FPCs as one of the “alternative agrifood institutions.” Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999) and Dahlberg (1994a, p. 1) draw similar links between food policy councils and alternative or new agrifood institutions, particularly in relation to the concept of the “Department of Food.” Dahlberg (1994a, p. 3) discusses the Department of Food concept in relation to FPCs, highlighting the fact that:

“Cities and towns are simply and unconsciously assumed by most to be only consumers of food. This perception is confirmed and reinforced by the fact that no U.S. city has a Department of Food. Food is not seen to be an issue or a problem for municipalities.”

Pothukuchi and Kaufman (1999, p. 219) suggest that, due to this perception, a multitude of municipal departments exist explicitly to address needs such as health, education,
transport, and waste while attention to food issues remains fragmented and underserved. According to the authors, a “Department of Food” could function as the “central intelligence”, “pulse-taking”, “policy clarification”, “community food security strategic plan”, and “feedback review” agency within local government areas. The authors posit that “the Department could not only alert the community to trouble spots, but could also offer remedies in the form of policy recommendations and in the formulation of specific programs” (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999, p. 220). Taking this one step further, these departments could serve similar roles at regional and state/provincial levels. The authors draw a clear connection between the “Department of Food” as a proposed new/alternative institution and FPCs, theorizing that:

‘Food policy councils represent the closest thing to a centering of attention for food related concerns at the local level. They have promising potential in their ability to take on all or most of the functions suggested for a department of food. But, given their resource limitations, most have not shown as yet the capacity to deliver a more comprehensive understanding of the urban food system, its intricacies, limitations, and interrelationships” (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999, p. 220)

Although municipal, regional, and state level FPCs may resemble the department of food concept in their function as a central point to assemble stakeholders and evaluate food system issues, as the authors indicate, they do not yet exhibit the capacity to undertake all of the functions and operate as a government agency or department. It may be important
here to reflect on the tensions between government and non-government organisations as discussed in Section 5.4. While political bureaucratic structures may inhibit the drive for innovation and change in political structures, non-government organisations in some respects may not possess the capacity or authority to instigate and direct institutional change.

Interviewees provided viewpoints on the potential relationship between and the different roles of these two types of organisations (FPCs and the department of food). As a preliminary investigation, interviewees were polled as to their familiarity with and viewpoints on the department of food concept. Although several of those interviewed were unfamiliar with the term, most demonstrated an understanding of the basics of the concept. Interviewee 1 indicated that this term was employed quite often during formative stages, although use of the term dissipated as the FPC became more firmly established:

“A lot of people were saying that particular phrase when we were getting this going. I haven’t heard it as much recently, but it was a common, common phrase brought forward.”

One interviewee demonstrated a viewpoint concurrent with that of the above authors, describing the inadequate representation of “food” in the current composition of the majority of governments, municipal and otherwise:

‘Fundamentally food does not exist. If you came from another planet and looked
at all the departments in any government, municipal, federal…or whatever, you
would conclude there is no such thing as food. There’s agriculture, or maybe agri-
food, there’s processing, there’s manufacturing, there’s trucking, there’s shipping,
there’s retailing, there’s composting, but there is no government department that
deals with food, including public health. We don’t go with food. We go with food
borne disease, nutrition, et cetera. So the big breakthrough is food. And the
problem of a food policy council in some cases is: where are you located in the
city?” (Interviewee 7).

Creating a department of food could in some respects avoid this problem by eliminating
the need to identify the appropriate department within which to house the FPC. In
connection to this dilemma the interviewee felt that ‘if you could ever convince
somebody to do a Department of Food that would be the big breakthrough.” While the
majority of those interviewed demonstrated only a basic understanding of the concept,
this interviewee was the only representative to demonstrate a detailed understanding of
the background to the idea. The absence of more detailed understanding may explain why
a majority remained opposed and did not indicate an interest in drawing connection
between the food policy council with the department of food concept. No interviewees
explicitly indicated a potential for the food policy council to serve as a similar body or
precursor to a department of food. Interviewee 6 overtly stated that little or no potential
was seen in the possibility of the FPC serving as a precursor:
“I don’t know if there’s a danger of becoming the Department of Food ourselves, not…I think that’s a great idea but I don’t think that this body will become that.”

Alternatively, several unique arguments of interviewees demonstrated some problematic aspects of the “department of food.” These focused around issues related to the bureaucratic nature and policing activities implied in the term. Interviewee 3A felt that the fear of “food police” was a significantly problematic aspect of the department of food:

‘I think there’s a lot of problems with “Department of Food” because there’s the whole “food police” problem like if you turned to the “food police” you’ve lost the fight…the direction we’re trying to go in, the food system…we’re looking for is not one that would be forced upon people and the “Department of Food” sort of implies that you’re going to force people to eat…and this is America, we’re just so complicated in terms of our eating habits and our social behaviour is related to eating and the idea that you have a sort of policing agency of some sort that tells you what to eat is a terrible concept.’

A similar issue was raised by another interviewee with respect to the word “food security.” The interviewee felt that the frequent misinterpretation of this term as one related to policing activities, such as implied in “homeland security” or food safety issues, created apprehension among the public towards the work of the FPC.
Other interviewees expressed opposition to the potential problems associated with creating bureaucratic structures around food issues. Interviewee 11B felt that administrative impediments and the improbability of being inclusive of food system stakeholders illustrated problems with and arguments against the concept:

“I don’t know if you need to create a bureaucracy around food…I think people would like to see it as “oh this would be great then you can put everything under that umbrella” but the thing is in reality food systems (are) a lot of different things…and it encompasses so many different kinds of departments and not even just departments, people, who are not part of government, who are out there as residents…they’re not necessarily part of a department nor would they want to be, right. So I think it’s really a matter of…how do we always keep this food systems perspective without having to bureaucratise it or create red tape around it…departments can create more obstacles than solutions and create more rhetoric than action.”

Another interviewee (11A) also described fundamental problems with government administration indicating that NGOs would always need to exist external to departments and agencies, even departments of food, to avoid stagnation:

“How can we get the city, in carrying out its duties, to see food as an important part of what they do and that it’s an important service and it’s an important responsibility and whether ultimately they end up with a Department of Food, that
still does not supplant the need for an organisation outside of it ‘cause the city only…has a certain set of standards it works within and a certain range of responsibility…government structures basically institutionalise a concept and then they work within that framework and it’s inherent to the success that…other groups need to be outside that and keep pushing and poking and pulling and moving ‘cause governments want to move towards stability and not change…things don’t get solved by creating a government structure. I think it’s only a vehicle.”

This argument demonstrates some valid reasoning for the existence of FPC type organisations as NGOs. Given that a majority of interviewees and others see linkages to government, it is suggested that the type of group described by Interviewee 11A be defined as another, although associated, type of organisation.

Several interviewees described alternatives to the department of food. The majority of these alternatives resembled food policy council models with certain changes or additions to structure and function. Interviewee 11A for example felt that, instead of a department of food, a group similar to that of a food policy council could be implemented provided that this group was located at the highest level of government, such as a mayor’s or governor’s office, to provide the authority needed over other government organisations in dealing with food system issues:
“I think that there should be though some integrated function that would be very high level around some of these things and for us it would have to be on the level of the Mayor’s Office probably to have any power, because there’s already groups not doing what they need or departments not doing what they necessarily need to be doing and you know short of having this scandal in the paper or the Mayor’s Office coming down on them, they probably won’t move faster.”

Creation of “supervisory” councils in high level departments, such as that described above by Interviewee 11A, was a common interest and proposed alternative of several interviewees. Interviewee 1, despite the interest of FPC 1 in the concept during formative stages, reasoned that there already exist too many government agencies and that planning issues in community food systems are too intricate to be dealt with by one agency as an authority directing communities on how to manage and plan for their food system. This interviewee stressed that a singular department or agency was inadequate or too limited to manage the scope of community food planning and the unique issues of different areas and neighbourhoods. Although this interviewee did not explicitly suggest an alternative type of organisation for handling food system issues and planning, the value of the food policy council was implied. The proposed alternative or suggestion focused on an expansion of the facilitation of community groups and community consultation role of the FPC. In some senses, food systems perspectives should be institutionalized such that this perception translates into food work done widely throughout and by the community.
Interviewee 13 was similarly against the proposed department of food concept, reasoning that it would marginalize certain issues, or certain aspects of food issues, and would not have the capacity to coordinate as a council can since existing policy prevents removing issues from one department and placing them in another. It was suggested that in order to achieve the coordination of food issues which cut across jurisdictions, joint council and city/state projects should be created and efforts made to institutionalize a food systems perspective within already existing departments.

Creating a municipal, regional, or state level department of food illustrates one method of institutionalizing food systems perspectives and planning within the various levels of government. Food policy councils demonstrate another already employed method to creating alternative agrifood institutions and achieving these goals. While some disadvantages may exist in creating the department of food, with appropriate financial and resource support, strong structural models, and community consultation frameworks, food policy councils may possess significant capacity for achieving change and institutionalization of food systems perspectives, policy, and planning within existing administrative structures. In some respects, the existence of a municipal, regional, or state level department of food and a food policy council simultaneously may be beneficial. While the department of food can provide authority and resources for comprehensive food systems planning and policy, food policy councils (unburdened by the bureaucratic structure of the department) can simultaneously provide avenues for innovation in this and other political structures. Food policy councils or high level supervisory bodies could serve to coordinate among government agencies with the
authority and in a manner not achievable by other or lower level departments. To coordinate and institutionalize in this respect, food policy council roles, functions, and activities, demand a focus on networking and more specifically on education about food systems and sustainability.

5.7 Food Policy Councils as Educators in Sustainability and Food Systems

Overall, interviews and research revealed the primary functions, demonstrated and proposed, of food policy councils as coordination points and through this networking, as communicators and educators on sustainability and food systems. Communication and education occurs at two different levels. The first level involves education of staff, members, and their constituents. The second level involves coordinating communication among and education of entire communities including government agencies, businesses, other organisations, community groups, and individuals. Communicating ideas, information, and education also occurs through a variety of outlets. Some of these outlets are based in project activities of FPCs such as information booths and events, publication of informational material, and e-communication technologies. Other outlets for this communication relate to the facilitation of other individuals and groups for the implementation of project ideas and educational activities that occur as a component of FPC meetings. Some more nebulous outlets of communication exist as well in respect to a continuous exchange of knowledge and information among council participants and
their constituent organisations, governments, businesses, non-profit organisations, community groups, and the public.

Communication, information exchange, and education for council members surfaced as one the foremost interests and concerns of interviewees. The State and Local Food Policy Councils project (2006) highlights the importance of information-sharing activities in that FPCs:

“can be an effective and efficient process to provide education and share information where people involved in all different parts of the food system and government can meet to learn more about what each does and consider how their actions impact other parts of the food system.”

There is a strong focus of FPCs on education and communication evidenced in the activities of the entire FPC community and the information and viewpoints revealed by interviewees. Interviewee 3B felt that there existed a general and vested interest among the public in learning about food issues and helping to increase food security. The FPC then played the lead role in facilitating this education and communication of knowledge or experience:

“I really am of the belief that everybody wants to make a difference and everybody would like to do good things, and for the world to work well. And so sometimes we need to just, you know, let people know how they can help make
that happen. And I think people are ready to be educated about things and learn
how to do things better.”

Reflecting on the outcomes of the FPC, another interviewee felt that the enduring legacy
of connections and shift from conventional to food systems perspectives among
participants was the most significant result and achievement of the group. This
interviewee also reflected on the value of information exchange during meetings as a
component of this outcome. Food policy council meetings were revealed as a crucial
point for educational and communication activities. In the case mentioned above, food
policy council meetings allowed at least one hour, of a two-hour meeting, exclusively for
information-sharing among participants. Other interviewees indicated a similar focus.
Interviewee 8 identified “educating ourselves to make our food system more effective
and improve it move it forward” as one of the most significant accomplishments of the
organisation.

Meetings served functions other than simply establishing priorities, organising, and
maintaining members’ interest. Although including outside speakers, allowing time to
share resources and information, and inviting outside participants during formal meeting
times serves a crucial organisational stability function in maintaining the interest and
participation of members, the education, networking, and communication that occurs
through these avenues plays a more fundamental role in achieving a greater awareness
and understanding of food policy council concerns and activities. The majority of
interviewees described the inclusion of presentations from outside individuals and
organisations as an integral component of food policy council meetings. As one interviewee stated, at FPC meetings “you don’t just talk business but you bring in somebody with a new idea.” Although for some of the more recently formed councils this activity had not become a regular agenda item, it was intended to expand upon and include presentations as a standard meeting component. Presentations usually focus on topics of interest to the food policy council members. They may be based on topics or speakers suggested by council members, items related to council priorities, on the proposal of the presenter, or organised by staff to shift or manage the FPC’s focus and priorities. Several interviewees described the invitation of certain speakers as a deliberate move to educate and focus the conversation of the FPC on particular subjects. For example, Interviewee 7 articulated a growing concern for the linkages between food and energy (oil) which demanded education of participants on the nature and specifics of the issue.

“Our food policy’s gotta be based on an oil policy or an energy policy. And so, we’ll be working, girding up, the food policy council to become a battering ram on that issue and to have the education and knowledge to move it out.”

Inviting outside speakers represents one avenue for the food policy council to educate, connect, and communicate with external organisations and individuals. Interviewee 3A described the mutual benefits gained by members and outside participants through the invitation to others for presentations at FPC meetings:
‘On occasion…we would invite people to the meetings who would tell us what they’re doing….and they would always be surprised that this meeting even existed, that this group of people existed, and they would tell us what they’re doing and then we would suggest, you know “have you contacted this person?” because we’re a wealth of knowledge.’

Another interviewee described the importance of remaining knowledgeable about programs and activities occurring in the wider community. Regular presentations were held during council meetings to achieve this and to instigate discussion around related program, project, or policy recommendations.

‘We had them make a presentation about that so kind of a “let’s talk about some really great programs out there that are really kind of breaking barriers” and that got all the council members talking and like “oh, we should do this and that and this” and it was really great’ (Interviewee 8).

Institutionalizing and education about food systems perspectives occurs through the networks and affiliate organisations of members as well. FPC members gaining new knowledge and broadening networks through their involvement with the council, communicate ideas and project proposals to their constituent organisations so that the sphere of education and influence grows wider. Interviewee 1 describes the experience of the food policy council in educating government representatives and agencies through the networks and communication of FPC members:
“The comments we got from people, from other city council members and the mayor at the (beginning) were like: “boy, when you brought this up we just didn’t know what you were…we just sort of went along with it but I think you’re kind of ahead of us on it and I see the connection here.” So… it felt like we sort of cleared the bar of relevance and I think of making this and food something we would look at as a local government. So I think…that is one of the bigger things that we’ve (done), apart from any of the specific projects, I think part of the effort to elevate the importance of the issues and help people look for some of those connections.’

Organisations which were not consciously aware of their relationship to the food system gained insight into the influence of their activities in certain areas. Interviewee 8 described raising the awareness of participants and constituent organisations that did not previously recognise their influence on food system health and sustainability. Raising this awareness was described as another of the most significant accomplishments of the FPC:

‘Sometimes we would get a little bit of…“I’m not exactly sure why I am here” but, like I said, I see that as being one of the larger accomplishments of what we’re trying to do because then we say well you know “yeah, the Department of Human Services has a huge role. I mean you’re implementing the federal food stamp program” and usually it’s like “oh yeah, well let’s try to think about it.’”
While this describes an interaction with one particular department, similar encounters describing this aspect of FPCs’ roles as vehicles for communication and education with government agencies, officials, and other organisations were indicated by this and several other interviewees. Educating FPC participants also aids in avoiding duplication of other programs and confirming the role of the group not as a tool for implementation but as a mechanism for networking and increasing the capacity for other programs to carry out activities:

‘Another role that we feel that is really important for us to play is to not duplicate or reinvent the wheel of other initiatives and collaborations and efforts that are already under way. What we’re learning is that there is a lot of good work going on…we keep hearing every once in a while “well aren’t, isn’t this gonna duplicate what group ‘x’ is doing or something like that” and we just explain that we’re not looking to do all those things but we’re looking to connect the dots and to find out what is all going on and also what else we could do’ (Interviewee 8).

Outside of the direct lines of communication between members, staff, and constituent organisations, FPCs also engage significantly in communicating principles of sustainable food systems with communities, the public, and partner organisations through project implementation activities. One form of this type of communication occurs through release of informational materials, use of communications technologies, and participation in celebrations or events, while another form relates to the facilitation of partners to carry out FPC program and project ideas. Informational materials published by FPCs include
resources such as “buy local” guides, published reports (such as food system assessment reports), educational or informational brochures, newsletters, or guidebooks. These materials act as an important vehicle for public education on sustainability and food systems, the roles and activities of the food policy council, and guides for public involvement in food systems work. Publication and distribution of these materials can form an important foundation for the overall effort and other activities of the FPC:

“We probably will start focussing a little more on…development of more literature and fact sheets and education about the role of food in preventing disease and that sort of thing. Communications is a big part of our total effort. We have a good website. We have a newsletter going to about seven or eight thousand people that really talks a lot about the council and our work and so we’re bringing a lot of public awareness to the whole issue and all in hopes, you know, that some day all of these forces will come together” (Interviewee 10).

All of the FPCs interviewed, with the exception of two very recently formed, had published and distributed informational brochures and participated in collaborative efforts to publish food guides or some type of food system assessment. In contrast, virtually all of the food policy councils shied away from and avoided contact with external media such as radio, newspapers, journals, or television. A few interviewees mentioned that although media exposure was not sought after, requests for interviews would in most cases not be turned down. Interviewee 6 described the interest of the media in pursuing interviews with the FPC and others on one particular issue as useful for indicating public
interest and where to direct the focus of activities:

“We had media asking us for interviews…It was all extremely positive. It felt
great that that was something clearly that (the public) could get behind and see as
a positive thing for the (community) and there were…excellent articles on buying
locally and exposing the issue…just days before the interview that we did…So
that was really great and that’s why we’re feeling that the buy local initiative is
very strong right now and there is incredible interest around it so that’s what
we’re focussing on.”

Three different reasons were indicated however for general avoidance of the media.
Some simply reported a lack of interest in pursuing these lines of communication while
others cited a potential danger in attracting possible adverse attention of public officials
or organisations that could threaten the stability of FPC political, public, and resource
support. One interviewee cited an additional reason, describing part of the FPC role in
facilitating other individuals and organisations as allowing these groups to take the
recognition for achievements. In many ways, allowing politicians and struggling non-
profits to take recognition through the media and otherwise helps the FPC to gain much-
needed and valuable political capital.

Another method for enabling communication and education of the public occurs through
the use of communications technologies such as e-mail, electronic newsletters, listserves,
and websites. Virtually all FPCs maintain a website providing general and sometimes more specific information on membership, ordinances, organisational structure, meetings, accomplishments, publications, and activities. The types of informational materials mentioned above may also be published on FPC websites. Online publication of “buy local” or food guides has been attempted by some FPCs with considerable success, significantly increasing the number of visitors to websites. One interviewee described the usefulness of using online publication for increasing the number of website visitors and awareness about FPC activities:

“It was a very practical, small in scale although a very comprehensive endeavour but it has been very useful. It has been successful at raising awareness about people using local food and I think raising awareness about the (FPC) and the number of people coming to our website has I would say almost doubled” (Interviewee 9A).

E-mail communication, listserves, and electronic newsletters have also increased in use among FPCs as a tool for communication among members as well as education and outreach to the public. The Toronto Food Policy Council created a listserv which appeared to significantly increase awareness of FPC activities and issues related to food system sustainability. Prior to initiating the listserv and regular electronic newsletters, the FPC office received about one call per week. Once the listserv was established and
subscription grew to 500, calls increased to one per day. When subscription increased to 750 addresses, calls to the FPC increased to two per day\textsuperscript{45}, a significant increase over one per week.

Communication and public education also occurs through hosting or participating in conferences and other events. Hosting events or conferences can be quite time-demanding and needs to be considered carefully before implementation in terms of logistics, resources, and volunteer time available. However, this type of activity can serve as an excellent avenue for attracting public attention, raising awareness, and education. Another method for participation in public events and celebrations can occur through holding information stalls or otherwise participating in events hosted by other organisations. This expands educational opportunities while avoiding some of the pressures and responsibilities associated with organising conferences, forums, and other affairs.

Another significant aspect of the communication and education role of FPCs relates to their involvement in the facilitation of other groups for the implementation of recommendations and projects. One of the most crucial stability and survival methods for food policy councils involves communicating, networking, and facilitating, through

\textsuperscript{45} This increase in calls was reported by the staff person as triggered by and pertaining to matters addressed in the listserv/newsletters.
education, other groups to take over project implementation. This was frequently
described by interviewees as a significant role or responsibility of the FPC:

“I think that’s part of the commission’s responsibility is, you know in any good
project the best thing you can do is educate other people about the project so that
it’s not, we don’t need be the end-all, do-it-all people” (Interviewee 4a).

In addition to communicating with and educating other groups for project
implementation, FPCs facilitate the creation of other groups or networks to share
information and learn amongst themselves. One example of this was a skill, capacity,
network building conference for immigrant farmers held by the Portland-Multnomah
Food Policy Council which led to the creation of a network and non-profit advocacy
group for these farmers. One interviewee mentioned a similar type of activity, describing
the creation of “learning communities” to facilitate communication among and education
of farmers on sustainable practices:

“That’s been really successful …trying to create these learning communities for
farmers and interns and others to come together and share on sustainable practices
and helping people who are interns on farms start their own farm, gain the skills
that they need in order to start the farm” (Interviewee 9A).

Another interviewee described the interest of an overseas government in the activities of
the FPC. In this situation the food policy council provided information and education for
the foreign government on the value of food work for people living with AIDS.

Following implementation of some of the provided examples and ideas, the government returned to the FPC to learn about further uses of food programs as a tool in social work:

‘As a result of coming here they started a good food box program and community gardening because I showed them “here’s how if you’re gonna live positively with AIDS. You do it with food.” So, and they just came back for a second tour on how to use work with food to influence youth’ (Interviewee 7).

Food policy councils can act as a “hub of knowledge” or a resource and learning centre for those interested in food systems work and activities. While, as noted above,

Interviewee 3A illustrated this in relation to FPC meetings, other interviewees described this in a more general sense:

“I think what’s been really important is to bring about awareness of food systems and how people, existing people, can already work together or you know create the energy to work together to do something” (Interviewee 11B).

“That the (FPC) would be a hub of information that people could access and find out if they wanted to join a collective kitchen what would they do, if they wanted to start a collective kitchen what would they do, do they want to be a member of a CSA what should they do, do they want to learn about canning, like all of those
sort of basics of food security entry points that the (FPC) would be a hub of that information and skills building as a basis for doing some of the other work. So that’s definitely our focus right now is building that very basic awareness in the community” (Interviewee 6).

