

Food Coalition of Central Indiana (FCCI)

*Our mission is to enhance the health of our community
by improving the food system
and increasing access to resources and nutritious food.*

We envision a community in which:

- We are conscious consumers of nutritious food.
- We understand the role of food in building the community, strengthening the economy, and valuing the environment.
- We have access to a diverse range of healthy, affordable food.
- We have the opportunity, means, and skills to grow and prepare healthy foods.
- Consumers, producers, planners, and policy makers align and support each other to fulfill this vision.

The Central Indiana Food Coalition will lead our community through our mission and vision to the following goals:

- ❖ To be a member-based organization working to establish best practices in our community.
- ❖ To earn the respect and trust of community members in all sectors of the food system in order to encourage communication and collaboration.
- ❖ To support, through our members, the greater food community by fostering shared knowledge, developing resources, and promoting a food culture that benefits all.
- ❖ To leverage the strengths of our members in recognition that access to healthy food is vital to improving the quality of life for the entire community.

The Food Coalition's Strategic Directions ⇔ Working Groups

INFORMATION/Visibility Group: Share information among participating organizations and the general public.

ADVOCACY Group: Influence public policy in issues related to our mission.

EDUCATION Group: Educate the public about growing and eating healthy food.

COLLABORATION Group: Strengthen relationships among participating organizations to improve the impact in the community.

SUPPORT Group: Support growers and producers by providing access to resources that enhance their capacity.

ORGANIZATION Group: Create a new structure for the group by analyzing the process by which we want to make decisions and understand how all of the moving pieces work together so that in the end, the organization can have the greatest impact possible in the community.

A little background on the founding of the Food Coalition of Central Indiana:

For a number of years, people have been coming together in the food movement and talking about the need for more organization. We see organization as a means to find power and strength in our community. Most of the time, the groups and individuals that want to “get stuff done” tend to be doers. Our thought was, if everyone has a mission of doing then no one has the mission of organizing what is being done or in other words, if everyone is a doer then no one is representing the collective effort. This was where the idea for the Coalition was formed.

The Coalition allows groups and organizations to exist and do what they do well and the coalition gives them a collective voice to present what they are doing for the community at large. One of the catalysts for this group included the hiring of a Program Manager of the Indianapolis Food, Farm and Family Coalition (IFFFC) a project of Earth Charter Indiana. The Program Manager was charged with the responsibility of working together with all of the “doers” and helping to organize food-related efforts. Essentially the job of the Program Manager was to re-vitalize the food coalition, using the framework of the IFFFC, by welcoming a collaborative discussion about what a food coalition would look like.

The IFFFC’s mission, previously named the Food Security Initiative, was based off of the definition of Food Security and Community Food Security. *Food Security*: When all people, at all times have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life (as defined by the FAO). *Community Food Security*: A condition in which all community residents obtain safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice (Anne Bellows and Mike Hamm). In 2008, this group held town hall meetings which invited local non-profits, chefs, activists, students, farmers, and the entire community to discuss the topic of a food secure Indianapolis. Later in 2009, the IFFFC held monthly meetings at Earth House working to form committees, goals, a vision and mission. Eventually the group formed two acting committees: one committee focused on a creating Food Charter for the City of Indianapolis that would help guide the decision-making of policy makers, communities, and residents with regards to food issues; the other committee started to design a Community Food Assessment that would help the IFFFC identify food deserts in the city and start a dialogue with the community about how best to create a strategy to address food insecurity.

In September 2010, several urban agriculture-focused groups traveled to the Growing Power Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and decided to call together a reflection meeting about the experience when they returned to Indy. This meeting inspired a spin-off of discussions, welcoming more and more leaders in the Indianapolis Food Movement to join in on the conversation. The result was a meeting in January 2011, in which a trained facilitator guided the group through a strategic planning process to help the participants decide what the Food Coalition should look like. The group was able to re-organize the old framework of the IFFFC and develop a more inclusive mission and vision, in order for everyone working in the Indy Food Community to be on board.