

Indiana Receives Technical Assistance for Agriculture and Food Production Enterprise

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The Local Foods, Local Places program, supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Delta Regional Authority, selected Indiana as one of 16 communities across the United States to participate in the LFLP program in 2018.

A local steering committee comprised of a variety of community partners, including local government, IUP, Penn State Extension, and Mahoning Creek Farm received support by a technical assistance team comprised of consultants and multiple federal agency partners.

The technical assistance centered around a 2-day workshop which involved a community tour and stakeholder brainstorming session. Participants elevated potential actions in support of increasing individuals' capacity to grow food, connecting surplus farm product with service agencies, and expanding garden-based education for youth. Other topics of discussion included expanding the number of retail or institutional outlets for locally grown food so that more food grown in Indiana is consumed in Indiana; contracting with new partners would extend local food access to new, more diverse audiences and helping farmers even out seasonal fluctuations in sales.

Practitioners and technical assistance providers also talking about how to identify what businesses need, what financial and technical assistance is available that targets food and agricultural enterprises, and the best methods to communicate opportunities. Other key topics revolved around walkability and connectivity from surrounding neighborhoods to downtown Indiana and helping residents recognize that downtown is an asset to the community.

The larger effort grew out of the expressed desires of the Sustainable Economic Development Task Force members to bring parties together, show aspiring growers how to make a living farming, increase access to food for all, and revitalize the downtown as a commercial and social center for everyone aligned closely with the goals of the Local Foods, Local Places program, which are to create:

- § More economic opportunities for local farmers and businesses.
- § Better access to healthy, local food, especially among disadvantaged groups.
- § Revitalized downtowns, main streets, and neighborhoods.

The Team completed the Community Action Plan for Indiana, Pennsylvania in December 2018. The report can be accessed at the Task Force's website at www.sustainableindianacounty.org.

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