5.8 Conclusion

Ultimately education, including communication and networking as important components of this activity, is a primary element of the organisational role and function of food policy councils. While FPCs work to build their own capacity to promote community food security and sustainable food systems, essentially they seek to build the capacity for others to do that for themselves through educating, networking, and capacity building. Implementation of programs should not be a single-handed or central activity. It can even be counter-productive to the underlying current of educating and capacity building. Using resources, knowledge, and ideas to help others implement programs is where the strength lies to institutionalise food systems perspectives. The education of a broader public is occurring through not the FPCs’ but the public’s hands-on implementation of programs. In building the capacity of others to implement, and in educating, the food policy council builds “political capital” and capacity to move further in the sustainable development of food systems. Building “political capital” or influencing government decision-making, policy, and planning remains a primary goal in these efforts. All of the FPCs represented in interviews, whether government, non-government, or hybrid organisations, suggested
this as one of, or the, central premises in their existence as a FPC and understanding of
the “food policy council” concept. Winne (2006) suggests that, due to the variation in
organisational structure and activities among different councils, a basic, comprehensive,
and all-inclusive definition for FPCs would indicate that these organisations are cross-
sectoral, multi-stakeholder councils created for the purpose of influencing government
policy, planning, and other decision-making. Working with this basic definition, we can
then move on to examine how FPCs, through structuring of administrative components
and operations, can build capacity to fulfil their organisational roles. The following
chapters examine the various components of administrative and operational capacity
building. These components then point towards administrative models for food policy
councils that prove effective in fulfilling the functions and roles of food policy councils
as identified above.
Chapter 6: Food Policy Council Structure: Fostering Organisational and Member Capacity

6.1 Introduction

The following two chapters begin to examine some of the results of research organised according to a progression through the stages of forming a food policy council. This progression moves from the creation/formation/establishment stage of FPCs to the formalisation of administrative structure.

The first section of this chapter examines pathways to creating a food policy council as experienced in the five different locations where FPCs had recently been formed (within the past 2 years). These experiences are then summarised to highlight the barriers that may be encountered and the steps that may aid with managing barriers to establishing a food policy council.

The subsequent three sections consider what follows from the creation/establishment stage of food policy councils: developing an administrative structure. This discussion examines those elements relevant to the investigation of FPC structure as identified in Chapter 4:
1. Organisational type
2. Relationship with government
3. Institutional alignment
4. Formalised processes (organisational documents; evaluation)
5. Staff
6. Members
7. Diversity and relationships with external organisations

The first of these sections examines the results of analysis related to components 1 to 4 above. Components 5 and 6 are investigated in the second and third sections respectively. The seventh component was revealed through analysis as closely related to membership issues and is therefore also considered in the third and last section of the chapter.

Following the examination of the formation and various components structure, Chapter 7 moves on to explore elements of FPC process and procedures.

The information presented in these next two chapters builds on that of Chapter 5. This occurs through an evaluation that will seek to identify formal structures and processes that facilitate the FPC in meeting those organisational roles identified in the preceding chapter. This evaluation also looks to some of the foundations of organisation theory discussed in Chapter 3. More specifically, this considers structural aspects and relationships that can help to build organisational, member, relationship, and
programmatic capacity for FPCs. However, as discussed in Section 4.2, collaboration theory provided a simple framework for inquiry and was not used as a measure for analysis. For this reason, the following discussions do not explicitly discuss or use collaboration theory as a measure for evaluation.

This evaluation also seeks to determine whether any similarities exist among experiences which indicate more effective structure arrangements or structural models for food policy councils. As interviews provided the most substantial source of data for this study, the findings presented here are drawn primarily from this source with some additional data drawn from FPC organisational and working documents.

### 6.2 Steps and Barriers Involved in the Formation of Food Policy Councils

Of the food policy councils represented in interviews, six had been established since 2002. The councils in this group, those aged less than four years, considered themselves to be in or just emerging from their formative stages. These councils additionally held the institutional memory to recount early stages of formation whereas several of the older FPCs had been through changes of staff and members such that much of the institutional memory related to information on formative years was not readily available. The six councils of this early age group were invited to recount histories of their formation
reflecting on the steps involved and barriers encountered in creation of the food policy
council. Due to the uniqueness of each case, the histories are recounted individually.
Similarities among histories are then considered in light of the factors and steps involved
in formation of a food policy council.

6.2.1 Food Policy Council 2

For several years prior to establishment support for raising awareness around food system
issues in the FPC’s area had grown significantly. Organisations and events had been
established to bring together those interested in food issues. Interviewee 2A indicated
that ‘years ago, ten years ago….we would hold large public forums and try to rally up the
energy and get everybody behind it….probably annually there would be a conference or a
workshop…that would pull together anybody involved in food in the (area) and the
intent, the underlying intent, was always around supporting food policy…underneath
there was always the “is there enough energy here to push this issue farther?”
Immediately prior to a request from the respective government for an investigation into
forming a food policy council three unique events coincided. The first event was an
amendment to regulations concerning an issue of food access that had been lobbied for
over several years. At the same time there was a change of government such that “people
who got food were on council” (Interviewee 2A). The third event was one of the annual
conferences, as referred to previously, where elected officials showed support and
attended. These three events led to a motion from the government to form a group with
the charge of developing a “sustainable food policy” and plan for methods to support this
policy. The group recommended the establishment of a food policy council and, following adoption of this recommendation by government, created the organisational structure for the council. The process of creating the organisational structure for the council as recounted by both interviewees at this location involved certain government staff researching and creating several options for different models or aspects of organisational structure such as membership and subcommittees. The group would be presented with these options at meetings and asked to choose which option or model should be put in place. In consideration of some of the organisational difficulties encountered by the council following formation, both interviewees indicated that this process was not entirely effective. Interviewee 2B felt that during the group process of preparing the organisational structure for the FPC “what happened in retrospect is that many of us came to those taskforce meetings, myself included, not completely prepared with the information…we made choices that in the end probably didn’t come up to what (were) the best working choices, like the most practical.” Interviewee 2a further supported this impression stating that after the council had begun meeting “six months into it and people realising that it wasn’t looking the way that they had initially imagined it to look…it’s one of those situations where people weren’t able to articulate what they wanted at the beginning and it wasn’t until you’re into something and you realise that this isn’t what you want and you still don’t actually know what you want but you know that this isn’t (it).”
6.2.2 Food Policy Council 1

As indicated by Interviewee 1 the motivation behind formation in this location initiated with a group of individuals expressing interest in developing a food policy council. This group approached a government official with the proposal to create a food policy council. A committee was assigned within a particular government office to “help look at that idea and come back with a proposal” (Interviewee 1). The committee organised a forum to bring together a larger group of people and organisations with interests in the food systems that “was just a chance to kind of validate that there was an interest in these issues from a broad spectrum of people and that fed into…the resolution” (Interviewee 1). A resolution including input from the forum was drafted by committee and adopted by government including a mandate to report back in one year with recommendations. No significant barriers to formation of the FPC were indicated.

6.2.3 Food Policy Council 5

The interest in forming Food Policy Council 5 began with a food system oriented non-profit organisation in this location receiving recommendations from a FPC in another location to investigate policy and advocacy work outside of the non-profit, NGO arena. The organisation formed a small working group including an advisor from another established FPC to investigate the possibility and work towards obtaining an ordinance from the government to officially sanction a council. Interviewee 5 indicated that there already existed a significant amount of interest in food issues in the area from various...
organisations and post-secondary institutions. A proposal was presented to the government which then held a public hearing for the proposal. A study reporting on food insecurity in the area, several influential speakers, and support from some elected officials was significant in gaining the support of and approval by the government of the proposal. Following approval, the working group of the non-profit continued to work on establishing organisational structure and identifying potential members. At the time of the interview this group is still in the very early stages of formation and did not report on any barriers to the development of organisational structure. The most significant barrier reported was the difficulty of explaining the concepts related to food policy councils such as ‘food system’ and ‘community food security’.

6.2.4 Food Policy Council 8

The formation of FPC 8 demonstrated some unique qualities compared to the others interviewed especially in that interest in creating a food policy council in this location originated from within government. The rarity of government-initiated interest in food policy councils is also noted by Interviewee 6 in reference to another government’s interest in forming a food policy council:

“They are the municipal staff and they are initiating contact with the community to try and get a food (policy) council going, which I’ve never heard of, like usually it’s community members that are trying to get municipalities involved and
At the outset, several high-level government officials connected with two influential non-profits and a post-secondary institution in the area. The project of drafting proposals for funding from one of the involved NGOs and for government approval was assigned to government staff. The staff also worked on researching and developing the organisational structure and other protocol for the council. There were no significant barriers to formation. One issue in the process of formation as indicated by Interviewee 8 was the length of time, nearly three years, between the initiation of interest and approval of the proposal so that the FPC was quite slow in “getting started.”

6.2.5 Food Policy Council 6

Food Policy Council 6 was established primarily through the efforts of a community group. For several years prior to establishment this group, in some cases working with government, published reports profiling food security in the region and hosting forums, workshops, conferences, community consultations, and other events around related issues. A proposal was developed by this group, and eventually approved by government, to create a food council. The group and newly appointed staff person worked on developing the organisational structure for the council. No significant barriers in creating the council were identified. However, after approximately a year and a half the council became dysfunctional. Several issues were identified by Interviewee 6 as
having led to the difficulties. Since the identified issues and barriers relate more closely to the organisational structure of the council than to the process of creating that structure they will be discussed in the sections dealing explicitly with organisational structure.

6.2.6 Summary of Steps and Barriers Involved in Establishment

Despite several unique factors and events involved in the formation of each of these councils a few striking similarities exist. All of the councils considered establishment through a government ordinance as essential. Interviewees indicated that the organisations of stakeholders drawn together with an interest in cross-sectoral collaborative work on food issues were not food policy councils prior to formal recognition and establishment under a government agency. With the exception of FPC 8, all of the councils also held events or forums to draw together potentially interested stakeholders from across the food system. Four of the five FPCs also reported engaging in significant amounts of research in the process of creating the organisational structure for the council. The process used by FPC 2 should be of significant note here in reflecting upon the inadequacies of these methods as reported by council members and staff after formation. The most significant differences in the processes used to create food councils related to those who initiated the idea of forming a food policy council: whether it was government, private, or community-based interest. Only two significant barriers to formation were identified. One of the barriers was encountered by FPC 2 as noted above in relation to developing the organisational structure. The other involved a lack of
familiarity with food system terms and concepts.

While the creation of these FPCs revealed some key steps and barriers involved with formation, the question remained of what are the advantages and disadvantages of different organisational structures of food policy councils and how do these structures function and deal with barriers to setting and working on priorities. The following section summarises the viewpoints expressed by interviewees in order to identify the characteristics of FPC structure and those pathways to ‘best-practice’ structure and process.

6.3 Organisational Capacity and the Administrative Foundations of Food Policy Councils

The following sections examine the information and opinions gathered through interviews and primary documents related to organisational capacity in terms of formalisation, human and financial resources. Formalised processes and resources form the administrative foundation for food policy councils. FPCs’ formalised administrative foundation is established through the ways in which they define organisational type and food sector alignment, create organisational documents, and secure funding. These components of administrative structure were explored to identify any underlying similarities in experience, opinion, or challenges. Underlying similarities may indicate some potential best-practice approaches to basic administrative arrangements among FPCs. This information will then be synthesized in Chapter 8 to examine potential best-
practice organisational structure for FPCs and, in reflection upon a well-accepted opinion that FPCs all develop and demand unique structures, to establish the validity and legitimacy of creating ‘FPC models’.

In the primary stages of structuring, FPCs confront several basic, fundamental administrative issues which act as the foundations for further structural arrangements. One of the first choices confronted when establishing a FPC as a formal organisation is that of organisational type. This choice emerges from the history of these organisations where the characteristics even in their most basic administrative arrangements have varied greatly, with some food policy councils operating as private organisations and some in the public sphere. Organisational type as it relates to FPCs concerns the option between establishment as a private, non-profit organisation or as a public organisation based in and funded by government. When established as government organisations FPCs demonstrate a further administrative variation. This variation concerns the alignment of food policy councils with a particular food sector through sponsorship within an individual government agency. Organisational documents also play a role in establishing administrative structure and may vary between FPCs in the degree of importance and formalised processes and procedures included in the documents. Whether government or non-profit, since FPCs historically have faced difficulties in securing adequate funding to operate this section also examines experiences and viewpoints concerning the types of resources and amount of funding needed to secure these resources.

These aspects form the basis and foundation upon which are built the other aspects of
leadership, member capacity, relationship capacity, and programmatic capacity.

Organisational type (whether government or NGO), food sector alignment, degree of formalisation, and funding and other resources are the basic building blocks for FPCs. In regards to the observed variation among food policy councils in the use of these ‘building blocks’, the following section examines the arrangements and opinions of FPCs and their interviewees to elicit an understanding of which administrative structures are most effective in building this basic capacity to support capacity building in terms of leadership, members, relationships, and programs.

6.3.1 Organisational Type and Food Sector Alignment of Food Policy Councils

Organisations, unless operating as informal associations, face the need in the initial stages of incorporation for formal establishment as a particular organisational type such as non-profit, for-profit, or through foundation in government. Food policy councils face the need to make such a decision as a preliminary and foundational administrative consideration. Throughout the history of these organisations, the administrative foundations of food policy councils have varied as to what type of organisation they are established and operate as, whether private or public. This variation raises the question of whether one organisational type may be more efficient or appropriate than another. FPCs usually operate as non-profit organisations, government entities, or some combination of the two.
Establishment as government or hybrid entities subsequently leads FPCs to be housed within a particular government office, agency, or department. Establishment within a government department can demonstrate alignment with, and sometimes predisposition to, a particular food sector. Given the numerous government departments involved with food system issues, FPCs throughout their history have inevitably demonstrated variation in aligning with different government departments and food sectors. This variation raises a question of whether alignment with a particular department, office, or food sector can prove more advantageous to accomplishing the goals of the FPC.

Of the FPCs interviewed, three operated primarily as non-profits in that there existed no formal recognition of the organisation as a government entity and no consistent stream of funding or in-kind resources from their respective government areas. FPC 9, although engaged with government staff and programs, deliberately expressed no interest in becoming or being part of a government entity. Interviewee 9B discussed the fact that this issue was carefully considered when forming the FPC and the reasoning why the conscious decision was made to remain a non-profit:

“At the time that we consciously made that decision there were a lot of people urging us to see if we could get associated with a government entity and it just, I mean to me it’s more a question of style and purpose …I guess for me it’s just

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46 This alignment may be superficial or may in fact direct the focus of programs and interests for the food policy council.
difficult to operate within a system and at the same time propose alternatives to that system you know, so if you can just be outside of the whole thing.”

Another five of the councils represented in interviews existed as what might be seen as hybrids between government and non-profit organisations. These councils were all formally associated with government through ordinances or executive orders. One exception existed where despite the absence of an ordinance the FPC formally existed as a project within a government agency. These councils usually received some nominal funding or in-kind resources from the government. However, their funding primarily stemmed from external grants or financial supporters. The remaining five councils were government organisations in that they were formally recognised through ordinances or as projects of a department and received significant salary or resource support from government. The interviewees of these two groups, with the exception of the council that was not recognised by an ordinance, all felt that formal recognition by government was an important issue and crucial preliminary consideration. When questioned as to whether or not this issue was viewed as important one Interviewee 2A replied:

“Oh, absolutely. I think it gives us three-quarters of the credibility that we have.”

Interviewee 1 expressed a similar viewpoint saying that those involved in the formation of the council “really wanted the link to the government decision-makers…that was important to a lot of the people involved.”
Two interviewees demonstrated a notably strong emphasis on the importance of establishment as a part of government. The primary financial supporter for FPC 8 “was interested in supporting (the food policy council) if the (food policy council) was going to have the authority to have some, some strength behind its charge and it was kind of viewed that the strongest way to have some strength behind its charge was to have it be an executive order.” Similarly, the funder “was really interested in supporting a council that was going to have the connection and the power” (Interviewee 8). Interviewee 7 expressed a similar opinion, indicating that a FPC not aligned with government was not worthwhile.

In conjunction with the determination of organisational type, FPCs attached to government also face the consideration of which agency or department to be housed within. Given the cross-cutting, cross-sectoral nature of “food work”, food policy councils could exist within any number of government agencies. At the state level, there appears greater similarity in the choice of which department to work within. As demonstrated by those represented in interviews and a review of additional FPCs’ administrative arrangements, government mandated food policy councils at the state level exist almost without exception within state departments of agriculture. These councils also appear to be much more involved, though not exclusively as would an “agriculture policy council”, with activities and interests related to agriculture and farming. Establishment within a department of agriculture seems a logical approach given the more obvious association of agriculture to food issues compared to other government agencies. At regional and local levels, departments of agriculture do not commonly exist.
At this government level, with the absence of transparently food-related agencies such as agriculture, FPCs demonstrate greater variation in the types of government departments that they are housed within. To illustrate this, the departments within which food policy councils at local and regional levels exist include departments of public health, community health, social services, social planning, environmental health, environment and natural resources, planning, sustainable development, and mayors’ or central offices. While great variety exists among this sample, the majority of local and regional FPCs are associated with public and community health agencies through their historically specific concern for issues related to nutrition and food security. While many of the agencies listed above may seem to be a logical choice for location of a local, government mandated FPC, there may be disadvantages to certain departments. As an example, the foremost concern of public health departments is with communicable disease. The concern for this will almost always outweigh any other issues such that FPCs in health departments will constantly face the challenge of gaining attention and support within their own department. Speaking to the issue of which department a food policy could or should be located in Interviewee 7 commented that:

“The problem of a food policy council in some cases is: where are you located in the city…and people think: yeah we got problems with obesity and hunger and those are sort of public health kinds of problems. But I could just as logically be in Works. I could just as logically be in Community and Social Services. I could just as logically be in Planning. I’m most logically in Planning…From a logical point of view they’re all problematic…and they all have opportunities. The
problem in public health is the number one responsibility of a medical officer of health, that they live or die on, is communicable disease…that’s (the) problem in public health is that you’re always considered to be important but you’re never gonna be a priority.”

In spite of the above exception, most interviewees did not express significant concern with or challenges related to alignment with particular departments. The issue of whether or not certain food sector alignments are more advantageous may demand further investigation given the variety of departments within which food policy councils could be located and the apparent advantages and disadvantages of each. Despite inconsistency in clearly identifying the advantages and disadvantages of aligning with certain government departments, interviews revealed the determination of organisational type, whether government, non-government/non-profit, or hybrid, as an important consideration when creating a food policy council.

All but one of the FPCs interviewed (92.3%) indicated that formal recognition by or association with government played a critical role in gaining the necessary resources, networks, contacts, or authority to fulfil the mandate of the food policy council. Formal association with government can then be identified as an important component of fulfilling the organisational roles and of building organisational capacity for these organisations.

Interviews revealed no consistent response as to the most appropriate government agency
for alignment. FPCs often establish within a particular government agency as a result of
the opportunity offered by this agency instead of the particular preference of the council.
The issue of which agency would prove ideal for FPCs is complex in that different
locations demonstrate variety in the administration and politics of their local and regional
governments. These differences will influence the authority given to any one department
or sections within departments. For example, in some cases establishment in the mayor’s
office may provide a high degree of authority while in others there may exist so many
mayor’s committees or councils that the FPC becomes lost in the administrative abyss.
Ultimately, FPCs need to determine which agency, office, or department will provide the
latitude to work equally among all food system sectors and the relatively highest degree
of authority in their local or regional government area.

There is another aspect of organisational structure that may be considered as a defining
characteristic of organisational type. This aspect relates to the question: Are the members
of FPCs individuals, organisations, or both? While members of FPCs are generally
individuals, they will often act in some capacities as representatives of their
organisations. This question of the roles of members and their relationship to the
operation of FPCs is addressed in more detail in Sections 6.5 and 7.3.2.

6.3.2 Organisational Documents and Evaluation
In addition to deciding on organisational type, FPCs can establish formalised processes and procedures through the creation of documents and through the application of protocol for evaluation. These components of formalisation can perform an overarching function in establishing and maintaining administrative structure while being responsive and able to adapt to internal and external changes.

Organisational documents can be used to set structure and clearly delineate roles, responsibilities, and operational protocol. Of the thirteen FPCs interviewed, bylaws or terms of reference were held by nine groups, all of whom referred to these as important organisational documents. These documents primarily address membership numbers, representation, terms served by members, appointment procedures, and vision, goals, or mandate of the FPC. Few documents addressed the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the organisation. Only two of the FPCs interviewed had created documents explicitly dealing with the issues of roles and responsibilities prior to formation. In one case, the setting of member and staff responsibilities was strictly adhered to and proved beneficial for the council’s operation. In the second case, the function of the council, members, and staff strayed from the roles and responsibilities set out in the organisational document. As indicated by Interviewees 2A and 2B, a lack of clarity and adherence to these guidelines led to different interpretations of the responsibilities of staff and members. The problems associated with delineating these roles were indicated by the interviewees as caused by an inadequate process used for establishing these guidelines prior to the election of council members and commencement of meetings. Members and staff felt misled in that what they felt had been established during the initial process, and
indicated in the protocol handbooks, did not coincide with what occurred once meetings of the FPC had commenced:

‘Well it was established that those were the terms of reference that’s how that, it would work. But I think what happened was people started to look back at the (initial) process and said “we didn’t realise that this is what we were choosing.”…We made choices that in the end probably didn’t come up to what was the best working choices, like the most practical. So in retrospect the council’s looking back and saying “hoo, maybe it isn’t the best way for us to do our work”’ (Interviewee 2B).

In light of these issues FPC 2 engaged in a process of self-evaluation shortly after formation to amend some of the problems encountered or potentially faced in terms of vision, focus, and delineation of roles and responsibilities. The process used for evaluation involved members in facilitated, in-camera sessions closed to staff. An outcome of evaluation processes for this council included a change to meeting agenda structure to aid in clarification of the relationship between staff and council members and their responsibilities. FPC 6 also encountered problems in relation to the interpretation of staff and member responsibilities shortly after formation leading to a near disintegration and disbanding of the council. No formal process of self-evaluation had been undertaken for the council. At the time of interview, this FPC was in the process of creating a new organisational structure. Interviewee 6 indicated that a regular evaluation process was
seen as an important concern and would be included as an integral component of the new structure:

“I think we would need to evaluate this year as well although it definitely felt like a year in transition but ideally I’d like to see an evaluation happen…and it is unfortunate that there wasn’t one done before that” (Interviewee 6).

Several of the remaining FPCs interviewed (FPCs 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11) had previously or intended to engage in organisational evaluation. The evaluation processes used varied, including formal, facilitated sessions or retreats, informal evaluation by staff, and annual review by all council members and staff over the course of one or several meetings. One interviewee indicated meeting with another council, all staff and members included, as a useful tool for evaluation. One notable exception existed in attitudes towards organisational evaluation. Interviewee 7 felt strongly adverse to conducting evaluations, viewing these processes as potentially threatening to the stability and viability of the organisation:

“I continue to survive the (government) efforts to kill us through bureaucratic means. And that’s, that in my opinion has justified the fact that we don’t do organisational evaluations. I don’t do ‘em and that’s why I don’t do yearly work finance and all that like I’m in an ongoing fight to stay here.”

Throughout the interview, this interviewee indicated that the mandate, roles, and
responsibilities of the council, staff, and members were clearly understood and considered effective which may further explain a lack of interest in self-evaluation procedures.

Organisational documents and regular, periodic evaluations, were indicated by at least nine of the thirteen FPCs (69.2%) as valuable tools in formalising and assessing processes and procedures. As indicated by Foster-Fishman et al. (2001), formalisation of structure and process aids in building clarity and stability within organisations, a crucial component of capacity building. These tools provide an additional venue for building capacity in staff-member relationships where clear delineation of responsibilities helps organisations to function more efficiently (Butterfoss et al., 1993). However, as FPC 2 demonstrated, careful consideration needs to be given to precision and clarity in these documents and evaluations when establishing or addressing the responsibilities of staff and members.

6.3.3 Funding

Among those represented through interviews, food policy councils indicated a need for funding for several different purposes. Financial support can be used for staff salaries, administrative costs, publishing reports and other materials, attending conferences and events and, in the case where FPCs implement programs, for specific projects. Funding may come in the form of direct financial or in-kind support. It can be derived from the sponsoring government agency, a private sponsor, government and non-government
sourced grants, or indirect sources such as members and outside contacts allotting time within their paid employment for FPC work.

The primary concern of food policy councils represented in interviews was a need for funding to pay for staff support. This same concern was echoed by a large number of FPCs outside of those interviewed (Bournhonesque, 2006a) and stemmed from either a lack of funding to support at least one full-time staff person or a lack in security of funding for staff (i.e. the funder could remove support at any time). Lack of security in staff support usually occurred due to a dependence on grant-funding.

Those FPCs receiving funding from a sponsoring government agency enjoyed relative security in terms of staff support. In one case however, a government-sponsored FPC received secure staff funding from a private sponsor and administrative resources from government. Of the government-sponsored councils, the majority (76.9%) indicated an interest in additional funding either for staff, project implementation, or other costs. All of the FPCs represented in interviews, with one exception, expressed a need for additional or more secure funding. Although the amounts needed usually were not specified, all of these interviewees indicated a need for financial support for at least one, and ideally two or three, full-time staff persons, administrative costs, office space, and in some cases project implementation.
6.3.4 Conclusions on Administrative Foundations

In terms of basic administrative components, interviews and other research results revealed substantial similarities in the experiences and recommendations of FPCs. Alignment with government, organisational documents, regular evaluation, and funding for staff and administrative expenses are valuable for building the capacity of FPCs to operate and meet organisational roles. Institutional (food sector) alignment remains the one significantly debatable, unresolved issue. Results of interview and document analysis reveal that alignment with certain departments will always present obstacles. However, no single type of agency or department appears across different local, regional, or state governments as presenting the best solution or option for institutional alignment. Determining an appropriate location within the government for a FPC then needs to consider and adapt to the unique circumstances and arrangements of different communities.

6.4 Organisational Capacity and Leadership: Staff Requirements for Food Policy Councils

Building on the basic administrative arrangements related to organisational type, food sector alignment, organisational documents, evaluation, and funding, FPC structuring involves the establishment of arrangements for leaders and administrators. This section examines the requirements for FPCs leadership and administration in terms of staff, paid
or unpaid, full or part time, including a consideration for the skills and knowledge needed for these persons to act as administrators or leaders for the organisation.

As noted in Chapter 3 the acquirement of paid staff has previously been identified as one of the challenges faced by food policy councils and a vital component of success (Dahlberg, 1994a; Boron, 2003; Yeatman, 1994). While the previous body of research suggests that having a staff person is an important component of success for FPCs, little consideration is given to other staffing issues such as the amount of paid time and skills needed to fulfil the needs of the organisation. The following section examines information and opinions collected through primary documents and interviews as it relates to these staffing issues. The first sub-section re-examines the question of whether or not staff is needed and expands on this to address some of the reasons why staff may be an important component of FPCs. The second sub-section looks at the amount of staff time needed while the following two sections consider some of the skills essential to staff leadership and administration.

6.4.1 Are Staff Needed: Why or Why Not?

Every food policy council interviewed had staff support in some capacity. There were
eight councils operating with different amounts (hours) of part-time staffing assistance, one of which was in the process of creating the position and hiring a full-time staff person. Six of the FPCs with part-time staff received this assistance on an essentially voluntary basis from a non-profit organisation closely associated with the FPC.

The principally volunteer positions appeared more precarious and unstable for two associated reasons. Since volunteer time proved insufficient for managing all of the administrative details of the FPC, the staff person usually needed to locate grant funding, outside of the non-profit, to fund some paid hours and other administrative costs. The grant funding used is not a secure, continuous source of financial support so that the existence of any paid staff time is constantly in threat.

The other source of instability and conflict stemmed from the fact that for most volunteer staff persons, their full-time work was not entirely dedicated to food systems planning and policy. Volunteers needed to find ways of reconciling their own work priorities with those of the council. The need for balancing council and work priorities in some cases also surfaced in the tensions created between any existing food sector alignment of their organisation and the broader food systems agenda of the council.

Councils dependent primarily on volunteer administrators also seemed to demand more work from members. In many cases this can lead to an excessive workload and time demand on council members which strains staff-member relationships and the functioning of the council. This issue will be explored further in a latter section dealing
directly with member roles and responsibilities. Of the remaining four councils, all of which employed full-time positions, three maintained more than one full-time staff person.

Overall findings indicate that having at least a part-time staff person was considered unanimously a critical component of operationalising a food policy council. Interviewee responses both explicitly and implicitly supported this conclusion. Of the FPCs represented, six explicitly indicated the need for staff in comments such as:

“All those activities need support…Funding support, definitely staff support”

(Interviewee 11A).

“We can do better when we have other staff support” (Interviewee 1).

While four councils did not explicitly state the need for staff assistance, two of these maintained more than one full-time position indicating a value for this type of support. The other two FPCs implicitly indicated a need for staff in their reference to locating funding to support resources, including staff time. Explanation of the need for paid staff was expressed by Interviewee 3A:

“If you don’t have a staff person designated to this group it’s very hard to see anything get done. You just can’t count on people meeting once a month…so not only producing reports or forums or events or new policy recommendations, it
Only one interviewee indicated the sentiment that staff is not necessarily a critical component. The FPC represented by this interviewee operated in absence of significant sources of funding for staff positions potentially leading to this alternative point of view from which FPCs can operate:

“Everybody always says staff is important and I think they can be. But I think that’s in a perfect universe and that’s not the kind of thing that I think there’s a lot of money around to have happen. So I think people who do like-kinds of work or who come at an issue from a number of different lenses need to be smart enough to come together and start figuring some of those things out themselves. The staff part’s really helpful…but I don’t think it’s mandatory to have tons of staff” (Interviewee 3B).

However, this same interviewee also indicated at other points in the conversation that staff is a valuable asset especially in respect to a variety of tasks that may not otherwise be addressed in their absence.

6.4.2 How Much Staff Time Is Needed?

Following on the explicit affirmation by the majority of interviewees of a need for some sort of staff assistance, the question remained of how much or what is an appropriate
amount of staff time to dedicate to a FPC. Some indication of this is given in the context of the broader population of FPCs where the majority of those newly formed (those being created within the past five years) aim for at least one securely funded full-time staff position. Several interviewees revealed an interest in and perceived benefits of having at least one full-time staff person:

“That’s really my goal is to get a good staff person full-time that can take this and really run with it” (Interviewee 10).

“I get the sense, that by having a full-time staff person you’re constantly in the public’s face…in the community’s face and public officials’ face and you know, no decisions get made about food in that community without first consulting that body because you’re ever present and there’s somebody there to always answer the phone” (Interviewee 3A).

These estimations all originated with representatives of FPCs which were at the time of interview only able to maintain part-time assistance. To these interviewees and others with similar staffing situations, the opinion was expressed that gaining even one full-time staff person would be of enormous benefit. There was little or no speculation from these interviewees on the benefit of assistance beyond the basic need for one full-time position. Interviewee 3A exemplified this sentiment in reference to a FPC in another location that maintained a full-time staff person stating that:
“Probably the best council I know of is one that has a full-time staff-person…(that person) does an amazing job…But that’s (their) job…40 hours a week (that person) is working on that council. I can’t imagine what we could do here if someone was designated (as staff).”

An interesting note on this viewpoint expressed by Interviewee 3A is that the FPC referred to in fact has funding for more than one staff person. Funding exists for one research and managerial staff position and for an administrative assistant. While interviewees representing the FPCs with more than one full-time staff person did not emphasise the need for more assistance, one interviewee from this group felt that an organisation of this nature needs more assistance in that:

“A one-person operation in my opinion is stupid like you’re really unnecessarily hampered and it should be a two or three person, not necessarily much bigger than that but it should be at least two or three person” (Interviewee 7A).

Interviewee responses and existing arrangements among the represented FPCs indicate that staff is a critical need for these organisations in managing administration, internal, and external communications. The arrangements of the represented FPCs and responses further indicate that at least one full-time staff person is critical while two or even up to three full-time staff persons represents an ideal situation.

6.4.3 Staff Skills and Institutional Alignment
Staffing issues extend beyond concerns for filling a certain amount of hours. With an indication of the need for at least one, and potentially two or three, full-time persons, arises the concern of what criteria staff should meet in terms of skills and food sector alignment. In regards to institutional alignment arises the issue of whether or not the position(s) should be based in government.

As discussed previously, positions provided for by non-profit or non-government organisations tend to fall under the threat of limited funding and resources. Interviewee 11 indicated that staff for the FPC are “always scrambling to find more money to support ourselves so I mean we’re up to all hours writing grants and stuff.” Interviewee 10 noted the challenge of funding staff through a non-profit organisation expressing the need for staff to “step out of the actual management because (they) can only devote so much time to it.” While maintaining staff positions within and funded by government may present advantages in security of the position and resources, other challenges may arise. One council encountered the difficulty of balancing attention to tasks demanded of staff by the government with that of work directly related to the FPC. Interviewee 2A said that FPC staff “are employees of the (government)…so once the food policy council was established, these positions got really busy doing work that came to them from within the (government)” leaving some uncertainty as to the amount of time and resources available to devote to the council.

Interview questions did not expressly aim to elicit views on staff skills and interests. However, two interviewees addressed this issue raising it as an interesting matter for
consideration. Interviewee 10 noted an interest in devoting a salary (US $100,000) equivalent to that of a highly skilled professional to FPC staff. In more specific terms Interviewee 6 felt that FPC staff should be skilled in facilitation, running meetings, and “to the level that they can run an organisation by themselves.” This interviewee also noted that staff:

“need to be passionate about food [issues]…obviously it’s transferable skills in terms of organisational development as well as bringing very disparate agendas and issues together and finding that common ground…that’s all transferable but I do find that the only people that stay in this type of work are people that are supremely passionate about food security. So, that’s who we look for to hire and it has served us.”

6.4.4 Conclusions for Staff Arrangements

Issues relating to the number of staff needed, their food sector alignment, skills, and interests as revealed through interviews can provide some initial insight into the needs of food policy councils for administrators and leaders. All but one of the FPCs interviewed (92.3%) indicated that having at least one full-time staff person (or more) is essential for FPC operation. For those five FPCs already operating with one to three full-time staff persons, it was indicated by all that at least two to three staff persons were needed for the council to operate efficiently. From this conclusion it can be seen that staff are one of two critical internal human resource components involved in constructing FPCs. The
other internal human resource component is the membership. The following section examines some of the basic components of structuring FPC membership to build member capacity.

### 6.5 Member Capacity: Membership Needs for Food Policy Councils

While staff are the legs of FPCs, providing essential administrative services to keep the organisation running, members are the heart, providing the essential component of diverse food system representation. To create this diverse representation which in many ways defines the food policy council, FPCs need to build member capacity through careful consideration of the size, skills, and diversity of food system representation created through membership profile. Several factors are taken into account when determining the membership of FPCs. These issues are considered below in relation to the number of members (size of membership), external criteria for determining membership, what sectors should be represented, and other skills or resources needed of members.

#### 6.5.1 Size and Other Components of Membership

The number of members for FPCs is set in most cases by organisational documents
specifying an exact number of members, a semi-flexible number, or no specification. Among the food policy councils represented in interviews, only four did not specify the number of members to be included on the council. All four of these FPCs operated primarily as non-profit organisations, although two of these did receive some in-kind support from government. The remaining councils set either a specific size for membership or a flexible number within an organisational document. These councils, as is common with many food policy councils, had between twelve and twenty-five members, excluding staff, ex-officio, and liaison members. Although not specifically targeted through interview questions, Interviewee 8 commented on the reasoning behind setting a specific number of members. The FPC represented by this interviewee had a specific number of members set by the organisational document. According to the interviewee, this number was set in order to:

“get as many people involved while still being effective and able to accomplish but you know it’s a balance. If everything was just completely open and we didn’t have anything defined about who was responsible and who was directly involved and it was just kind of an information free for all for whoever wanted to contribute you know then you’re gonna be a lot less effective. You’re not gonna be able to really get as much done. So it’s definitely a balancing act between being inclusive and being effective.”

It was felt by this interviewee that there existed many more representatives related to various aspects of the food system than could be included in council membership. To
mediate this challenge of balancing between inclusiveness and effectiveness, the council draws additional “non-member” representatives to participate on task forces without being appointed or full council members. As another method for including a wider range of stakeholders, a majority of FPCs conduct “open meetings” which any person may attend. These attendees are often allowed to present ideas or voice opinions either at a designated time within the agenda or at any point throughout the meeting, although the latter is less common. FPC 4 was of particular note in its inclusion of non-member representatives in that the council also included two persons outside of the official council membership who regularly attended meetings, voiced opinions and ideas at any point, and often carried out tasks for the council outside of meeting times. A significant difference between council members and the non-member representatives, especially as related to FPCs 4 and 8, is that these other participants do not hold voting privileges.

Following a determination of the number of members, several councils are subject to external criteria for selecting who these representatives will be, usually as a result of government regulations for organisations of this nature. While this information also was not directly targeted through interview questions, five FPCs indicated that external regulations set by the government regulated council membership. For two of these councils, regulations involved ensuring “right colour-mix, gender-mix, age-mix” (Interviewee 7A) and an equal representation of all of the relevant geopolitical sub-areas within the FPCs’ greater jurisdiction. The remaining three councils were obligated to show an equal distribution of the recognised political parties of the region. With the exception of one of these councils, which has membership appointment handled by an
outside resource, all representatives interviewed felt that these regulations can present challenges when recruiting members. These challenges relate to the extra attention that must be paid to member attributes and the constraint of excluding potential members due to regulations.

6.5.2 Diversity in Food System Representation

As indicated by the definitions of food policy councils discussed in Chapter 5, representation of all or at least several sectors of the food system is often seen as a crucial component of FPC membership. In addressing this issue, many FPCs delineate specific sectors and the exact number of members to represent each of these sectors within their organisational documents. Of the FPCs represented in interviews, five specified certain sectors to be represented. An additional two FPCs limited member representation to those “actively” involved in an organisation or network dealing explicitly with food system issues such as agriculture, hunger, community gardens, nutrition, or farmers’ markets. Among all of the food councils interviewed, the current members of the council indicated an interest in including members from a variety of sectors within the food system. Several interviewees indicated, however, that specifying representation from “every” or several sectors of the food system was not the most important criteria in selecting members. Interviewee 3B noted that including representatives on the council who are not employed in the food system “a hundred percent of their time” is “kind of helpful, it kind of keeps it broad and reminds those people who only do food work that part of what’s important is making that link between just being focussed on food issues alone to the rest of the
world.” Conversely, this interviewee also noted that the members “who are more active are probably those whose full-time work revolves around (food issues)…they talk to each other more regularly and it kind of keeps the energy going.” Interviewees 9A and 9B also addressed the issue of explicit, broad-based food system representation referring to consultation with an expert on the subject:

‘He basically said you know “quit worrying about having broad-based representation” you know “go with the passion of the people who are already on it right now” (Interviewee 9B).

“Should it be something where we try to get representation of all the different sectors of the food system and have it be kind of structured and make sure that there’s a representative from each one of those important components… and you know (one person’s) suggestion was just use the energy of the people that are there” (Interviewee 9A).

Another debatable or unresolved issue of member representation relates to the participation of government on FPCs. Some food policy councils in formative stages have demonstrated concern and sought advice on this issue (Bournhonesque, 2005). Six of the FPCs interviewed included government representatives as specified in organisational documents to act as full-council, liaison, or ex-officio members. Another four FPCs retained government staff as members although their inclusion on the council was not considered mandatory. Although two elected officials were members of the
relevant council Interviewee 7 was adamant about not having any government staff as members stating that “No staff can be on council…Only citizens. Only or absolutely, only citizens and two (elected officials). Yeah. No staff. Ever. Under any circumstance. So yeah, it’s a citizen body.”

In contrast, certain councils, especially those at the state level, appeared to be “agency heavy” with a majority of members employed as staff in various government departments. There appear to be advantages and disadvantages to including government staff and elected officials as council members. In one respect, including elected officials as members can disadvantageously affect continuity in that as a result of election cycles these members may be constantly changing over. Another issue for consideration when including government staff on FPCs is the authority of the individuals within their departments. According to Interviewee 3A including lower-level government staff can make a council “hand-tied” since these members “can’t officially do much of anything…in terms of policy they’re very sort of careful about what they can say.” Another interviewee noted this issue as the most significant barrier to discussion, work, and accomplishment on this council. Two FPCs demonstrated an interest in high-level, although not top-level, government staff as members. As expressed by Interviewee 10, this led to the advantage of including those with the time to invest interest in FPC work while still maintaining decision-making authority:

“It’s been trying to pick the individuals within an agency that really seem to have an interest in it instead of picking the top bureaucrat in every agency. Try to get to
a person that has an interest in this and yet has enough authority that they can make some decisions. I mean that’s the key is we try to go to the number two people in these different agencies.”

Interviewee 7 raised one more seemingly vital consideration when selecting council members from the non-government backgrounds. One of the most critical considerations stressed by this representative was that council members be high profile members of the community. This helps gain credibility and respect for councils’ decisions and activities.

### 6.5.3 Conclusions Regarding Membership Needs and Capacity

Identifying a set number of members, often between twelve and thirty, appears to be a fairly common arrangement for food policy councils with 69.2% of those interviewed supporting this membership standard. As described by one interviewee, this set number of members provides a tool for balancing between inclusiveness and effectiveness. To fulfil the role as representative of a broad range of food system issues, FPCs need to ensure a diversity of member representation from across multiple sectors. Again, 69.2% of those interviewed felt that special attention needs to be given to ensuring a diverse membership, representative of the broad range of food sectors. While a set membership size can place constraints on the diversity of representation, the inclusion of other types of non-voting members in meetings and task forces can aid in fulfilling this need. In
regards to member skills, there are significant advantages in the inclusion primarily of members in relatively high-level, influential positions. Inclusion of members from this type of background helps to gain credibility, authority, valuable contacts, and resources.

6.6 Conclusion

The issues discussed above as related to staff, members, organisational type, organisational documents, food sector alignment, and funding figure strongly in building organisational and member capacity for FPCs. Information, histories, and viewpoints upon these issues reveal some underlying similarities in experience, opinion, or challenges, and recommendations. The similarities indicate one or several potential models for organisational structure among these organisations. These similarities will be summarised and revisited in Chapter 8 as a component of ‘best-practice’ FPC models.

Along with member and organisational capacity, relationship and program capacity are also critical components in FPC structuring and operations. Food policy councils’ approaches to priority setting, acting on priorities, and the roles of staff and members in carrying out priorities play a crucial role in building this capacity. Chapter 7 examines these levels of capacity as they relate to FPC process. Chapter 8 moves on to synthesize the recommendations and findings related to FPC structure and process. This synthesis will examine similarities that may outline potential models of organisational structure for FPCs.
Chapter 7: Relationship and Program Capacity: Priority Setting, Project Implementation, Staff and Member Roles

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 examined critical elements of member and organisational capacity, especially as they relate to human resources and basic administrative structure. These are only two of four essential components needed to build collaborative capacity. Relationship and program capacity serve as the two further components of capacity building. Elements of these capacity levels considered here include relationships with external organisations (relationship capacity), priority setting, and project implementation (program capacity). One final element, considered in the second section of this chapter, cuts across several levels of capacity building. This element, the definition of staff, member, and other participants’ roles, relates to aspects of relationship capacity, organisational capacity, and program capacity. Clearly defined roles for staff, members, and other participants are crucial for healthy internal relationships (relationship capacity), defining organisational structure (organisational capacity), and moving priorities into action (program capacity).

This chapter examines these elements of capacity building in terms of four different elements of FPC process: 1) setting broad priority areas; 2) determining specific projects; 3) addressing priorities by identifying staff, member, and other participants’ roles in projects; and 4) managing barriers or challenges faced in project implementation. The first section of this chapter examines elements one and two: how, out of the myriad of
possibilities in sustainable food systems work, the elements of FPCs operate to set priorities. Following this is an examination of findings related to ways in which the roles of staff, members, external participants, and administrative tools such as subcommittees are defined to help determine and to address priorities. This section considers how participants’ skills and interests fit together and are utilised to move the FPC towards its vision and goals. The final section considers some of challenges and barriers to project implementation that FPCs confront and methods for managing these issues.

7.2 Priority Setting

The broad scope and variety of food systems activities means that organisations working with the entire food system, such as food policy councils, encounter a numerous and diverse assortment of potential programs and projects. FPCs need to determine which aspects of the food system, projects, and programs take priority in their local or regional area. Determining these priorities is an important component of building program capacity. Priority setting can relate to identifying broad areas or food system sectors for consideration or more specifically to individual program or project ideas. Selection of priorities may be affected by external factors or outside expectations, pre-determined vision, goals, or mandate, and the age and available resources of a food policy council.
7.2.1 Outside Expectations and Preliminary Conditions

Some external or preliminary factors exist which may to some extent serve as a pre-determining influence in the establishment of priorities. Food sector alignment, community consultation outcomes, organisational documents, and government mandates can prove influential in pre-determining a general direction for FPCs’ priorities.

The background of a food policy council, concerning formation and alignment with certain sectors through government agencies, appears to have some significant effect in determining the focus of activities. In particular, FPCs emerging out of concern heavily weighted in one sector of the food system such as nutrition or agriculture tend to become aligned with institutions related to these areas (e.g. Department of Agriculture; Department of Public Health) while those emerging from a broader standpoint may become aligned with a broad-based (e.g. mayor’s office; Department of Sustainable Development; Department of Environment and Natural Resources) or no particular institution at all. As discussed in Chapter 6, association with a particular level of government may affect the institutional alignment of a FPC, and inherently resources and networks, such that state level organisations tend to align with Departments of Agriculture while regional and local level organisations show a broader range of sponsoring agencies. Association in these respects with particular government agencies appears to affect FPCs such that priorities will tend to focus on programs and projects related to the particular interests of the associated institution. In this regard, food policy councils especially aligned with Departments of Agriculture tend to focus more strongly
on agricultural programs than others. Those aligned with Departments of Health (Public Health, Community Health, Community Development) tend to focus more strongly on issues related to nutrition, hunger, and low-income populations. Although all of these organisations still maintain a broad food systems perspective in their work these alignments to some degree still affect focus and priorities.

The interest of food policy councils in community consultation as it relates to local values and food issues was explored through interviews. In terms of gaining direction for priorities through community input and consultation, at least nine of the FPCs interviewed did engage with the broader public at an informal level through conferences, forums, and events. Among all known food policy councils, involvement with forums, events, and conferences through which public input is gained tends to be a common activity. Although none of the food policy councils interviewed indicated involvement with any formal, explicit, or structured forms of community consultation several interviewees expressed an interest in this activity for direction and program setting in the future.

“In many arenas we’re dealing with the difficulty of a small, of the advisory steering committee model of outreach generally….We’ve gotten a lot of interest and we’re doing well, reasonably well with this group with what we’re doing. On the other hand it’s, you know there’s a big public out there that a lot, you know it’s a big challenge for public involvement in a city the size…we can do a lot of issue-specific work well, you know, on housing, or food, or any of those things
but ultimately we need to be able to have it, you know really link up with a better community development process generally” (Interviewee 1).

“I’m not so sure they [the FPC] feel comfortable engaging in a more politically active role than where they’re at. I think they would need more community input so that they’re not just in a vacuum designing changes, recommendations” (Interviewee 3A).

Another external or preliminary factor affecting the activities and priorities of food policy councils stems from visions and mandates determined prior to formation or in organisational documents. Mandates and visions can indicate whether a council is focussed on implementation of projects or recommendations for implementation by others. Several food policy councils are concerned with implementation of projects as well as making recommendations to government. These councils, when operating without a specific government order for proposals, can feel the need to “prove themselves” prior to offering recommendations:

‘You need to be sure that your first set of policy recommendations are well thought out and I think we’re working toward that but I don’t think we’re recognised to the extent that “if we say it it’s right.” I think we’re still earning respect’ (Interviewee 10).
For some of the FPCs interviewed, a government ordinance or executive order mandated the organisation to provide recommendations, often within a certain timeframe of several months to a year. As indicated by Interviewee 8 operating under this type of mandate affects the activities of a food policy council:

“I know some councils approach this differently but as a council we’re not going to be implementing our recommendations or at least not at this point that’s not our, that’s not the model that we’re operating under. We are formed to research, investigate, and develop recommendations that then move their way up and then are distributed…If they like them then they get farmed out to who needs to be doing those recommendations.”

A focus on recommending, implementing, or both can affect FPC priorities in that the different activities involved with each demand use of different resources and networks in different ways. Government mandates can further direct the priorities of FPCs such that the wording of a mandate may explicitly state certain areas of priority for work or recommendation. Several of the FPCs interviewed, including those operating without this type of specialized government mandate, demonstrated interest in broad priority areas to direct more specific actions. The following section examines activities leading to the development of priority areas and more specific projects.

The influences discussed above, namely food sector alignment, community consultation
outcomes, organisational vision, and government mandate, pre-determine the general direction for FPCs’ work priorities and activities. These directions can set a preliminary framework within which FPCs can identify more specific priority areas and goals.

7.2.2 Structuring and Identifying Broader Issues: Priority Areas, Annual Issues, and Work Plans

Working within the framework of particular food sector interest consultation outcomes, vision, and mandates, FPCs create and structure more specific agendas to focus FPC activities. The use of priority areas and annual agenda setting tools such as work plans were investigated as a means for structuring these agendas. Action or priority areas sometimes established within annual work plans were evaluated for their use and value as a perennial, continuous method for broad agenda setting.

Food policy councils sometimes set “priority” or “action” areas which in some sense serve to focus and categorize their activities and the issues addressed. Examples of action or priority areas include those addressing issues such as institutional purchasing, urban agriculture, promoting local foods, enhancing agricultural viability, food access, community food assessments, rooftop gardens, community gardens, farmers’ markets, or food processing and distribution for low-income communities. Only four of the FPCs interviewed indicated that at some point the council had identified specific priority areas in which to work. In all of these cases, the food policy councils had set these action areas prior to or in the early stages of formation. In all but one case, priority areas were
derived from government mandates or organisational documents which had set out issues of precedence to be addressed. The motivation for one FPC to create task forces as a result of government mandate was described by Interviewee 8:

“The charges are so broad that to be able to really do anything in any amount of detail we would need to break up into little groups that at least make sense focussing on specific areas.”

Two of these FPCs abandoned their initial priority areas after the first one to two years of operation. One of the four FPCs, despite priorities being set out prior to formation, did not address these action areas when meetings commenced. This led to challenges during the first several meetings in determining an agenda, structure, and focus for activities. These difficulties caused frustration, dissatisfaction, and loss of interest among several council members.

Although the use of priority areas did not figure prominently as a tool used by the majority, use of this tool by several of the younger FPCs may indicate the value of this method for newly formed organisations. Interviewee 1 noted the use of priority areas as an initial agenda setting tool:

“Our initial charge was to come up with our recommendations to the…priority areas. So, that was like the first year and a quarter, year and a half almost. So,
from that point the goal was to look at our priorities and recommendations and try to get some things going.”

For those FPCs beyond the initial stages of operation, annual agenda setting figured more prominently as a valuable tool for structuring priorities and activities with more specific focus on the use of facilitated visioning sessions, work plans, and recurring annual issues. For the one FPC that had strayed from the priority areas set out prior to formation a facilitated visioning session was used to redetermine the focus of their work. While some members of the council viewed the session as a useful tool, others felt an unnecessary focus on process and were interested in proceeding with work on some of the previously identified issues:

‘Half the people really wanted to get working and start doing something and create change and were sick and tired of process and then, and then you know the other half of the people were going like ‘whoa, slow down. You know we need to be thoughtful about this’ and so there was this real tension that evolved’

(Interviewee 2A).

Although not specifically targeted through interview questioning, several other FPCs described the use of facilitated visioning sessions to evaluate recent work and potential future focus of activities:
‘This past year the (food policy) council had a strategic planning sort of session. They devoted one of their meetings to having somebody come in from the outside and, you know go through “Where are we now? What are we doing? Where are we going?”’ (Interviewee 3A).

‘It became a little bit more of a standard process in that this last February we brought ‘em together for a retreat again to say ‘okay, where do we wanna be here? Here’s all the stuff we’ve done. Where do we wanna be organisationally and so forth?’” (Interviewee 1).

In the manner described by these two interviewees, facilitated sessions can serve as an agenda setting tool similar in some regards to the development of a periodic or annual work plan. Interviewees 4A and 4B also described the use of similar facilitated visioning sessions in the formational stages of the organisation. The interviewees indicated that the first several meetings of the council were devoted to having facilitators come to help determine priorities, strategic vision, and focus areas. Out of these meetings emerged the council’s steering committee to carry on the work of determining priority areas and strategic planning.

Eight of the food policy councils interviewed had developed formal or semi-formal work plans for the current period of work. All of these eight and two additional FPCs indicated interest in regularly evaluating and developing periodic plans. Development of work plans usually coincided with a specific time of the year such as the end/beginning of
the city/state fiscal year or the beginning of the school year. Interviewee 3B described a perceived value for work plans in that they allow the FPC to evaluate:

“What little pieces of each of those are we gonna pay attention to this year and do we want to keep them all on our agenda?...How are we gonna address Women, Infant, and Children? How are we gonna address nutrition education? How are we gonna address sustainable agriculture?...That’s what we need to do so we can remind ourselves about okay, what are all of the issues?”

Interviewee 9, representing a FPC that had not regularly developed a work plan or agenda also felt that having some set, standard processes can be helpful to focus activities:

“I think we should have an annual plan. I think we should have one every year. I am the first to seize an opportunity when it comes up but I do think that at least having some sense of where you’re going is useful.”

In some cases, food policy councils choose to focus on one issue or project in particular. In this case, a periodic or annual agenda may revolve around this one item. Two of the FPCs interviewed currently, or had in the past, centred activity around one issue. Decisions to focus on one particular item may occur for a few reasons. For one of the FPCs, particular items were focussed on due to measurement of the interest of the council for the issue and the amount of time and resources that the issue would consume. In contrast, Interviewee 10 noted the decision to focus on one project as somewhat of a
survival method. It was felt that, given the young age of the organisation, the council members needed to focus effort on one issue to be well thought out and successful. This could provide a “quick win” for the FPC, helping to gain respect and credibility.

For several of the FPCs interviewed, annual events figured prominently in formal and informal agendas. Two FPCs mentioned the use of an annual conference or forum to consult with other interested parties and partners, drawing potential agenda items and project ideas from these meetings. Five of those interviewed indicated an annually recurring focus of activities on events such as World Food Day and Thanksgiving:

“Some topics that have a time reference of some sort, for example around Thanksgiving we’ll usually spend a little bit of time talking about what’s the current supply of turkeys” (Interviewee 3A).

While periodic and annual agendas appear to offer some advantages, two interviewees demonstrated a decided disinterest in the use of such plans. The disinterest in work plans stemmed from a desire to work with opportunities that may arise unpredictably:

‘It’s a balance between the opportunity that lies before you that could advance part of your agenda or do you say “no, our strategic plan has its focus here”’ (Interviewee 9A).

‘My work plan fundamentally from mid-June until November twelfth is those two
events, right, making sure that they happen without a glitch. But everything else that I do depends on whoever walks in the door, wants some help...after those two events are over...I don’t want any more obligations...there’re so many opportunities here. I’m turning them down all the time. Like my problem is not to say: “What are we gonna do?,” my problem is to say: “What are we not gonna do?” right. So, I don’t need a work plan' (Interviewee 7).

The importance of working with opportunity featured significantly in interviews with respect to numerous aspects of food policy council activity. The breadth of this issue will be addressed in the review provided in Chapter 7 and may be applied more specifically to the roles of staff, members, and others and to the choice of and focus on individual projects and activities.

7.2.3 Individual Projects and Activities: Opportunity and Quick Wins

Within the broader areas of food system work, focus on specific activities needs to respond to the resources, funding, networks, and otherwise, of the FPC. In some respects, the idea for, focus on, or choice of specific activities relates to the interests and resources of council members and staff. If sufficient resources and interest aren’t there, the FPC

47 The events, which are yearly, recurring events, will remain unnamed to protect the anonymity of the interviewee.
either can’t do it or will not be successful in the project. In some cases, staff persons or members may introduce agenda items. Interviewee 3A felt that the FPC depended perhaps too much on staff and member interests to drive project ideas and that more consultation with community could be utilised:

“What I see right now is that it’s sort of a loose list of topics that people want to get to. Some topics that come back month after month as they get worked through…so, I mean that’s a place where if there was a more community participation I would think that the agenda could change, you know could invite more of that.”

Resource-driven origination of a project idea may also derive from the interests of financial supporters:

“That really hadn’t been on our radar screen before coming up with something that met the funders’ goals” (Interviewee 1).

“We just that didn’t get funded and we just didn’t have the opportunity and then it finally got to the point where “okay, we’re gonna do this” and partnered with (an organisation) and they had some funding and so we got one out” (Interviewee 9A).

“We’re conscious of trying to identify the things that we can do as a state within
the resources and authority that we have” (Interviewee 8).

Although an important consideration, the resources of staff and members acts more as a qualifier for rather than an instigator of specific activities.

Several interviewees highlighted the significance of external factors in instigating ideas for and determining choice of activities. Local values and interests often present inspiration for activities and opportunities to gain “quick wins” and popular support. Two interviewees, representing two different FPCs recalled occasions where the idea for a specific project originated with particular stories covered by the local media. In another case, an interviewee noted project focus stemming from a significant amount of media and public interest in general around a particular issue stating that “there is incredible interest around it so that’s what we’re focussing on” (Interviewee 6).

Other interviewees noted a more generalized attention to local interests:

“You gotta kind of go with what’s going on, what’s hot” (Interviewee 1).

“Everything else that I do depends on whoever walks in the door, wants some help or, or whatever” (Interviewee 7).
Priorities “sort of percolate up depending on what people are interested in and where there also might be an opening, a new opening. Nutrition education is something that there’s a big gap (here) in nutrition education so it makes sense that (the council) start working on that and pursue a course of some sort. You know sometimes, you know it has a lot to do with what’s going on right then” (Interviewee 3A).

“What I have focussed on probably more is just building partnerships and relationships and trying to find out where in the community we can move and be effective” (Interviewee 9A).

“let’s…get it funded by other people so we can move forward because I mean there’s an incredible…right now there is an incredible amount of energy around community” (Interviewee 9B).

Interviewee 7 indicated a particularly strong emphasis for the FPC working with interests external to the FPC staff and membership. It was indicated that numerous project ideas existed. The actual engagement with and implementation of these ideas depended on external interests, other individuals’ and organisations’ willingness to take up and champion a particular initiative.

Prior to conducting interviews, it was presumed that a significant role of FPC meetings was in agenda and priority setting. Over the course of research this presumption proved to
be misplaced. Although functioning as a part of priority and agenda setting, meetings proved to a greater extent to be related to educating and networking, revealing priorities and opportunities rather than directly focusing on the identification of projects.

7.3 Addressing Priorities: Member, Staff, and Network Roles

Establishing priorities and implementation of programs requires FPCs to determine the roles of members, staff, and other participants in these activities. Clearly defined roles for participants plays a critical role in building capacity at all four levels (Member; Relationship; Organisational; Programmatic). Butterfoss et al. (1993) note that coalitions operate more effectively when staff and members have clearly understood and defined roles. This can be seen as a component of building internal relationship capacity and, as it relates to strong leadership, a component of organisational capacity building. Defining staff, members, and others’ roles also builds program capacity through a clarification of each participant’s function in establishing priorities and implementing agenda items. This clarity allows each participant to understand, and therefore more readily carry out, the necessary tasks associated with their position.

As discussed in the preceding section, the resources available to those individuals and organisations involved in FPCs plays a role in determining items to act upon. FPCs need to ensure the availability of resources before establishing a particular food sector, project, or program as a priority. The roles of staff and members are closely related to this need to create programs in conjunction with available networks, contacts, and resources. FPCs
utilise various mechanisms such as subcommittees and chairpersons in defining roles. The following includes an examination of these mechanisms as well as the more general roles of staff, members, and other participants. This examination also considers the function of the resources offered by individual participants and organisations in addressing particular tasks.

7.3.1 Subcommittees or Task Forces

Subcommittees, or task forces, are frequently created by FPCs to address either priority/action areas or specific projects. All of the councils that developed priority/action areas created standing subcommittees to examine each individual area. In other cases, several FPCs described the intermittent creation of ad hoc subcommittees to work on specific project ideas as they arose and in some cases to examine administrative issues such as changes to organisational documents, agendas, periodic plans, or financial issues. Following the creation and approval by government of a broad “food policy”, one FPC created a cross between standing and ad hoc subcommittees to examine and develop programs and projects for each of the main issues addressed in the policy statement. Subcommittees often meet or discuss outside of general council meeting times.\(^48\)

\(^{48}\) Although all of the FPCs interviewed did not hold subcommittee meetings during council meetings, some FPCs such as the Iowa Food Policy Council hold half or all-day meetings during which task forces or subcommittees meet.
Subcommittee work occurs for some during set meeting times while, for others, these groups are expected to independently organise time to discuss and work on their issues. In the latter case, problems may arise due to an uneven balance among individual members of and between different groups in the amount of time, effort, and work expended. Two FPCs described encounters with this challenge:

“I think there was a concern that the committees were doing, some people were doing too much work and they were feeling burnt-out” (Interviewee 6).

“What I started to see was that there were some subcommittees that were more active than others, there were some that hardly met at all. They would meet purely by email, not even conference…in one group I can think of one person did all the work, sent it out for everyone to review and got feedback and would present the final document at the meetings in terms of reporting. I actually felt, I didn’t feel good about that” (Interviewee 2B).

In addition to the potential explicit usefulness of task forces in examining and working on program areas, these groups can offer other advantages. As mentioned in Chapter 5, some FPCs were able to mediate the issue of balancing inclusiveness with effectiveness in the number of council members by allowing additional participants onto subcommittees. This highlights the added benefit of subcommittees as expressed by Interviewee 8:
“We said that we wanted to have task forces and that way we could bring even more people to the table.”

Including additional participants in task forces offers benefits in the potential to include a wider range of perspectives, networks, and food system contacts. Interviewee 8 expressed another benefit of additional participants for subcommittees as deriving from the ability for these individuals to draw staff time and resources from their place of employment for FPC work:

“We’ve also been drawing staff, (government) employees, from those departments to participate on our task forces as well and so all of that time, all that staff time and resource time that we’re asking them to help…to provide information and resources to the council that’s all in-kind as well. We’re not paying…we’re not compensating for their staff’s salaries.”

As indicated through this evaluation of interviewee responses, task forces or subcommittees can be useful tools for FPCs at several levels. In terms of programmatic capacity, task forces help to create and maintain a structure of the FPC’s priorities. This also can help to maintain continuous focus on and development of priority areas into specific projects and implementation strategies. Task forces and subcommittees can also be used to build member and relationship capacity. Bolstering member capacity occurs through the provision by these subgroups of an outlet for individual members’ particular field of interest or expertise thereby maintaining member interest in the organisation as a
whole. Building external relationship capacity can occur through the use of these subgroups as a tool for engaging individuals and organisations external to the formal FPC membership profile.

7.3.2 Member Roles

As previously noted, clearly defined staff and member roles are an important component of organisational capacity for collaborations such as food policy councils. FPC members participate in a variety of different activities with roles ranging from facilitator and networker to researcher, champion, and project implementer. Two of the more functional activities that FPC members may be involved in outside of general meetings and communication are participation on subcommittees and acting as chairpersons. In addition to developing meeting agendas and chairing meetings, chairpersons or co-chairpersons can act as facilitators and in some cases as liaisons between staff and members. In this respect, one interviewee described the role of chairperson, in addition to other responsibilities, as a “human resources” position to handle problems, frustrations, and personal issues. In some cases, this role may demand so much time that for councils where members are expected to carry some additional workload outside of meetings, chairpersons are not expected to participate or are exempt from participating in subcommittees and additional work.

In addition to participating as chairpersons, members engage voluntarily in a variety of activities. These activities create roles for council members in research, writing, or
program implementation. As one of the most frequently noted aspects and key benefits of the food policy council, FPC members bring a range of unique perspectives from throughout the various food system sectors (Boron, 2003). In utilising their diverse experiences, members serve in this capacity as networkers and co-educators. One might theorize that this is in fact the primary role played by (or should be the primary task of) FPC members.

Many food policy councils, from the very beginning, recognise a choice to be made as to whether or not to operate as a “working council.” A “working council” might be defined as an FPC where members are expected to carry out council-related tasks and work outside of meetings and on their own time. There are several issues affecting the ability of members to participate in a “working council.” These include the voluntary nature of FPC membership, busy work schedules, and opportunity to merge FPC interests with paid work. Almost without exception FPC members participate on voluntary terms. Where the resources and need exist, some members are compensated for travel or related expenses and, extremely rarely, for time spent on research, writing, or project implementation. In many cases, members are unable to carry out a significant amount of FPC tasks on their own time. However, this often conflicts with the interest of members in doing so. One potential solution for this is the merging of FPC tasks with a member’s regular employment.

Throughout the majority of FPCs represented in interviews, members hold other full-time employment which limits the amount of time that can be spent on council work. FPCs
seeking members for their expertise, knowledge, and networks often engage representatives who hold high-level, time-demanding positions in influential non-profit organisations or food-related businesses. Interviewee 7 described difficulties in recruiting and limitations imposed by “time-crunch” of members with time-demanding employment:

‘Number one, we’re dealing with people who are time-crunched. I’m begging them…, like, and I’m begging people to say: “Would you come? All you gotta do is come to (the meetings) and I guarantee you’ll never have to do any more, right.” And I gotta sign that in blood before they even agree to come on because the time crunch is such an incredible worry.’

Interviewee 2B noted that a significant percentage of members work full-time for non-profit organisations. The amount of hours demanded by these organisations constrains the amount of time available to members for FPC activities. In reference to previous work with non-profit organisation, this interviewee describes the restrictions placed on the availability of members employed through such organisations:

“Many of them work for non-profits which right away are already too much work for most people… If I would’ve been on that council there would’ve been no way I could’ve done any of that work, absolutely none of it because I worked sixty to eighty hours a week. So, I remember saying “I can go to meetings and that in
itself is cutting into my work time but I can’t go away with any work unless it’s specifically related to my organisation and it’s forwarding the work of my organisation. Otherwise I just can’t take on general activities.”

Despite commitments to time-demanding full-time employment, FPC members often identify opportunities to do council work as part of their employed positions in other organisations. In this sense, the FPC may be receiving additional in-kind support of staff-time. Interviewee 8 indicated that the food policy council derived a great deal of additional support in this manner without the need to compensate for salaries and other resources:

“All that staff time and resource time…that’s all in-kind as well. We’re not paying, we’re not compensating for their staff’s salaries.”

Although members sometimes find opportunities such as this within their other employment, several of those interviewed described an overburden of FPC work. For those organisations operating with part or very little staff time, members are expected to carry a significant amount of the workload including administrative functions for the council. As described by Interviewee 3B, addressing priorities and project ideas for these councils can depend largely upon the availability of members’ time and their interest:

“Well that’s the whole thing with a volunteer group. Sometimes we’re good about and other times we’re not. Sometimes what we do food policy work on our off-
hours and other times we don’t think about it till we get to the next meeting and
that’s really lame and we need to do better…Isn’t that the same with any
volunteer effort. You know, you get projects you get propelled and sort of
psyched about and then others that kind of wane.”

Even those FPCs with full-time staff may be a “working council” such that members are
expected to carry out council work on their own time. Interviewees of one council
indicated that from the very early stages of formation, despite the existence of a
significant amount of paid full-time staff, it was decided that the FPC would be a
“working council”. In several cases, interviewees noted that FPC members wanted work
and off-hours tasks:

“We just have some members who really step ahead to organise things…I think
it’s fair to say a lot of our projects have been very, very much council member
driven” (Interviewee 1).

“There was a project then that one of our members through the Department of the
Environment took on and they wrote a grant and they got money for a farmers’
market” (Interviewee 11).

“They want work to do. They want meaningful work and you can, you can make a
lot of committees and you know that just doesn’t work. They’ve got to perceive
that their committee has a job such as identifying farmers or identifying schools and get out and do that” (Interviewee 10).

While some FPC members may want to volunteer in this capacity, the amount of work carried out or expected can become a burden leading to internal problems and complaints from participants. Two of the FPCs interviewed experienced significant challenges and opposition when members felt that the workload was too heavy. Interviewee 6 describes how the problem of members feeling overworked arose for this FPC:

‘They would meet…once a month and then there were committee structures that had formed and people would do work outside…and I do think that that worked well. I think the committee work worked well. There were definite events that happened during that year and a half…there was a huge event that they had put on and there weren’t enough bodies to be putting on, to be doing such a large event and so the people that ended up doing it were feeling really overworked and they were the ones that were like: “okay, we can’t do this anymore.”’

In this case, several members left the FPC and the organisation completely restructured itself based on the input of staff and a few remaining participants. In another case the FPC, which had purposefully decided to be a “working council”, became confused about the role of staff and members and felt that they had misunderstood the amount of work expected from a “working council”. Interviewees from this FPC describe the emergence of this issue and how council members began to complain because they were unaware of
the amount of time demanded by this work,

‘Council’s actually starting to work on some major projects…and council got overwhelmed. It’s like ‘I didn’t think that that’s what I was signing up for. I thought that’s what staff was supposed to be doing. How come I’m doing so much work?’” (Interviewee 2A).

“I started to hear complaints from the council members that this was a lot of work, this was more work than they had anticipated. They’re all very busy. Many of them work for non-profits which right away are already too much work for most people. And they didn’t remember how they got to this place. They thought that their responsibilities were different” (Interviewee 2B).

This council undertook some facilitated workshop sessions and discussions to evaluate the issue and potential solutions. A re-evaluation of the roles of participants may have solved some of the problems related to the workload of FPC members:

“People sort of realised that they could, through this little crisis that we had, that we could be asking staff to do that, and that’s one way to
connect, you know to lessen the workload on council, and to connect so that everybody’s working on the same projects” (Interviewee 2A).

As several of the above examples show and as otherwise indicated by interviewees, members of working FPCs drive priorities in terms of research, writing, organising and hosting events and other aspects of project implementation. For several of those interviewed, members’ roles and responsibilities were not limited to these activities, also including the responsibility of staff monitoring. Interviewee 7 explained that members were there to review all the decisions made by staff. For two of the FPCs interviewed, an overemphasis on staff monitoring by members, especially in time spent during council meetings, added to dysfunction in the council and problems related to the (mis)interpretation of staff and member roles. In contrast, FPC 7 did not report any difficulties in staff monitoring, attributing this in part to a mechanism used in council meetings and clarity as to roles of staff and members. Interviewee 7 suggested the importance of trust between staff and members was so that the priority of each always remained supporting and driving the mandate and goals of the organisation. The mechanism used by this FPC involved a “quick-pass” list of items on meeting agendas. This list included staff decisions, budget reports and other issues that could be approved immediately at the beginning of meetings thereby avoiding lengthy discussions essentially related to trust issues during meeting times. Above and beyond workload and other responsibilities, interviews revealed a tremendous interest in and stress on the importance of the networks available through and the networking activities of FPC members. As described by interviewee 3A, member networking represents an activity of
intangible yet important results:

‘In the room you have a group of people who have different connections in the city and so everybody sort of shares some ideas ‘Oh, why don’t you put an ad on, in this newspaper’ or ‘Why don’t you send me the flier and I can get it out to my clients.’ So some of it is just, as a body themselves they, they are sort of, build their own capacity with, amongst each other. And that’s not something I could tangibly point to.’

For one FPC, member networking was seen as offering sufficient value to trade off for members engaging in more tangible work and activities. However, in this instance the presence of staff to attend to administrative issues must be taken into consideration. Despite a need among some FPCs for staff to handle administrative functions, interviews revealed that above all, the most valuable and crucial role of FPC members was their knowledge, expertise, and networking capabilities.

Interviews revealed what can be understood as three basic roles for FPC members. The first role is that of a member participating as a chairperson, thereby functioning as human resources personnel and liaison between staff and members. The second role relates to those members involved in a “working council.” In this role, members are expected to participate, on a voluntary basis, in the development, research, and implementation of FPC programs and activities. The final role the FPC members play, that of networker and educator, is essential to the food policy council concept and found throughout almost all
councils. In this role, members bring their resources, knowledge, and contacts to the
council and in return bring the council’s vision, mission, project ideas, and resource
needs to external organisations. This role, as it exists almost universally among FPCs,
can be the most essential role for members.

The need for a working council can to some degree be compensated for through the use
of member networks in fulfilling the necessary tasks and resource needs of the council.
The incredible resources and networks brought to the council by members in high-level
or influential positions can compensate for a “working council” by providing the means
for others to research and implement FPC programs thereby avoiding to a large extent the
demand of volunteer work from members.

7.3.3 Staff Roles and Responsibilities

While members play a critical role in resourcing, networking, and providing the food
systems perspective, FPCs still have a need for the management of administrative,
communications, external relationships, and other issues. Where full-time staff did not
exist, members (in “working councils”) were often left with the responsibility of filling
these needs. As stated in the previous section, this time-demanding work can place
overburdening pressure on the FPC members, depleting the organisational capacity of the
council. Staff persons can be critical in fulfilling a variety of roles and ensuring that
members do not become overburdened with council workload. Staff can also play their own unique role in networking, educating, and enhancing the food system perspective of the council and external organisations.

Interviewees revealed a different set of responsibilities for FPC staff persons as compared to those for members. Staff work encompasses a variety of activities including administrative functions, developing process and protocol, research and member support, networking, recruiting members, and building political capital. When full-time staff positions exist, the staff person(s) often acts as the “go-to” person or centre point for the FPC.49

For FPCs with sufficient paid time available, the majority of “day-to-day workings” (Interviewee 2A) or organisational functions go to staff. This may include developing meeting agendas, compiling resources, managing financial resources, answering members’ questions, and other administrative tasks. FPCs in the early stages of existence reported a focus of staff responsibility and activities on developing process and protocol. Once these activities are well established and worked through, staff move on to other activities:

49 As Interviewee 2A described in a previous quote, the presence of a full-time staff person means that there is always someone there to “answer the phone”.

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“Now we’re really starting to get into the meat of the issues and so now a lot of our focus is gonna shift from process-oriented things because…we’ve put hopefully enough effort into that that it won’t need as much time and energy at this point. Hopefully it’ll keep going and as staff we can focus more on research and recommendation development with you know all cues taken from task force participants and council members” (Interviewee 10).

Beyond process-oriented and administrative tasks, FPC staff members engage variably in research, networking, and other forms of support. Apart from networking, staff reported writing reports, promotional material, and other documents, organising and hosting events, and working with outside groups to support project implementation. Interviews and other materials provided by FPCs indicated a responsibility for or involvement of staff with writing some or all of the material and organising printing and distribution for reports and publications. FPCs with limited staff assistance indicated a sharing of these tasks among staff and members. A primary activity for many, as suggested in the above example from Interviewee 10, included research on questions and requests of FPC members. For FPCs supporting this type of staff-member relationship, staff tended to be somewhat removed from decision-making (and priority-setting) responsibilities and roles. Interviewee 10 describes staff activities in this position:

“I develop all their materials and the resources that they need. I, if they have ideas or questions or anything they come to me and I don’t make any of the decisions because that’s up for the council. I just am an arbiter of information and so they
come to me when they have questions…I write rough agendas but I don’t set the agenda.”

In these research and writing aspects of their work, staff persons genuinely fulfil a role of acting as support to council members. In stark contrast, some of the FPCs interviewed reported minimal research and writing responsibilities for staff members:

“I hardly do any researching and writing. You know what, I don’t have two minutes to research or write” (Interviewee 7).

In these cases, the role of staff and members was reversed such that members, in their capacity to network and bring opportunity and ideas to the council, acted as support for staff. Staff for these FPCs stressed recruiting valuable members, a staff responsibility also reported by several others interviewed, as a fundamental concern and activity. One interviewee described the search for FPC members who could open up certain networks and opportunities for the FPC to work in a particular sector or community.

The two food policy councils that reported difficulties with the interpretation of member responsibilities and workload indicated similar problems in the interpretation of staff roles. One case in particular demonstrated a lack of clarity as to whether staff served as support to members, members served as support to staff, or both. These problems emerged in the early stages of operation for the FPC where staff felt that while the council members worked to determine priorities to address there was insufficient work
and member needs to support. In other words, there was not enough work for the staff members. Two interviewees from this FPC demonstrated this confusion in interpretation of staff responsibilities. When asked about this issue, other FPCs did not report any similar problems. One interviewee speculated that the absence of this problem may have been due to the presence of a specific mandate for that FPC and that for those without such a mandate a slow beginning for staff could become an issue. As the outcome of internal assessments for the FPCs encountering these problems suggests, clarifying roles appears to be crucial to successful operation for these food policy councils.

Without exception interviewees indicated that staff fulfilled a role as liaison or network point for the FPC. For example, Interviewee 9A indicated that a staff member “plays a very lead role in that in pulling together partners.” Other interviewees also reported staff serving as a liaison to various government officials and agencies. Building political capital, in terms of gaining recognition and support for a FPC’s work, was suggested by one interviewee as a crucial component of staff networking responsibilities. This interviewee suggested that, despite government ordinances, executive orders, or several years of firm establishment and support, food policy councils especially through staff members need to constantly work to build political capital to grow recognition and call in additional support when needed.

Overall, interviews revealed that staff have numerous responsibilities. These responsibilities are different from the primarily networking roles of other participants in that they include administrative tasks, acting as the organisation’s main point of contact
(the “go-to” person), “building” the council (i.e. educating the council, selecting members), functioning as a liaison with government, and networking for purposes and in ways different to others. Members often cannot and most likely should not try to meet these responsibilities for the council in order to avoid an overburdening volunteer workload. Members and staff, as interviews demonstrated, play their own vital roles in the function of FPCs. As their responsibilities for networking indicate, there exists significant contact for members and staff with external organisations that is directly related to FPC activities. Since a great deal of contact and exchange occurs with external organisations the following section explores their function and role(s) in the activities of FPCs.

7.3.4 Role of Associated External Organisations

While staff and members appear to play a central role in the activities of food policy councils, a great deal of project design and implementation occurs in conjunction with associated external organisations. FPCs work with academic institutions, government institutions, community groups, and businesses to gain access to financial, human, and other resources that are not readily available to the council. For some projects FPCs facilitate the creation of community groups to carry project implementation. In other cases FPCs facilitate pre-existing groups, businesses, government agencies and organisations to work individually or in conjunction with others to apply project ideas. Academic institutions often work with FPCs to carry out research and write reports. In activities requiring assistance in legislation, planning, and public services, FPC staff and
members work with government agencies to acquire resources and support. Most food policy councils lack the resources to implement programs and projects individually. With this in mind several of those interviewed described developing ideas for, suggesting, networking between, and facilitating other organisations in project development and implementation as a central and fundamental activity of the FPC. To illustrate this relationship, interviewees described the relationship between the FPC and other organisations with respect to certain project ideas as demonstrated below:

“(The project) was done by council members and a whole lot of other people, organisations and the community. So we were really the convenor and we put our intern into helping with a lot of the details. But it was all people from the community putting the time and effort in” (Interviewee 1).

“What we did was we organised a lot around it and then kind of gave it off to another community group to monitor and we didn’t need to monitor it anymore. But I think some of those things are the kinds of things we can do. Take a project on, give light to it, and then sort of pass the torch” (Interviewee 2B).

As suggested by Interviewee 2B, working with interests across the food system creates a necessity for FPCs to network and coordinate among organisations to ensure continuity in projects and ability to work among a variety of different issues. One interviewee discussed taking very little or no credit publicly for the work done by other organisations. In allowing other organisations and individuals to take credit for their part the FPC was
able to accomplish tasks while maintaining valuable relationships especially with non-profit organisations and public officials. The value in this approach included facilitating these individuals and organisations to gain valuable public recognition without, especially in the case of non-profit organisations, seeing the FPC as competition. This approach allows FPCs to gain support or political capital by fulfilling a role as the group which helps others to “get more money” (Interviewee 7) or build public support.

The importance of fostering and utilising these relationships cannot be underestimated. Working with external organisations in this manner helps to fulfil the crucial roles of FPCs discussed in Chapter 5. These relationships with external organisations enable an FPC to fulfil the role as a network centre point for food system interests and the role of facilitator (as opposed to implementer) for change in the food system.

7.4 Implementation and Operational Challenges

Identifying roles for staff, members, and external organisations and developing suitable administrative arrangements (as discussed in Chapter 6) present challenges to FPCs in terms of creating a structure and set of relationships that will allow councils to meet their goals and objectives and fulfil the roles outlined in Chapter 5. This structuring, with the exception of obtaining alliance with government, is almost completely within the control of the food policy council. Outside of these challenges in creating structure, FPCs face a range of issues, pressures, and threats over which they have little or no direct control.
When queried as to the challenges they had encountered, most FPCs reported a range of common problems over which they may hold some influence such as limited funding and confusion over staff and member roles. Two FPCs had, at the time of interview, recently encountered significant setbacks in operation related to communication, confusion of staff and member roles, and member dissatisfaction. Several of those interviewed reported additional challenges that lay primarily outside of their sphere of influence. These included challenges such as strong external corporate or government opposition and changes in government following elections. This section summarises some of the issues discussed by interviewees including both direct structural challenges and external challenges.

Although not explicitly addressed by interviewees one overall challenge facing food policy councils may be the general reluctance to discuss problems. A widespread absence of self-evaluation procedures among FPCs represented in interviewees indicates a hesitation or unwillingness to examine and address organisational difficulties. It appeared that deliberate evaluation of the effectiveness of organisational structure only occurred when councils faced significant threats to establishment. Outside of an individual FPC’s operation, the unwillingness to recognise challenges and difficulties also creates impediments for other groups examining the potential and strategies for creating and operating food policy councils. Interviewee 11 felt that this presented an overall, pervasive challenge in the operation of food policy councils:

‘I know in this country that we don’t…talk about what doesn’t work you know
talk about the problems. It’s always you have to have the glossy “we’re wonderful” kind of presentation always whereas I don’t know if that’s really served the movement at all.’

While a need for more general self-evaluation and discussion of challenges may exist, interviewees still revealed several of the barriers and obstacles faced in operation.

Maintaining adequate funding, resources, and support figures prominently as an almost universal setback for food policy councils. Every FPC represented in interviews indicated that more funding for staff salaries or other resources would significantly benefit and facilitate the function of the council. Interviews revealed an emphasis on the challenge of operating a FPC without at least one full-time staff person. Some interviewees, in most cases those representing FPCs with less than one full-time staff person, placed more stress on this issue than others. For one of these FPCs a full-time staff person was available but faced the constant challenge of writing grant applications to secure continued funding for the position thereby placing constraints on the amount of attention that could be given specifically to council activities. While interviewees expressed an interest in additional funding for resources and staff salaries, the majority of views expressed this as a potentially additional benefit rather than a necessity for operation.

Issues of relationships with government and among various government agencies produced additional common, although generally manageable challenges. Alignment with specific government departments, recruiting government staff as FPC members, and changes to government were mentioned by several interviewees as obstacles in the
operation of the organisation. In regards to changes in government organisation, two urban FPCs highlighted the challenges presented by amalgamation of the city with other local government areas. Amalgamation led to disengagement between government agencies as well as changes in administrative structure and the priorities of elected officials. Disengagement among agencies created difficulties in coordinating among departments involved in food systems work. Changes to administrative structure and the priorities of elected officials featured as a challenge in dealing with amalgamation and for other FPCs facing regular elections or other alterations to government structure. One FPC encountered a significant confrontation in the proposed merger of two major food-related government departments. In regards to regular elections, variation in the degree of concern, support, and interest of changing elected officials for FPC issues and projects creates an environment of constant uncertainty. Recruiting government staff without the ability to speak with authority in representing their agency can create substantial challenges in decision-making and accomplishing goals. Interviewees 4A and 4B placed this issue as the most significant barrier faced in the history of the FPC. Alignment with particular government departments also raises obstacles to gaining recognition of and support for FPC activities. Food policy councils engage with opportunity, for example, by locating upon creation within a department willing to support the mandate or goals of such an organisation. While state FPCs often locate within departments of agriculture which hold food production as a primary interest, local government (or urban) areas do not traditionally include departments whose primary areas of interest include food issues (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). For this reason many FPCs have located within departments of (public/community/population) health as these divisions often recognise
shared objectives in relation to hunger, nutrition, and other food security concerns. As discussed previously, Interviewee 7 highlighted some of the problems in the bases of food policy councils in departments of (public/community/population) health. One of these problems relates to the low priority level of food issues in health departments. A second and equally difficult challenge highlighted by this interviewee is the territorial divide among the various divisions of urban government:

‘Food is a very territorial area right like if (we) say: “well we wanna talk about this for compost” well, Works guys say: “excuse me, we do compost in this city pal… and you wanna talk about nutrition or anything like that like in, I’m not talking in very short order, I’m talking in nano-seconds they’ll be telling (us): “get out of my issue or you will regret it”’ (Interviewee 7).

To counteract this problem several interviewees (most notably Interviewees 1, 7, 13) discussed the value of liaising with government staff and elected officials to build political capital or the openness among agencies for collaboration.

Concerns for effective communication within the council and a lack of clarity regarding the roles of staff and council members revealed another set of potential barriers for food policy councils. These issues appeared as challenges principally for the two food policy councils experiencing significant setbacks in operation although they were raised as potential problems by interviewees of other FPCs as well. One interviewee indicated a
broader concern for communication barriers indicating that effectiveness in this area presented the most significant threat to FPC operation:

“I do feel like a lot of these councils, well, committees, councils, any group working together I think, my experience is that it’s the communication that’s the downfall of it” (Interviewee 6).

For one FPC interviewees described this issue more specifically as a lack of effectiveness in communication between staff and members. These more specific views reflected on the overarching problem of hesitation and general lack of effectiveness in communicating about problems. In some cases, communications protocol disengages participants from expressing concerns or difficulties. In other instances staff or members may take advantage of protocol to instigate others, as described by Interviewee 2B:

“A really squeaky wheel on the council doesn’t think it’s working and so that person may bring up something and then the whole council starts talking about it. That’s why I’m saying it will be very interesting to see what happens at tonight’s meeting because there are one or two squeaky wheels and they just, they let people know when they’re not happy with something.”

For the two FPCs where communication became a significant challenge these issues also translated into lack of clarity regarding the roles of staff and council members. In these cases, the issues expressed themselves through increasing dissatisfaction of members.
The lack of clarity appeared as misunderstandings as to the type and amount of work expected from council members and what could be expected of staff. One cause of this drawback may have been miscommunication of expectations and roles upon recruitment of staff and council members. The skills of staff persons with regards to facilitation and running an organisation play a significant role here. Another source of this difficulty could relate to an overestimation of the amount of time available for FPC work from “time-crunched” members. One interviewee suggested that apportioning a considerable amount of members’ time to staff monitoring may also have triggered these difficulties. This view remains supported in light of those expressed by interviewees of other councils regarding the necessity for trust between staff and members. In resolving member dissatisfaction and communication barriers these FPCs took two different approaches.

One FPC which lost almost all of its members as a result of this complication, completely restructured the organisation to clarify the role of staff person(s) as actors and members as support, networkers, and advisors. The other group used a facilitated process resulting in a restructuring of meeting agendas, communication protocol, and clarification of expectations of staff and council members. Although not expressly indicated by interviewees another potential source of miscommunication may lie in the discrepancies and lack of clarity among definitions of food policy councils in general. Inconsistency as to the views on the more general roles of FPCs indicates a potential internal communication pitfall for these organisations.

50 Miscommunication as to the roles of food policy councils relates to issues such as whether the organisation implements or recommends strategies, engages in policy or project work, and expectations of...
In addition to internal organisational challenges FPCs experience barriers in the form of opposition from external entities. According to one interviewee this type of opposition is to be expected and is almost unavoidable:

“I’m learning…from other councils…and conversations with other people who have done this sort of work a lot. It just kind of comes with the territory and then there are certain issues that are going to be controversial on some level. But either different parts of the agriculture community or the access community or whatever and there are just gonna be issues we’re gonna have deal with” (Interviewee 8).

At the state level, FPCs may encounter opposition from industry groups and corporate entities. All of the state groups interviewed reported encountering opposition at some point from corporate entities and industry interest groups, especially agriculture and farm bureaus. Interviewees indicated this type of opposition arising in response to specific FPC programs or to member selection. For those groups which had moved well beyond formative stages opposition was reported as aimed towards specific activities and broader objectives of the FPCs. The opposition, although not significant enough to dismantle the councils, did pose a challenge and threat for consideration. Three FPCs, two of more recent formation, described encounters that they had experienced with corporate or industry opposition directed at the membership composition of the council. In these relationships to government and other organisations.

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cases, the industry and corporate groups were interested in participating as members on the FPC. Interviewee 8 again described the unavoidable nature of these types of encounters for food policy councils:

‘In any process of this nature, there’s always going to be people who aren’t happy for one reason or another from both sides because you know “well why aren’t I involved” or “why aren’t I involved” and there’s only so many people that you can involve.’

While the FPCs abated these concerns through the inclusion of these groups as representatives (either as full members, task force, consultants, or otherwise) these concessions could present further internal challenges to decision-making and maintaining objectives. One FPC even created a new “affiliate” member position to include the corporate interests without offering them full-time positions. Local government level FPCs appeared fairly safe from this opposition. Interviewee 7 described this as a significant advantage of local councils:

“This is the fantastic opportunity of a food policy council which is that…if you want to fight for institutional or policy change at the national level…every interest group in the country is gonna be there…but you know what…those guys cannot match us locally…and that’s the nice little secret of life. So we can walk right through this stuff and never face any corporate opposition”
“That’s the real power of a food policy council is, I sort of emphasized a bit about the challenges you face, but the big news is that it’s a pretty wide, it’s a wide open field because the sections of capital that work on the city level are developers, real estate speculators not the food industry that work on the national level, the pesticide industry.”

In contrast, FPCs at the local level are prone to opposition especially from within local government. Interviewees described opposition of this nature to FPC work as resulting from territorial challenges, attitudes of elected officials towards FPC work, and amalgamation of local government areas. One interviewee described a situation in which the FPC experienced opposition to passing a policy statement through local government. Through this process the FPC was obliged to remove all of the implementation mechanisms before the policy would be passed by the government. The interviewee indicated that no local council members would vote for the policy if additional funding from government was required to implement policy recommendations.

Food policy councils, as highlighted above, face a range of challenges related to administration, internal organisational issues, and to external political, corporate, and social pressures. Interviewees revealed a similarly wide range of responses to managing these pressures. These issues and responses indicate some approaches to administration, structure, and performance that can constitute approaches to best avoid or manage these challenges while also meeting the roles of FPCs as discussed in Chapter 5.
7.5 *Conclusion*

FPC processes involve several stages or components, from determining broad priority areas to identifying specific projects and the roles of participants in their development and implementation. Within the stage of broad priority or agenda setting, annual work plans, recurring annual agenda items, community consultation, and subcommittees can be useful tools for FPCs. These elements help to structure the broad range of food system interests and ensure that the council addresses its responsibilities and mandate while providing flexibility and room for adaptation to changing circumstances. This flexibility is necessary at the stage of identifying specific projects since implementation depends to a large extent on opportunities and resources as they arise.

Members, staff, and other external participants all play critical roles in FPC operation and the development and implementation of projects. Staff have numerous roles and responsibilities ranging from administrative tasks, main contact, and educating and selecting members to functioning as a liaison with government and other organisations or networks. The responses of interviewees revealed a fairly common view that expectations of members to try to meet these staff responsibilities can overburden and ‘burn-out’ the council. On the other hand, members play a vital role in resourcing, networking, and providing the food systems perspective. This is where the need for members in positions of authority becomes evident. Members with decision-making authority and access to resources can more readily aid in identifying and acquiring the human and financial resource needs for councils. The networking roles of members feeds into the
engagement with external organisations. These “other participants,” often sourced through the contacts of members and staff, frequently take on the implementation of projects where the FPC is not in the place to complete this type of work on its own.

The responses and recommendations of interviewees discussed earlier in this chapter can be considered in conjunction with the components of structure and organisational roles discussed in the preceding chapters. Chapter 8 builds on the interviewee responses and recommendations to investigate whether there exist certain options within structure and process categories that are more effective than others in building capacity and the ability to fulfil mandate and roles.
Chapter 8: Models for the Establishment and Administrative Structure of Food Policy Councils

8.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have examined research findings related to administrative structuring, operations, and the organisational role of food policy councils (in relation to alternative food movements). Conclusions drawn from the responses of interviewees, which demonstrated some strong similarities in experience and recommendations, indicate that some approaches to administrative structuring and operations may be more effective at managing challenges, meeting goals, and fulfilling the organisational roles of FPCs. This chapter examines and summarises these similarities in the experiences and recommendations of interviewees. The summary of these similarities then provides the basis for identifying models for administrative structure and operations management that would be generally more effective at meeting goals and fulfilling the organisational roles of FPCs (as outlined in Chapter 5).

The basic premise established for the food policy council concept (that they are organisations created for the purpose of cross-sectoral collaborative efforts to influence government) indicates that the creation, structuring, and operation of FPCs must respond to the influence of their local and regional governments. In order to fulfil the roles of networker, facilitator, and educator as outlined in Chapter 5, FPCs are also influenced by
and must respond to local values, economic structures and activities, and the presence of non-profit, community, or other advocacy groups. These characteristics demonstrate considerable variation between different local government areas or between local and regional or state/provincial areas. Ultimately, the “most effective” models developed for food policy councils suggest a high degree of responsiveness to and use of these factors and influences. The replication and expansion of the FPC concept and structural elements to other government areas suggests some degree of transferability of administrative models. Given the variability in social, economic, cultural, political, and environmental factors between different geopolitical areas, models require some degree of reflexiveness and responsiveness if they are to be applied and tested. The following examines pathways to creating FPCs and potential models to be implemented as these groups are established, in light of the necessity for flexibility due to differences in government and local or regional values.

8.2 Options for ‘Best-Practice’ Models of Food Policy Councils

The research findings presented in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 demonstrate similarities in experiences and recommendations of interviewees in relation to FPC organisational structure and operations. These similarities and recommendations suggest options within categories of administrative structure that prove more effective in building capacity and enabling FPCs to meet their own goals and the organisational roles outlined in Chapter 5. The existence of options within structural categories is especially suggested through the
histories recounted by those food policy councils recently formed. Several of those
FPCs, especially FPC 2, described a preliminary process of selecting from choices related
to different administrative components when creating the structure and protocol for the
organisation. The similarities among the responses and recommendations of other FPC
interviewees also suggest that different categories exist whose options for different
administrative characteristics can lead to the implementation of more effective structure
and procedural guidelines.

The categories for structure and process components of FPC models are based on those
presented in Chapter 4 and which provided the framework for Chapters 6 and 7:

**Structure:**
1. Organisational type
2. Relationship with government
3. Institutional alignment
4. Formalised processes (organisational documents; evaluation)
5. Staff
6. Members
7. Diversity and relationships with external organisations

**Process:**
8. Decision – making/Priority setting
9. Priority areas
10. Long and short-term planning
11. Function in catalysing or implementing programs or policy
12. Task forces and subcommittees
13. Expectations and roles of members
14. Staff roles
15. Roles of external organisations

Several of the structure options (e.g. Staff; Members, Relationship with government) are to some extent covered by and based upon previous research which formed a part of the basis for the methodology (Yeatman, 1994; Boron, 2003; Dahlberg, 1994a). However, the options within the categories presented here reveal a different set of suggested choices and are based upon a different interpretation of “effectiveness.” Previous research focussed on effectiveness in terms of maintaining the existence of the organisation. In contrast, the findings of this research revealed options for greater effectiveness in terms of meeting the goals of the FPC and fulfilling the organisation roles identified in Chapter 5. The suggested options for greater effectiveness build upon, although in many ways differ from and contradict, the suggested characteristics contributing to “success” and “failure” of FPCs indicated by Dahlberg (1994a) and Yeatman (1994) as covered in Chapter 3. The following section details these suggestions, through the categories of structure and process components and their options, leading to some models and alternatives for more effective FPC administration and operation.

The information and responses gathered from interviewees and other sources relating to administrative structuring of FPCs are summarised in Table 8.1. This table presents all of the options for FPC structuring as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Options for structuring
are presented in relation to different categories of administration as outlined in these previous chapters (e.g. funding; organisational type; institutional alignment). Categories and options for FPC process are presented in Table 8.2 and summarised in the subsequent discussion. Table 8.3 recapitulates these categories of structure and process in order to present only those options revealed as most effective for structuring FPCs to meet their organisational roles.

Table 8.1 illustrates the options for FPC structuring within the categories related to basic or fundamental administrative issues. These categories cover the issues discussed in Chapter 6 about the creation of FPCs. However, two issues related to creating FPCs are not presented in this table: use of organisational documents and evaluation; and representation of a range of food system stakeholders through diverse membership. These components are seen as “non-optional” since they have been identified as essential in building capacity through their utility in clarifying and formalising the structure and processes of FPCs and encouraging development and adaptation to change.

The options shown in Table 8.1 illustrate all potential administrative arrangements, including those which may not lead to effectiveness as defined above. It is important to note that the options given in each row are not exclusive to that column and are interchangeable with options in other columns from the respective row (e.g. a regional council, which is option B in row 1, could utilise options A, B, C, or D from any of the following rows. This also applies to Table 8.2 which is presented later in this chapter. An evaluation is included in the following discussion to identify those options within
each category which were suggested by interviewee responses as contributing the most to building capacity and effectiveness in FPCs.

### Categories Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geopolitical Level</th>
<th>Local/Municipal</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>Hybrid</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Type</td>
<td>Permanent Government</td>
<td>Temporary Government</td>
<td>Non-government</td>
<td>Options A, B, or C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Alignment</td>
<td>Central Gov’t Office (e.g. Governor’s office)</td>
<td>Gov’t Department**</td>
<td>Non-profit</td>
<td>Options A, B, or C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Secured Permanent Gov’t</td>
<td>Temp. Gov’t Grant</td>
<td>Private Grant</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Members</td>
<td>12 - 30</td>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>Options A or B</td>
<td>Options A or B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Staff</td>
<td>&lt; 1 FT</td>
<td>1 FT</td>
<td>1 FT + Aid</td>
<td>2 – 3 FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers**</td>
<td>Standing Facilitator</td>
<td>Standing Figurehead</td>
<td>Rotating</td>
<td>Options A, B, or C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committees</td>
<td>Standing</td>
<td>Ad Hoc</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1 Potential administrative arrangements for food policy councils

** There are several sub-options for government departments which vary according to the particular local or regional government

*** Other options for officers exist including secretary and the choice between a single chairperson or co-chairpersons

The categories, and their options, of organisational aspects summarised in Table 8.1 address the most fundamental components of FPC composition. The first category, “geopolitical level” is an exception to the others in that typically it is not so much an option as it is a product of coincidence. This category, however, is crucial to the function of FPCs and affects the focus of the organisations’ work. The focus of FPCs’ work is affected by this characteristic, “geopolitical level”, for two primary reasons. Geopolitical level determines what kind of food system stakeholders will be affected by the food policy council. For example, FPCs at the state level may be involved with and affected by
stakeholders such as large agri-food corporations and unions. In contrast, this research has shown that these stakeholders usually do not have significant interest in or affect FPCs at the local level. FPCs are also affected by: the differences between these different stakeholders’ concerns; and by differences in government and non-government power structures. For example, local-level FPCs may focus on urban agriculture. However, state-level FPCs will not focus as strongly on urban agriculture but may take a stronger interest in broad-acre agriculture. This category of “geopolitical level” is also included as an option to show that FPCs function differently at the local compared to the regional or state level. Certain interviewees suggested that FPCs can function most effectively and with least opposition at local/municipal levels. The benefits or disadvantages of each government level, and methods for managing these challenges, should be considered prior to forming a food policy council. The option to form a hybrid (e.g. local and regional) FPC may also present itself in this category.

The second category addresses the question of whether or not FPCs should be government or non-government organisations. As suggested throughout the research, evaluation, and interviews, the relationship of FPCs to government is an integral component of premise, objectives, structure, and function. Three options were identified for this category. Two of these options indicate establishment as tied to government process. One of these, establishment as “Permanent Government” relates to those FPCs which are created as a government program or section of a government department. This offers significantly more stability than the other options since to some degree the FPCs have become an “institution” and do not face the challenge of needing to request
continuation of their existence or funding on a regular basis. The other is that of FPCs which are established under government ordinances or executive orders such that they are “temporary” and often subject to timelines indicating the period of their existence. These organisations face regular, periodic assessments determining whether or not the ordinance will be renewed. In many ways, this type of FPC also operates as a hybrid of government and non-government organisation. While these organisations are established as an extension of government entities, they customarily depend on non-government organisations for funding and other resources. The third option is that of a separate, non-government entity. In relation to this category options A and C offer the greatest stability since they do not depend on a requirement for a regular renewal that mandates their existence. In terms of fulfilling the organisational role for FPCs of needing to act as advocates for change in government decision-making processes however, options A and B offer greater advantage through the resources provided in linking directly and formally with government.

Category three functions as a subcategory of the preceding, in that establishment as a NGO in practice has meant automatic designation of the FPC as a non-profit organisation and therefore it has no direct alignment with a specific food sector through a government department. However, in some cases the membership or arrangements with external organisations demonstrates alignment with specific food sectors. This occurs through a majority representation, in membership, external relationships, or programs, of certain government departments or private organisations with specific food sector interests. The two governmental types of FPC usually encounter more directly the option of aligning
with different government departments. Findings suggest that alignment with a central
government office (e.g. mayor’s office or governor’s office), a planning department, or
an office specifically targeting sustainable development presents the most advantageous
approach to food sector and institutional alignment. Due to the broader focus and
authorization to work throughout a wide range of sectors and departments, alignment
with these types of government offices can help to avoid focussing too heavily in one
food sector and provide greater authority in implementing programs. This encourages
and aids FPCs in meeting the organisational role of working throughout the food system
as opposed to within one particular sector (e.g. agriculture; public health; community
development).

Funding options are closely related to and influenced by organisational type and
institutional alignment. This influence is such that funding arrangements are usually not
an autonomous option but a product of the preceding two categories. Permanent,
“institutionalised” FPCs and temporarily government-appointed councils are more likely
to receive a secured pocket of “permanent” government funding. For example, of the
participants involved in this research, only the permanent and temporarily appointed
councils received secure funding. This type of funding will be provided by the
government at the council’s relevant geopolitical level (e.g. city council; city department
of health; governor’s office; premier’s office; state/provincial department of agriculture).
The final four categories are relatively straightforward. Findings suggest that twenty to thirty is the ideal number of members and that FPCs can operate more effectively with two or three paid full-time staff persons. Officers, such as chairpersons, serve most effectively in a standing position as facilitators for meeting agendas and problems, issues, or interests of members. The value of committees changes according to the age and experience of the FPC. Standing committees for specific issues are valuable in early stages of operation and can help to maintain a food systems perspective when one is designated for each of a broad range of issues across the sectors. Some findings suggest however that standing committees may become an impediment to growth in more established councils. Without the use of standing committees some measures should be taken to ensure maintenance of a food systems approach. These measures could include protocol for annual or periodic reviews, member selection criteria, or regular reviews conducted by staff on the activities of the FPC.

Categories and options related to process primarily include those issues discussed in Chapter 7 (staff responsibilities; member responsibilities; agenda setting). In contrast to structural components where only one selection can be made within a category (e.g. government or non-government; local or state), process components can not always be framed as opposing options (where only one option of many can be employed). Often several options can be employed simultaneously (e.g. for staff skills choosing both leadership and administrative abilities). Table 8.2, on the next page, and the following discussion examine the categories and options revealed through research as they relate to the process components of FPCs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Membership Representation</strong></td>
<td>Diverse representation of food system stakeholders; The particular sectors, types of organisations** represented, and the exact number of representatives/stakeholders from each sector/type of organisation** are specified in the organisational document(s). The FPC must fulfil these membership requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Member Skills</strong></td>
<td>Represent a diversity of food sectors and stakeholders; Knowledgeable; Decision-making capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Member Responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>Networking; Knowledge Base; Facilitating; Educating; Resourcing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Skills</strong></td>
<td>Leadership; Organisational Management; Research; Networking; Event Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff Responsibilities</strong></td>
<td>Leadership; Organisational Management; Coordination; Networking; Contact point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Participants</strong></td>
<td>Subcommittee participants from organisations not represented within the membership base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.2 Options for FPC process**

** E.g. non-profit organisation, private business, government

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Selection criteria for FPC membership can range from very loose to quite strict guidelines. On one end of the spectrum, there is the option to place no criteria or conditions on membership other than an interest in food systems issues and willingness to volunteer time for meetings and possibly for other work. This is a fundamental aspect of membership selection for virtually all FPCs. Some groups place more emphasis on this aspect than others, especially when this is the only criterion determining FPC membership. From this basis, when working within a set number of members, other conditions may be set on member selection as well. One common type of condition concerns ensuring a diverse representation from across the food system sectors. FPCs often choose to specify the exact number of representatives to be chosen from each sector or part of the food system. A selection from the Vancouver Food Policy Council Terms of Reference illustrates this type of specification:

“11. PROPOSED APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

The VFPC members will consist of 14 sectoral and 6 at-large members. Two (2) members will be elected from each of the following seven sectors: (food) production, processing, distribution, consumption, access, waste management and system-wide (for a list of possible members in each sector, see Appendix B). Six (6) at-large candidates will be elected. The at-large members will have expertise needed by the Council but may or may not be affiliated with any of the sectors comprising the council. As part of the candidate application process, individual candidates will decide the sector with which they are most closely affiliated.”
The Michigan Food Policy Council also employs very strict member selection criteria specifying that members will be: two from Michigan agricultural organisations; two representing sustainable agriculture or sustainable agricultural development; one representing higher education; one representing K-12 schools; one representing community-based urban development activities; one representing rural development activities; one representing anti-hunger organisations; one representing public health organisations or persons with expertise in public health; one representing food processors; one representing food retailers; one representing non-food manufacturers; one representing restaurants; one representing organised labour. This approach to membership selection criteria presents advantages and disadvantages. The benefits of this approach include the clarity of a formalized process, leaving little room for misinterpretation, and ensuring that a broad food system representation will occur. On the other hand, the disadvantage of this approach stems from its lack of flexibility such that when one member seat becomes vacant, the FPC may suffer from a reduced membership size until a replacement can be found fitting all of the very specific selection criteria. In contrast, FPCs may indicate a looser framework for ensuring diversity. This can encompass the advantages of the above approach while avoiding the disadvantages associated with a lack of flexibility. For example, the Portland-Multnomah County Food Policy Council specified the following criteria for member selection:

“Members representing the diversity of the local community and providing a wide range of expertise on local food issues including

- hunger relief
- nutrition
- food business and industrial practices
- land use
- local farming (large and small farms)
- community education
- institutional food purchasing and practices
- faith community
- Extension Service”

While some lack of clarity or precision in these selection criteria could lead to conflict in interpretation, these stipulations allow for some flexibility that can be valuable in adapting to changing circumstances and food cultures.

Other considerations when selecting members reflect on skills and authority. The best options in relation to the skills and authority of members involve the inclusion of members with a significant level of authority in their organisation. Middle management

level representatives often do not have the authority to influence decisions and directions for their institutions, organisation, agency, or department.

Levels of skill and authority in turn reflect upon some of the options for the roles and responsibilities of members. One of the most significant choices to be made in terms of responsibilities concerns the amount of work expected from members. Opting for a “working council” could help to accomplish more, especially in the absence of appropriate staff support. Conversely, the option of a “working council” can lead to conflict among members, between members and staff, and waning interest in participation where members feel overworked. It may be important to remember here the examples of FPCs 2 and 6 where members participating in staff monitoring led to unconstructive and negative circumstances such that both food policy councils undertook significant restructuring of their staff and member responsibilities.

Members drawn from high level management positions, non-profit organisations, and many other areas, often do not have time to spend on additional projects. In the case of selecting such individuals for membership, a demand arises for other options in terms of their roles and responsibilities. One valuable asset gained from selecting such representatives involves the credibility and authority on issues lent to the FPC through their inclusion as members.

Another and perhaps better option than working councils involves employment of members as networking agents, representatives with decision-making capacity in leading
organisations from a diversity of food system sectors. This type of membership profile creates a combined hotbed of knowledge and ideas with the networks, resources, and funding needed to promote education and to facilitate the implementation of food programs and projects. Members facilitate the education about sustainable food systems, the implementation of projects, planning mechanisms, and policy, thereby avoiding a great deal of the work and time demand that accompanies these types of activities. Through this option members can also be afforded the opportunity to engage more directly in working on projects where their individual interests, time demands, and schedules allow. Opting for high level management representatives and a largely non-working council means that a FPC primarily will not implement projects. Instead it will fulfil the role of educator, networker, coordinator, and facilitator for planning and policy creation or change and project implementation.

In addition to members there is also the option for including other regular FPC participants through various avenues. One option is to include participants as members of subcommittees. Another option is to include ex-officio members such as mayors, governors, departmental heads or their representatives. As indicated in Option C of Table 8.2, there could also be a provision for interested parties to attend and offer comments during meetings on a casual basis, without voting or decision-making privileges.

Options for staff skills and responsibilities are fairly minimal. There was no apparent alternate option for staff skills and criteria for selection other than the requirement for individuals with the capacity to be leaders and effectively run an organisation, coordinate
and network among participants, synthesize information, and be familiar with food systems issues. These skills directly indicate the responsibilities of staff members. In cases where more than one full-time staff person is present, the ability to organise and conduct some research of food issues, planning, and policy may be included as a valued staff skill.

Synthesizing these conclusions, some models for effective FPC structure emerge. Table 8.3, building upon Table 8.1 and Table 8.2, demonstrates some of these structural recommendations and provides three ‘models’ for FPC organisational structure and process. Choices for non-profit organisations were not included in this table based upon research findings leading to the conclusion that such organisations are considered “food systems organisations” in contrast to those interests, roles and responsibilities filled by the “food policy council.”

The multiplicity of options provided below is intended to allow for some flexibility in relation to varying local characteristics and political, economic, or social circumstances. While all of these models represent those options identified as most effective, minor differences between them may lead to advantages and disadvantages dependent on these circumstances. These differences and advantages/disadvantages are discussed in Chapter 9.

As with Tables 8.1 and 8.2 the options for each row are interchangeable. However, options represented in “Model A” are considered to be the most effective while those in
“Model B” and “Model C” are second and third most effective respectively. The exception to this is the category for “Geopolitical Level”. In this category, all options are seen as equally advantageous. Table 8.3 is presented on the following page.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Primary Options</th>
<th>Other Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model A</td>
<td>Model B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geopolitical Level</td>
<td>Local (Municipal or Regional)</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Type</td>
<td>Permanent Government - Institutionalised</td>
<td>Semi-Permanent Government – Executive Order or Ordinance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Alignment</td>
<td>Central Gov’t Office (e.g. Governor’s office) or Planning Department</td>
<td>Other Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Secured Permanent Gov’t</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Members</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Staff</td>
<td>2 -3 FT</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officers***</td>
<td>Standing Facilitator, Chair/Co-chair</td>
<td>Standing Figurehead, Chair/Co-chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committees</td>
<td>Hybrid</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Representation</td>
<td>Diverse representation of food system stakeholders; The particular sectors, types of organisations** represented, and the exact number of representatives/stakeholders from each sector/type of organisation** are specified in the organisational document(s). The FPC must fulfil these membership requirements</td>
<td>Diverse representation of food system stakeholders; Organisational document(s) specify food sectors to potentially be represented but do not have a requirement for exact numbers of representatives from each sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Skills</td>
<td>Food system representatives; Knowledgeable; Decision-making capacity</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Responsibilities</td>
<td>Networking; Knowledge Base; Facilitating; Educating; Resourcing</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Skills</td>
<td>Leadership; Organisational Management; Research; Networking; Event Management</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Responsibilities</td>
<td>Leadership; Organisational Management; Coordination; Networking; Contact point</td>
<td>Research; Event Management;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Participants</td>
<td>Subcommittee participants; Informal and unofficial meeting participants; Ex - officio members</td>
<td>Same as Model A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3 Three models for FPC structure and process

** E.g. non-profit organisation, private business, government

*** Other options for officers exist including secretary and the choice between a single chairperson or co-chairpersons
8.4 Conclusion

The findings and analysis of research conducted on FPCs in North America have suggested significant similarities in experiences and recommendations on the components of structure and process that can lead to effectiveness in terms of capacity building and fulfilling organisational roles. The model presented in this chapter summarises these findings, considering the various opposing options and presenting those revealed through the research as contributing the most to effective FPC operation. The development of this model from a broad and diverse representative sample, indicates that such modelling of structure and process may be applicable in transferring the concept of, and creating, FPCs in new locations. However, the potential for transferring the concept and models suggested above may need to be tested therefore opening one of several avenues for further research as discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 9: Conclusions and Further Avenues for Research

9.1 Introduction

The preceding discussions cover a wide range of issues from the broader concepts of sustainable development and food systems theory to the more specific details of alternative agrifood institutions and food policy councils. This chapter revisits and summarises this research. In doing so, it provides some conclusions and recommendations and examines remaining or new questions that provide directions for further research. The first section reviews some of the background to the research and reconsiders the research questions, exploring some conclusions and recommendations in light of these findings. The subsequent section explores some of the additional outcomes and conclusions that emerged from research findings that were not originally addressed in the research questions. Following this a discussion is provided of methodological and other problems encountered in the research. The conclusions, recommendations, and additional outcomes present some new, emerging, or unanswered questions which suggest some potential avenues for further research that will enhance the opportunities for food policy council development.
9.2 The Research Questions Re-visited

9.2.1 Introduction

The first portion of this research involved an examination of the evolution, context of, and prior research on FPCs. This examination was focussed through an initial set of two research questions:

1. What are the detailed problems of the conventional food system and proposed solutions to these problems? and
2. What are the origins, history of, and prior research conducted on FPCs in relation to these problems?

These questions were researched and explored through the reviews of relevant literature found in Chapters 2 and 3. Findings related to questions 1 and 2 led to the second set of three questions which formed the basis for the empirical research on FPCs as presented in Chapters 4 through 9. This research set about filling a gap in knowledge on FPCs by examining questions as to whether one or several models can be developed or suggested for creating FPCs, modelling organisational structure, and determining the most effective processes for setting priorities and program implementation. This led to an overall investigation into the organisational role of FPCs: can they be defined, what do they do, and what roles do they play or purpose do they serve? In other words: what are, could be,
or should be the fundamental and unchanging characteristics of food policy councils?
The outcomes, conclusions, and recommendations arising from this research are now explored in reference to these five research questions. Since the second set of questions focussed on empirical research, the conclusions related to these questions are discussed in detail. Conclusions related to the first two research questions are presented summarily since these questions served primarily to provide the background and basis for empirical inquiry.

9.2.2 Question 1: What are the detailed problems of the conventional food system and proposed solutions to these problems?

In relation to question 1, an investigation was conducted into some of the detailed problems associated with and resulting from the traditional organisation, foundation, and framework of the conventional food system. These appear in terms of social, environmental, and economic problems associated with conventional, industrialised agriculture, human health and nutrition in terms of food security and community food security, and those arising from a dependence on unrenewable energy resources, in particular oil and petroleum-based energy forms.

Several different approaches to ameliorating these problems have been suggested. As one of these proposed approaches, agricultural biotechnology was revealed through the research as insufficient in addressing some of the critical social and political problems of the conventional food system. Other approaches that were identified in this research
include those associated with the concept of “alternative food movements” such as sustainable agriculture and community food security. Some of the solutions proposed through alternative food movements suggest a shift from traditional, fragmented conceptualisations of food and agricultural activities to a more comprehensive, inclusive “food systems” framework and approach. These same suggestions, in advising an institutionalisation of such perspectives, propose the creation and development of alternative agrifood institutions which embody and progress these conceptualisations. One such new institutional form is that of the food policy council (FPC), an organisation which, through the embodiment of a food systems perspective, proposes innovative local and regional level solutions to food systems problems.

9.2.3 Question 2: What are the origins, history of, and prior research conducted on FPCs in relation to these problems?

Origination of the food policy council concept included the suggestion that these organisations could work with and advocate for changes in government policy, planning, programs, and decision-making to support integrated, cross-sectoral sustainable development of local and regional food systems. While a few of these organisations first appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s, over the past decade interest in the FPC concept has grown significantly. This interest is signified partly by substantial increases in the number of FPCs in existence over the past several years, and in the amount of funding and support offered by various government and private organisations to help
create, maintain, and operate these organisations. While support for the creation and development of these organisations has grown significantly over the past decade, there has been some research conducted on the processes, activities, and structure of FPCs. However, there has existed only minimal research based in organisational theory such that food policy councils still suffer from a lack of understanding as to their definition, role and the most effective models for organisational structure and operation. This gap in knowledge formed the basis for the empirical research undertaken in this thesis and summarised below in answers to research questions 3, 4, and 5.

9.2.4 Question 3: What is the organisational role and function of food policy councils in relation to alternative food movements?

Understanding organisational role and function is critical to the effectiveness of food policy councils. Without a clear understanding of the vision, mandate, and relationship to other public and private entities, organisations suffer from conflict and lack of direction in guiding operation and activities. As a unique type of organisation, food policy councils share similarities in broad goals, purpose, and organisational role. Research findings suggested some fundamental similarities. These similarities are summarised and then discussed in further detail below. Food policy councils are (in no particular order of importance):
1. Organisations that use the perspectives of members and participants from a range of food system sectors to create innovative strategies for sustainable development of food systems.

2. Organisations which serve as a centre or coordination point for a network of individuals, organisations, agencies, and departments involved with food-related issues.

3. Educators on food system problems, comprehensive food systems perspectives, and sustainable development of food systems.

4. Organisations designed to advise decision-makers and government on planning, decision-making, and policy approaches or change to encourage sustainable development of food systems.

All of the organisational roles and functions above address the traditional fragmented approach to food system institutions, planning, and decision-making processes. The first role mentioned describes the uniqueness of the food policy council concept as posited during the creation of the first of these organisations. One of the featured benefits of the food policy council is the use of cross-sectoral dialogue and information exchange to develop ideas that may not have evolved but for this collaboration. Cross-sectoral collaboration to build and benefit from food systems perspectives is a fundamental subtext of the food policy council concept and primary role for these organisations to fulfil. This role feeds into the other three organisational roles.
The second role describes the function of FPCs in supporting and developing a network among the previously disparate food system sectors. This also points to the function of FPCs as facilitators for collaborative, innovative food systems programs, projects, and restructuring. Fulfilling this role further supports food policy councils in their own work by increasing their ability to identify organisations and potential collaborations that can implement or take over the administrative responsibilities of project and program ideas developed by the council.

The third role mentioned builds on the previous two. In creating a venue for information exchange among participants, FPCs facilitate their own growth through the education of staff and members. In addressing the second role, FPCs educate a wider range of food systems stakeholders and the public through networking, dissemination, and implementation of project ideas, including publication and facilitation of educational materials and activities.

The fourth role and organisational function posited above is the most difficult. The findings of this research lead to the conclusion that FPCs are organisations designed to advocate for change in government decision-making processes, planning, and policy as they pertain to food systems. The findings also lead to the subsidiary conclusion that in order to fulfil this role most effectively, food policy councils need to develop some formal relationships with government, the most effective form of which is to actually create FPCs as formal government entities. To resist the tendency for government institutions to become trapped within a set framework, FPCs need to develop this
relationship with government and their organisational structure to be as flexible and responsive as possible to new ideas and concepts.

Some of the findings of this research suggest that FPC type organisations can exist without formal government association or a direct advocacy role. However, the research points to these groups as another type of organisation, along the lines of “food systems organisations” or “food policy organisations”, in contrast to formal food policy councils. This conclusion raises the whole question of food policy terminology as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. What should we call “food policy councils” in contrast to other food systems organisations? The term “food policy council” remains problematic and not completely accurate. In some cases using the term “food policy council” is seen as helpful, while in others it is a hindrance. Despite fulfilling all of the suggested “food policy council” roles, several organisations still use alternative terminology. Moreover, “food policy councils” work with much more than food (systems) policy alone.

Several other constructive, and in some respects more accurate terms have previously been offered, such as food council and food systems council. In contrast to the policy orientation suggested by the term “food policy council”, this other terminology allows for greater flexibility in that it does not suggest a specific type of work for these organisations. Although other terms could be suggested: food planning council; food systems planning council; food systems planning and policy council, it is not the purpose of this research to change this terminology. The use and application of various terminologies should be determined by individual organisations. However, there should
be some agreement as to how all of the “food policy councils” can identify as an organisational type to share information and network with each other. In this context “food councils” might be an appropriate all-inclusive alternative. On the other hand “food policy council” may be so embedded and accepted that it should not be changed. For example, the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) labels a range of groups as FPCs, despite these organisations using different terminology to refer to themselves. Whether these organisations approve of and use the term FPC or not, they still recognise themselves through participation in CFSC programs and dialogue on the basis that they belong to this organisational type. Whatever terminology is applied, these organisations might still be recognised by the above organisational roles, functions, and relationships. A summary of research findings relating to the details of practice, protocol, and organisational structure as they aid in fulfilling these roles and functions appears below in reference to Question 5.

9.2.5 Question 4: How is a food policy council created?

The research related to this question was approached through collection of information through primary documents of food policy councils and interviews with members of various food policy councils on the steps involved and barriers encountered in formation of the organisation. Several of the FPCs focussed on in the research had recently been formed and due to this were able to provide detailed information on the challenges and steps involved in initiating and developing the organisation. Several actions arose as the most common and apparently advantageous steps in creating a FPC.
One of these crucial strategic approaches involved assessing the levels and places of support, understanding, and interest in food systems perspectives and issues among the community, government, and other organisations. The research showed that this should be evident in preceding food systems dialogue in the community and assessed through preliminary networking and collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders from multiple food system sectors. Stakeholders and interested parties should be brought together to form a preliminary committee to investigate “local” food system issues including consideration of the potential for creating a food policy council. When this step is taken with the support of government it proves very constructive and effective in gaining government support and funding and establishing the future directions and priorities for a FPC. These groups can consist of a wide range of parties with formally scheduled meeting times or as a small group of interested individuals charged with investigating the issue.

Another valuable strategy in assessing and gathering support for community food security or food systems work involves organising a conference or forum bringing together the community and a variety of stakeholders to discuss pertinent food issues or concerns and the relevance of creating a local, regional, or state food policy council. This should be organised through the committee or small research group established to examine the issue.

53 The term “local” is used in this section to refer to whatever the relevant food system level of concern is, whether local, regional, state, or otherwise.
feasibility of establishing a FPC. In addition to assessing support and serving as a tool for community consultation, forums should be used to present research and information on the local food system conducted or compiled by the committee. These gatherings are often used simply to validate beliefs of the committee or prove to others that a significant degree of interest already exists among the public. Proof or validation in this way is often valuable in securing funding and other resource support and bolstering a cross-sectoral food system network.

All of the FPCs concerned in this area of questioning also raised the issue of accessing government support as a critical factor. These respondents all represented FPCs associated with government through funding or other resources and forms of support. In the case of forming a government-linked FPC then, another crucial step includes assessing and building an adequate level of government support in funding, resources, and otherwise prior to formation. Interpretations of “adequate support” will be addressed when discussing Question 5 later in this chapter.

Another related aspect and formative step concerns funding and other resources such as publication or printing materials, offices, and meeting space. Whether or not associated with a government office or department, FPCs should secure adequate funding prior to foundation and beginning other activities. The committee or small research group should establish organisational structure, protocol, and procedures for the council that are not already dictated by law or otherwise. This should be done with as small a group as possible since inclusion of numerous (more than ten or twelve) stakeholders in this
process appears to raise conflict and misunderstandings as to the structural and procedural choices being made.

Addressed in Question 5 are some of the structural and procedural issues that should be considered including suggested “best-practice” models. Although the structural and procedural outline should be flexible and able to respond to social, political, or other changes, the current mandate and protocol should be stated in clear, unambiguous terms to council members to avoid conflict or confusion. The steps described above are summarised below in point form:

1. Assess local understanding of, support for, and interest in sustainability and food system issues or concerns.
   a. Create a network among interested parties.

2. Create a committee or small research group (preferably through government appointment) to investigate the health and sustainability of the local food system. Use the committee to:
   a. Compile previous research and conduct further research on any previously unaddressed local food system issues.
   b. Network among a wider community of interested stakeholders.
   c. Include research into the feasibility of a FPC and whether there is a need for forming of food policy council.

3. Hold a forum or conference organised by the committee to:
   a. Bring together a wider range of stakeholders.
b. Present at least some of the research findings and compiled material.

c. Validate or prove the level of interest in food issues.

d. Consult the community.

4. Secure funding and other resource support.

If interested in but not already receiving government support then:

a. Contact any potentially interested government departments.

b. Draft a statement demonstrating the need for and interest of the community in creating a FPC.

5. Use the committee or small research group to create structural and procedural guidelines.

Determining organisational role and function, such as that described in a mandate, is also a critical formative step\(^{54}\).

**9.2.6 Question 5: What is/are the most effective model(s) of FPC organisational structure and process for fulfilling organisational role and function?**

\(^{54}\) Refer to the earlier discussion in this chapter in relation to research question 3 on organisational role and function.
Previous research, namely that of Dahlberg (1994a), Yeatman (1994), and Boron (2003), suggests that the organisational structure of food policy councils can to some extent be standardised or at least be described according to some standard structural aspects and terms. The findings of this research support these conclusions. However, the authors above who did offer models indicated their relevance to only one case study FPC each. By contrast, the findings of this research led to models that can be applied to several food policy councils, demonstrating a higher degree of standardisation.

Research findings led to the development of three food policy council models. There are two foundational characteristics upon which each of these models is built: the relationship of the food policy council with government; and organisational type (i.e. government, non-government, or hybrid). These characteristics were identified as the foundation for food policy council models due to their relationship to the fourth FPC organisational role55 and the importance of this role in defining the nature of food policy councils. Three models with varying structure and process characteristics were created to allow for the flexibility necessary for FPCs to adapt to the specific social, political, and cultural circumstances of their geopolitical boundaries. These characteristics are described in more detail below.

55 Fourth organisational role: Organisations designed to advise decision-makers and government on planning, decision-making, and policy approaches or change to encourage sustainable development of food systems.
There is no doubt that FPCs need paid staff, with two to three paid staff-persons seen as sufficient for operating effectively. Research also revealed that formal support from the relevant government level was a significant factor in the perceived effectiveness of the FPC. This of course relates to the fourth FPC role discussed above. It also more generally relates to effectiveness in terms of the financial support, resources, and stability enjoyed by the organisation. This higher level of stability frees the FPC in a manner that often leads towards fulfilment of other characteristics of the models as follows. These characteristics, related to membership, networks, other participants, priority setting and program implementation, also demonstrate considerable effectiveness in achieving FPC goals, especially the institutionalisation of comprehensive food systems awareness.

While from these findings Model A in Table 8.3, in the preceding chapter, demonstrates significant advantages in terms of effectiveness, the other two models presented in that table also demonstrate strengths. Model B presents advantages primarily in terms of establishing a government-associated food advocacy body where political and cultural conditions do not exist to support Model A. Model B endures more regular threats to organisational stability than the other two models given the temporary and impermanent appointment by government. While models for organisational structure and protocol can enhance the effectiveness of FPCs, other issues related to mandate and operation influence efficacy as well. FPCs above all need to maintain effective communications and a clear understanding and awareness of mandate, organisational role, and function. These aspects form the fundamental basis for activities and maintain a healthy organisational culture.
9.3 Additional Outcomes

The research in this dissertation revealed several additional findings not explicitly addressed or sought through the research questions. These findings related primarily to broader conceptual issues associated with food policy councils such as sustainable development, community food security, and sustainable agriculture. Although the majority of those involved in this study were not familiar with more generalised dialogue related to sustainable development, FPCs embody, and are at least subconsciously aware of, a need to create and develop a synergy between social, environmental, and economic priorities.

Contrary to some previously asserted descriptions and associations, food policy councils also embody the priorities and interests of the sustainable agriculture and community food security movements. In fact, in many ways the concept of community food security and continuing development of the movement, increasingly incorporates sustainable agriculture as an integral aspect and component in working towards socially just and sustainable food systems.

Another finding not addressed directly through the research questions pertains to the value of networks among food policy councils themselves. Although FPCs and other organisations such as the Drake/USDA State and Local Food Policy Councils partnership
program endeavoured, with some effectiveness, to provide a central point for networking, support, and dissemination of information on these organisations, these efforts and the activities of many food policy councils, frequently remained noted as unfamiliar or insufficient. Several FPCs perceived a need for different types of networking, especially in ways that can serve to connect and educate staff persons and members. Recent research and development implemented through a USDA/CFSC partnership is revealing some ways in which more of the networking and technical assistance needs of FPCs can be met.

One further issue that may affect food policy councils, their effectiveness, and activities, is the consciousness of a sense of urgency surrounding food systems issues. When there is a lack of a sense of urgency on food systems issues this can create significant setbacks, hindering development of an effective and sound approach to program implementation. Conversely, when this sense of urgency is consciously apprehended it can be used to the advantage of FPCs. With these additional findings and those related directly to the research questions, several new questions and further avenues for research emerged.

**9.4 Directions for Further Research**

Do food policy councils contribute to developing more sustainable food systems? Undoubtedly food systems health and sustainability benefits from the presence and activities of FPCs at the very least in terms of contributing to education and communication around the relevant issues. But, are these organisations the only or most
effective model for contributing to policy and planning changes in support of these concepts? Could other organisations such as a department of food or urban agriculture council supplant or work in concert with the FPC? This question and the effect that food policy councils have on their local (regional, and state) food systems remain for further exploration. Investigation into these issues, however, demands careful consideration for the relative youth of food policy councils and the lengthy timeframe involved in food systems change. This also raises the question as to how, through specific programs and activities, food policy councils can demonstrate greatest effectiveness. Given specific circumstances or simply greater efficacy, are certain FPC projects or programs more direct routes to achieving food systems change than others?

While the research findings generated some conclusions regarding FPC concepts and effectiveness in terms of organisational role, structure, operation, and creation of the food policy council concept, the above questions indicate a need for research regarding more specific aspects of FPC operation and determination of priority areas for individual councils. This research covered generalised approaches, relationships, and activities contributing to FPC effectiveness. These organisations could benefit from further examination of the way in which specific projects and activities contribute to effective operation and ‘best practice’ models for these projects. Additionally, while this research has produced models for FPC structure and process there has been no test of the functionality of these models. Further research should investigate and test the reliability of these models. This should also involve an investigation of the usefulness of these
models in transferring the FPC concept to other geopolitical areas, especially those regions and countries where the FPC concept is unprecedented (i.e. outside of North America and Australia).

Further research could take into account the full extent of food policy council activities and whether these organisations could benefit from a compilation of all of the different potential projects and approaches to implementation. This research should also take into account the extent of FPCs’ effect on food systems change and how this knowledge could indicate which specific activities may be beneficial in development of priorities. While several activities of food policy councils contributing to priority assessment and determination such as food systems assessments, community consultation activities, and food planning or policy guidebooks have been utilised and recommended in standardised forms, the effectiveness and modes of implementation for these remain open to exploration. Several food policy councils also remain uninformed as to which and in what manner various sectors are involved in and affect food systems. Mapping the components of food systems policy and planning may prove valuable in this respect. These avenues of research can also contribute to a greater understanding of the ways in which food systems interact with other social, political, economic, and cultural issues and sustainable development as a whole. Ultimately, further research can look towards methods for assessing sustainability and comprehensive guides to the details of food policy and planning that can contribute to the development of food systems health and sustainability.
Appendix 1: Interview Questions for Food Policy Councils

Note:

This material presented in this appendix represents the questions used in all of the interviews with FPC representatives. This set of questions was created through the guidance and adaptation of this suite of surveys for evaluating community collaborations found in Backer (2003). Of the set of surveys found in Backer (2003), surveys 1 through 4 and survey 8 were utilised primarily.

Formative Evaluation

1. What factors, steps or strategies contributed to the success of establishing the council in the initial phases of formation?
   
   1a. What were the barriers?

2. What steps to successful formation would you recommend taking to other groups interested in establishing a local or state food policy council?

3. What other advice would you recommended to other groups interested in establishing a
food policy council?

Program Implementation and Strategy Evaluation

Success

4. What is the most significant change that you have noticed since the establishment of the council?

5. What are the most successful programs conducted so far by the council?
   5a. Why are these programs considered successful?
   5b. Why do you think these were successful?

Barriers

6. Can you identify any programs that did not progress as intended or were considered ‘unsuccessful’?
   6a. Why were these programs considered ‘unsuccessful’?
   6b. Why do you think they were unsuccessful?

7. What barriers has the council encountered to successful implementation of strategies?

Strategic Areas
8. What broad strategic areas does the council focus on for program development and implementation? e.g. food security; urban agriculture; local food production and consumption; waste management; sustainable agriculture – farming systems

9. Has the council been successful at implementing policy and systems change strategies?

10. How has the council changed rules, regulations, policies, practices, or procedures of local institutions to improve the food system?

11. How has the council influenced policies and legislation to improve the food system?

**Funding**

12. What fundraising support has the council already received?

13. How has the council identified additional potential support?

14. What fundraising advice would you offer to other groups interested in establishing a food policy council?

**Government Relationships**

15. Does the council consider establishment under a government ordinance as an important sustainability issue? If yes,

15a. Is the council established under an ordinance?
15b. Is the council established as part of a government department?

Evaluation & Change

16. What have you learned about program development and implementation from your evaluation findings?

17. What revisions would you like to make on these strategies based on your evaluation findings?

18. Have new strategies or opportunities presented themselves that had not been anticipated? What are they?

19. Do you have a mission statement that is written down?

19a. Are all council members aware of it and have access to a copy?

20. Do you have an organisational document?

21. Has the council ever re-evaluated your mission statement – values and goals – or organisational document?

21a. If yes, does the council do this regularly and how many times has the council done this?

Media
22. Does the council use the media to educate or to promote awareness of the councils’ goals, actions, and accomplishments?

22a. What kind of media? How often have they done stories on the council?

Work plan

23. Does the council develop a plan annually, or at some other regular interval, outlining goals and activities that it wants to accomplish during the year?

23a. Does the council keep records of these?

External Assessments

24. Does the council conduct regular external assessments, such as community food assessments, to gauge the progress towards long-term goals, such as food security or food system sustainability?

24a. If yes, what indicators are used? Are these assessments conducted at regular intervals?

25. Does the council utilize resources and information on other food policy councils that can help to achieve the council’s goals?

26. What, if any, local government departments does the council work with?

27. What, if any, state government departments does the council work with?
28. Does the council currently, or has the council ever worked with any other levels of government?

28a. If yes, which ones?

29. In what capacity does the council work or liaise with these departments, through program development, policy development, policy or program implementation, to provide resources, to provide information for research, for staff, for funding, or to offer recommendations only?

30. Has the council worked with any community, non-profit organisations?

30a. If yes, which ones and what is their focus?

31. Has the council worked with any businesses or industry associations?

31a. If yes, which ones and for what purpose?

32. Has the council ever experienced any opposition to your work or existence, for example from corporate entities, government departments, industry associations, or consumer associations?

32a. If yes, could you please describe the nature of the opposition and what steps were taken to mediate this?

33. Are you familiar with the concept of triple-bottom-line sustainability?
34. Does the council take any measures or effort to work within this sustainability framework?

34a. If yes, please describe?

34b. If no, why not and what value framework best describes the focus of your activities?

Additional and Clarified Questions

Do you have a mission statement that is written down?

Is everyone aware of it and has a copy?

Can I have a copy?

Do you have an organisational document?

Can I have copy?

Have you ever re-evaluated your mission statement – values and goals – or organisational document?

If yes, do you do this regularly and how many times have you done this?

Does the council develop a plan annually, or at some other regular interval, outlining goals and activities that it wants to accomplish during the year?

Do you keep records of these? Can I have copies?
Does the council conduct regular external assessments, such as community food assessments, to gauge the progress towards long-term goals, such as food security or food system sustainability?

What indicators do you use? Do you do this at regular intervals? Can I have copies of the results?

Do you utilize resources and information on other food policy councils that can help to achieve the council’s goals?

Do you currently, or have you ever worked with any other levels of government?

If yes, which ones?

In what capacity do you work or liaise with these departments, through program development, policy development, policy or program implementation, to provide resources, to provide information for research, for staff, for funding, or to offer recommendations only?

Have you worked with any community organisations?

If yes, which ones and what do they do?

Have you worked with any businesses or industry associations?
If yes, which ones and for what purpose?

Have you ever experienced any opposition to your work or existence, for example from corporate entities, government departments, industry associations, or consumer associations?

If yes, could you please describe the nature of the opposition and what steps were taken to mediate this?
Appendix 2: Examples of FPC Contact Lists

Note:

This appendix provides examples of three different FPC contact lists as provided by three different organisations. This serves two primary purposes within the context of this thesis: 1) to illustrate the approximate number of FPCs in existence in North America and 2) to illustrate discrepancies between different lists as to the number and location of FPCs in North America.

These lists have been copied exactly from the sources cited for each respective list in order to illustrate as accurately as possible the different sources of contact information on FPCs.

Example 1 is a direct copy of the list provided by The State and Local Food Policy Councils (2005c) project.

Example 2 is a direct copy of the list provided by the Dane County Local Food Policy Advisory Subcommittee (Dane County Local Food Policy Advisory Subcommittee, 2005b).

Example 3 is a direct copy of the list provided by Bournhonesque (2005) with some
comments provided by myself, as to the accuracy of the contact information, at the request of the above author made in an email communication November 22, 2005.

Example 1, Source: (State and Local Food Policy Councils, 2005c)

State, Local and Native American Tribal Food Policy Council Profiles *under formation
Local (City/County/Regional) Councils
Atlanta Regional Food System*
Berkeley Food Policy Council
Chicago Food Policy Council*
Dane County Food Systems Council*
Holyoke Food Policy Council
King County Food Policy Council*
Lane County Food Coalition*
Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council
Salina Food Policy Council
San Francisco Food Alliance
Yolo County Food Policy Council*

Native American Tribal Councils
Oneida Nation Integrated Food Systems
Tohono O’odham Community Action

Canadian Councils
Farm Folk/ City of Folk Society
Kamloops Food Policy Council
Ottawa Food Security Council
Toronto Food Policy Council
Vancouver Food Policy Task Force

Arizona

S: Arizona Food Policy Coalition*
Contact: Cindy Gentry
Coordinator, Arizona Food Policy Coalition
Community Food Connections
(602) 493.5231

L: Pima County Food Policy Council*
Contact: Varga Garland
Community Food Bank
(520) 622.0525

California

L: Berkeley Food Policy Council
L: San Francisco Food Alliance/San Francisco Food Systems
Contact: Leah Rimkus
Program Manager
(415) 252.3937

L: Yolo County Food Policy Council*
Contact: Christina Servetas
Market and Food Policy Council Coordinator
Food Bank of Yolo County
(530) 668-0690
Connecticut

S: Connecticut Food Policy Council
Contact: Jiff Martin
Coordinator, Connecticut Food Policy Council
Hartford Food System
(860)296-9325

L: Hartford Food Policy Commission
Contact: Jiff Martin
Hartford Food System
(860)296-9325

Georgia

L: Atlanta Regional Food System*
Contact: Peggy Barlett
Emory University
(404) 727.5766

Illinois

L: Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council*
Contact: Erika Allen
Co-Chair, Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council
Growing Power Illinois
(773) 324.7924

S: Illinois Sustainable Food Policy Council*
Contact: Mark Boekrum
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
(217) 498.9707
Iowa

S: Iowa Food Policy Council
Contact: Christine Pardee
Co-Director, The State & Local Food Policy Project
Drake University Agricultural Law Center
(515) 271.4956

Kansas

L: Salina Food Policy Council
Contact: Kirk Cusick
Coordinator, The Salina Food Policy Council
(785) 827.6276
S: Kansas State Food Policy Council*
Contact: Dan Nagengast
Coordinator, The Kansas State Food Policy Council
(785) 748.0959

Massachusetts

L: Holyoke Food Policy Council
Contact: Kristin Getler
Coordinator, Holyoke Food Policy Council
Holyoke City Health Department
(413) 322.5595

Minnesota

L: Twin Cities Food Council*
Contact: Chris Morton
Minnesota Food Association
(612) 788.4342

New Mexico

S: New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council
North Carolina
S: North Carolina Food Policy Council
Contact: Sandi Cummings
North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
(919) 733.7125, ext. 256

Oklahoma
S: The Oklahoma Food Policy Council
Contact: Jim Horne or Anita Poole
The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
(918) 647.9123

Oregon
L: Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council
Contact: Matt Emlen
Coordinator, The Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council
City of Portland, Office of Sustainable Development
(503) 823.7224
L: Lane County Food Coalition*
Contact: Mariah Levitt
Community Food Advocate
Lane County Food Coalition
(541) 343.2822
S: Oregon State Food Policy Council*

Utah
S: Utah Food Council
Contact: Richard Sparks
Director of Marketing
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
(801) 538.4913

Washington
L: King County Food Policy Council*
S: Washington Food Policy Council*

Wisconsin
L: Dane County Food Systems Council*
Contact: Jerry Kaufman

L: Toronto Food Policy Council
Contact: Wayne Roberts
Project Coordinator
(416) 338.7937
Example 2, Source: (Dane County Local Food Policy Advisory Subcommittee, 2005a)

Food Policy Councils
and Related Organizations in North America

Updated June 2005

Sources: Borron 2003, State and Local Food Policy Councils web site, Vancouver Food Policy Council web site, and web search “food policycouncils”

City-wide

Berkeley Food Policy Council, California, http://www.berkeleyfood.org

Grand Rapids Food Systems Council, Michigan,
http://www.wmeac.org/programs/foodsycoun/default.asp

City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy, Connecticut,
http://www.hartford.gov/government/FoodCommission/

Holyoke Food Policy Council, Massachusetts

Sacramento Hunger Commission, California, http://www.targethunger.com/

Salina Food Policy Council. Kansas,
http://www.wannabhealthy.com/SFPC/index.htm

San Francisco Food Systems, California, http://www.sffoodsystems.org/

Currently Forming
Atlanta Food Policy Council, Georgia

County-wide

Marin County Food Systems Project, California,
http://www.eecom.net/projects_school.htm
Placer County Food Policy Council, California,
http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu/Nutrition,_Family_and_Consumer_Sciences/
West Contra Costa County Food Security Council, California,
http://www.cchealth.org/groups/west_co_food_security/

Currently Forming

King County Food Policy Council, Washington
Lane County Food Coalition, Oregon, http://www.lanefood.org/
Prima County Food Policy Council, Arizona,
http://www.communityfoodbank.org/dynamic2/home.aspx
Yolo County Food Policy Council, California

City/ County Hybrid

Knoxville/ Knox County Food Policy Council, Tennessee,
http://www.cityofknoxville.org/boards/food.asp
Portland/ Multnomah Food Policy Council, Oregon,
http://www.sustainableportland.org/default.asp?sec=stp&pg=food_policy

Regional

State-wide
Connecticut Food Policy Council, http://www.foodpc.state.ct.us/
Iowa Food Policy Council, http://www.iowafoodpolicy.org/index.htm
Michigan Food Policy Council, http://www.mda.state.mi.us/mfpc/
New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council, 
http://www.statefoodpolicy.org/nm_fpc.htm
North Carolina Food Policy Council, 

Currently Forming:
Arizona Food Policy Council, http://www.foodconnect.org/
Illinois Sustainable Food Policy Council, 
http://www.illinoisstewardshipalliance.org/
Kansas Food Policy Council

Washington Food Policy Council,

http://agr.wa.gov/Marketing/SmallFarm/foodpolicycouncil.htm

First Nations

Integrated Food Systems Project of the Oneida Nation in Wisconsin

Tohono O’odham Community Food System in Arizona,

http://www.tocaonline.org/homepage.html

Canadian

Kamloops Food Policy Council

Peterborough Food Policy Coalition

Toronto Food Policy Council, http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/health/tfpc_index.htm


Vancouver Food Policy Council,

http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/council.htm
Example 3, Source: (Bournhonesque, 2005)

NORTH AMERICAN FOOD POLICY COUNCIL MASTER

CONTACT LIST

* Indicates the FPC is in early development

Alabama

Alaska

Arizona

S: Arizona Food Policy Coalition

Contact: Cindy Gentry

Coordinator, Arizona Food Policy Coalition

Community Food Connections

368
(602) 493.5231
cgentry@foodconnect.org

L: Pima County Food Policy Council*
Contact: Varga Garland
Director, Community Food Security Center
Community Food Bank
(520) 622.0525
vgarland@communityfoodbank.com

Arkansas

California

L: Berkeley Food Policy Council
Contact: Kate Clayton
Health Educator
(510) 981-5314
kclayton@ci.berkeley.ca.us
L: Fresno Food and Agriculture/Built Environment Council*

Contact: Edie Jessup
Hunger & Nutrition Project Coordinator
Fresno Metro Ministry
(559) 485-1416
edie@fresnometmin.org

L: LA Food and Justice Network

Contact: Frank Tamborello
Organizer
Hunger Action Network and Hollywood CAN
(213) 439-1070
frank@lacehh.org

L: Marin County Food Policy Council

Contact: Janet Brown
Founder and Chair
(510) 845-4595 x107
janet@ecoliteracy.org

L: Pasadena Food Policy Council

Contact: Mary Urtecho-Garcia
Nutrition and Physical Activity Project
(626) 744-6163
mugarcia@cityofpasadena.net

L: Sacramento Hunger Commission
Contact: Peggy Roark
(916) 447-7063 x335
proark@communitycouncil.org

L: San Francisco Food Alliance/San Francisco Food Systems
Contact: Leah Rinkus
Program Manager
(415) 252.3937
leah.rinkus@sfdph.org

L: Santa Cruz Food Systems Network*
Contact: Kristina Perry
(831) 345-2349
foodpolicy@baymoon.com

L: West Contra County Food Security Project
Contact: Maria Padilla
(925) 313-6108
mpadilla@hsd.ca.contra-costa.ca.us

L: Yolo County Food Policy Council*
Contact: Christina Servetas
Market and Food Policy Council Coordinator
Food Bank of Yolo County
(530) 668-0690
fbyolo@jps.net

Colorado

Connecticut

L: City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy
Contact: Jiff Martin
Policy Director
Hartford Food System
(860) 296-9325
jmartin@hartfordfood.org
S: Connecticut Food Policy Council
Contact: Jiff Martin
Coordinator, Connecticut Food Policy Council
Hartford Food System
(860) 296-9325
jmartin@hartfordfood.org

L: New Haven Food Policy Council*
Contact: Jennifer McTiernan
Founder and Executive Director
CitySeed, Inc
(203) 777-4330
jennifer@cityseed.org

Delaware

Florida

L: Palm Beach County Community Food Security Council
Contact: Tracey Padian Lamport
Director, Impact Area
United Way of Palm Beach County
(561) 375-6686
Traceypadian@unitedwaypbc.org

Georgia

L: Atlanta Regional Food System*
Contact: Peggy Barlett
Researcher and Professor of Anthropology
Emory University
(404) 727.5766
pbarlett@emory.edu

Hawaii

Idaho
Illinois

L: Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council*
Contact: Erika Allen
Co-Chair, Chicago Food Policy Advisory Council
Growing Power Illinois
(773) 324-7924
Erika@growingpower.org

S: Illinois Sustainable Food Policy Council*
Contact: Mark Beorkrem
Executive Director
Illinois Stewardship Alliance
(217) 498-9707

Indiana

Iowa
S: Iowa Food Policy Council

Contact: Christine Pardee
State Food Policy Council Coordinator
Drake University Agricultural Law Center
(515) 271-4956
christine.pardee@drake.edu

Kansas

L: Salina Food Policy Council

Contact: Kirk Cusick
Coordinator, The Salina Food Policy Council
(785) 827-6276
whisperingctnwd@sbc.net

S: Kansas State Food Policy Council*

Contact: Dan Nagengast
Coordinator, The Kansas State Food Policy Council
(785) 748-0959
nagengast@earthlink.net
Kentucky

Louisiana

Maine

Maryland

Massachusetts

L: Holyoke Food Policy Council
Contact: Kristin Getler
Coordinator, Holyoke Food Policy Council
Holyoke City Health Department
(413) 322.5595
kgetler@ci.holyoke.ma.us

S: Massachusetts Food Policy Council

L: Springfield Food Policy Council*

Michigan

L: Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council
Contact: Cynthia Price
(231) 578-0873
skyprice@gmail.com

S: Michigan Food Policy Council
Contact: Kristin L. Brooks
Executive Coordinator
Fax: (517) 335-1423
mda-mfpc@michigan.gov
Minnesota

S: Minnesota Food Policy Council

L: Twin Cities Food Council*
Contact: Chris Morton
Executive Director
Minnesota Food Association
(612) 788-4342
cmorton@mnfoodassociation.org

L: St. Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission*
Contact: Richard Ragan
(651) 266-2454

L: St. Paul/Ramsey County Food Policy Council??

Mississippi

Missouri

379
Montana

L: Missoula County Community Food and Agriculture Coalition

Contact: Neva Hassanein

Associate Professor, Environmental Studies Program

University of Montana

(406) 243-6271

neva.hassanein@umontana.edu

Nebraska

Nevada

New Hampshire

New Jersey
New Mexico

S: New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council
Contact: Pam Roy
Coordinator, New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council
Co-Director, Farm to Table
(505) 473-1004
pamelaroy@aol.com
www.farmtotable.info

New York

S: New York Food Policy Council

L: Onondaga Food System Council
(315) 424-9485
S: North Carolina Food Policy Council

Contact: Sandi Cummings

Grants Specialist

North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

(919) 733-7125 x256

sandi.cummings@ncmail.net

North Dakota

S: North Dakota Food Policy Council* ??

Ohio

Oklahoma

S: The Oklahoma Food Policy Council
Contact: Jim Horne or Anita Poole

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

(918) 647-9123
apoole@kerrcenter.com

Oregon

L: Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council
Contact: Matt Emlen
Coordinator, The Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council
City of Portland, Office of Sustainable Development
(503) 823-7224
mattemlen@ci.portland.or.us

L: Lane County Food Coalition*
Contact: Jessica Chanay, Mariah Levitt
FOOD for Lane County
(541) 343-2822
jchanay@foodforlanecounty.org
Mariah_leavitt@yahoo.com
S: Oregon State Food Policy Council*

L: Tillamook Community Food Security Council***

Contact: Shelly Bowe

Community Food Program, CARE Regional Food Bank

(503) 842-5261

sbowe@careinc.org

Pennsylvania

Rhode Island

South Carolina

South Dakota
Tennessee

L: Knoxville/Knox County Food Policy Council
Contact: Gail Harris
Director
(865) 546-3500

gail.harris@doleta.sprint.com

I don’t think Gail’s been around for quite a while. The new website is http://www.cityofknoxville.org/boards/food.asp and the best person to contact would probably be Chris Woodhull although I haven’t had much luck getting in touch with him.

    chriswoodhull@bellsouth.net

Texas

L: Austin-Travis Food Policy Council*

Utah

S: Utah Food Council

385
Contact: Richard Sparks
Director of Marketing
Utah Department of Agriculture and Food
(801) 538.4913

Vermont

Burlington Food Council
Contact Betsy Rosenbluth, Legacy Project Director
Phone (802) 865-7515 or email
brosenbluth@ci.burlington.vt.us
http://www.cedo.ci.burlington.vt.us/legacy/foodcouncil.html

Virginia

Washington

L: King County Food Policy Council*
Contact: Holly Freishtat
WSU King County Extension
(206) 205-3210
holly.freishtat@metrokc.gov

L: Tahoma Food System
Contact: Peter Jacobson
Director of Community Programs
(253) 475-3663

S: Washington State Food Policy Council*
Contact: Leslie Zenz
Program Manager, WA State Dept of Agriculture, Small Farms and Direct Marketing
(360) 902-1884

West Virginia

Wisconsin
L: Dane County Food Systems Council*

Contact: Majid Allan

(608) 267-2536

localfood@co.dane.wi.us

Wyoming

NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL COUNCILS

Oneida Community Integrated Food Systems

Contact: Bill Ver Voort

OCIFS Coordinator

(920) 869-1041

wvervoor@oneidanation.org

Tohono O’odham Community Action

Contact: Tristan Reader

Co-director

(520) 386-4966
CANADIAN COUNCILS

L: Farm Folk/City Folk Society
Contact: Herb Barbolet
Co-Founder
(604) 730-0450
herb@ffcf.bc.ca

L: Kamloops Food Policy Council
Contact: Laura Kalina
Chair and Founder
(250) 372-0815
Laura.kalina@interiorhealth.ca

L: Ottawa Food Security Council
Contact: Bob Thomson
Coordinator
(613) 236-9300 x301
cfsc@spcottawa.on.ca

I’m pretty sure that Moe Garahan is coordinator – same phone # and email
L: Peterborough Food Policy Coalition

L: Toronto Food Policy Council
Contact: Wayne Roberts
Project Coordinator
(416) 338.7937
wrobert@toronto.ca

L: Vancouver Food Policy Task Force
Contact: Devorah Kahn
Food Policy Coordinator, City of Vancouver
(604) 871-6324
devorah.kahn@vancouver.ca

Vancouver Food Policy Task Force became the Food Policy Council about a year ago
Appendix 3: Counts for Empirical Research

Note:

This appendix provides a tabulation of counts for the questions examined in each section of Chapters 5, 6, and 7. The questions are presented in the order of their occurrence in the thesis, each followed by a table representing the counts or other qualitative information collected for that question.

The following counts are derived from implicit or explicit indication of a “yes” or “no” answer to each of the following questions. All explicit and implicit answers are counted together simply as either a “yes” or “no”.

An implicit “yes” is derived where a FPC has utilized the relevant structure or process component and has not explicitly indicated a “no” in the interview material. An implicit “yes” is derived from primary documents provided by the FPC (i.e. organisational documents”) or interview responses.

An explicit “yes” is derived where the interviewee(s) have specifically given a “yes” or “no” answer in the interview.
Chapter 5

5.2 Overview of Terminology; No Counts Taken

5.3 Did the FPC have interest or previous experience in working with “food policy”?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Answer: Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4. Was formal recognition by or association with Government identified as important to operation and project implementation for the FPC?

Answers provided in section 6.3.1

5.5 and 5.7 Outside of Policy and Program work: Compile list of main functions of the FPC:

- Working council
- Educator
- Networker/Facilitator
Of these functions, what were considered by each FPC to be the main functions of the organisation (Working council/ Educator/ Networker/ Facilitator)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Working Council</th>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Networker/ Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>Not Specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6 Was it felt that the FPC could be a precursor to the “Department of Food” or Could the FPC become a “Department of Food”?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Answer: Yes/ No/ Problematic*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Problematic</td>
</tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Problematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Problematic” indicates that the interviewee(s) found problems with the FPC becoming a “Department of Food” but did not explicitly state a “no” answer
Chapter 6

6.3.1. Was it indicated that formal recognition by or association with Government was important to operation and project implementation for the FPC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Answer: Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And
If so,

**What government agency/sector does the FPC align with?**

To protect the confidentiality of interviewees, the agencies/departments are listed without the corresponding FPC #. Given the differences between agencies at state as opposed to local/regional government levels, there are two separate lists: one list for state FPCs and one list for local/regional FPCs.

These are listed in random order

**State FPCs**

Agriculture; Agriculture; Agriculture; Agriculture

**Local/Regional/Hybrid**

Mayor’s Office; Public Health; Sustainable Development; Community Development;
Mayor’s Office; Public Health; Public Health; Social Planning

**6.3.2 Was it considered important for the FPC to have organisational**
documents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
And

Was it indicated that it has been/is/would be valuable for the FPC to do Organisational Evaluations?

<table>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
6.3.3 Was it felt that the FPC needs additional funding?

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<td>13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</table>
And If so, What was the funding needed for: Staff? Administrative Costs? Program Implementation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Staff</th>
<th>Administrative Costs</th>
<th>Project Implementation</th>
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<td>9</td>
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</table>
6.4.1 Are staff considered as an important component for the effective operation of the FPC?

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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Undecided – Staff is used but not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>considered crucial by both interviewees</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
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</table>

### 6.4.2 How many staff persons does the FPC have?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Part Time/ 1 Full Time/ &gt; 1 Full Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Part Time moving to 1 Full Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 Full Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Part Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.5 Full Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 Full Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Part Time</td>
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</table>
What number of Staff was identified as optimal for the effective operation of the FPC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Part Time/ 1 Full Time/ 2 to 3 (Full Time)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2 to 3</td>
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<td>2 to 3</td>
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<td>2 to 3</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>2 to 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Full Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>No Specific Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.3 Compile list of valuable Staff Skills; No Counts Taken

Recommended Staff Skills:

Administrative tasks

Acting as the organisation’s main point of contact (the “go-to” person)

Leadership and Organisational Management

“Building” the council (i.e. educating the council, selecting members)

Functioning as a liaison with government, and networking for purposes and in ways different to others

Research
6.5.1 Was it considered valuable to identify a set number of Members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Answer: Yes/No</th>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
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</table>
And

What membership size was indicated as optimal for the FPC?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Answer: # Members or Not Specified</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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</table>
Was it considered as valuable to have external participants, i.e. ex-officio, task force, or unofficial meeting participants?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Answer: Yes/ No/ Not Specified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
6.5.2 Was it indicated that special attention should be given to ensuring a diverse representation?

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Chapter 7

7.2.1 Compile information as to different preliminary or external factors that affect priority setting; No Counts Taken

Roles for External Organisations:

Networking

Funding

Research and Writing Reports

Representing a broader set of food system stakeholders than what is represented only in the FPC membership
## 7.2.2 Was it considered valuable for the FPC to have: Set Priority Areas? Annual Issues? Work Plans?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPC #</th>
<th>Priority Areas</th>
<th>Annual Projects/Issues</th>
<th>Work Plans</th>
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<tr>
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And

What other Priority Setting tools have been used?

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<th>Facilitated Sessions/Retreats</th>
<th>Community Consultation/ Forums</th>
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</table>
7.2.3 Compile information as to experiences related to “working with opportunities” and “quick wins”; List answers; No Counts Taken

7.3.1 Were Subcommittees or Task Forces used/considered valuable for the FPCs work?

<table>
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<th>Answer: Standing/ Ad Hoc/ None/ Both</th>
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<td>Both</td>
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<td>Ad Hoc</td>
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</table>
7.3.2 Was it felt that it was valuable for Members to do “volunteer” work for the FPC, i.e. have a “working council”? 

<table>
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<th>FPC #</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>No</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
And

if not,

Compile list of what roles it was felt that members could fulfil; No Counts Taken

Working council; i.e. project implementation, project “champion”, Administrative work

Chairpersons

Research and Report Writing

Networking/ Facilitating

Educating

7.3.3 Staff Skills: See Section 6.4.3
7.3.4 Role of external organisations in FPC work: See Section 7.2.1

7.4 What are, or have been, the challenges to implementation and operation experienced by the FPC? Compile List; No Counts Taken
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