Welcome to the Rhode Island Food Policy Council!

Founded in 2011, the Council has become the backbone network for the people, businesses, government agencies and community organizations that make up Rhode Island’s food system. We played a key role in developing the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grant Program, and in developing the Rhode Island food strategy, Relish Rhody. We continue to be a place where people from across our state meet, learn, exchange ideas and create new solutions for building a just and resilient food system for all Rhode Islanders.

In the midst of a global pandemic that spotlighted how vulnerable our local food system can be, the last two years have been a time of continued growth for RIFPC. We developed new partnerships and projects, some of them in response to the emergency food access crisis caused by COVID-19. In 2021 we took another step forward to transition from being a fiscally sponsored project to become a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

We are excited to bring your expertise and perspective to this work. We hope this guide will help answer many of your questions about what it means to serve on the Council and what to expect in the coming year.

We thank you in advance for your time, energy, and commitment to helping the Rhode Island food system become more equitable, accessible, and sustainable. We look forward to this journey and what we can achieve together!

Warmest regards,

Nessa Richman  
Network Director

Jazandra Barros  
Co-Chair

Thea Upham  
Co-Chair
# Table of Contents

- **Vision & Mission**  
  Page 3

- **Commitment to Equity & Justice**  
  Page 3

- **Resources: Guidelines, Annual reports, Relish Rhody food strategy**  
  Page 4

- **Decision-Making Process**  
  Page 4

- **Council Membership Information**  
  Pages 4-5

- **Committees and Work Groups**  
  Pages 6-7

- **Policy Priority Areas**  
  Page 7

- **Shared Work Platforms and Processes**  
  Page 8

- **Council Members & Contact Information**  
  Pages 8-9

- **Board Members**  
  Pages 10-11

- **Staff Members**  
  Pages 11-12
Vision

We envision a Rhode Island in which the local food system is a growing component of the state’s economy, a connecting framework for stakeholders across multiple sectors (production, distribution, access, public health, and resource recycling), and a creator of new jobs and industries that contribute to the State’s long-term economic viability.

We envision a Rhode Island where safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food is accessible and affordable in every RI community and in which an increasing proportion of the state’s food supply is raised, caught and processed locally and in an environmentally sustainable way. The Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC) envisions a day when Rhode Island will be known nationally for the strength of its local food system and its success at achieving community food security and optimal public health.

Mission

The mission of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council is to promote a more equitable, accessible, and sustainable state food system. Our work is coordinated by a statewide collaboration of diverse, committed, and engaged stakeholders from all sectors of the food system. We create partnerships, develop policies, and advocate for improvements to the local food system that increase and expand its capacity, viability, and sustainability.

We are committed to improving the quality of life of all state residents, particularly BIPOC and people affected by poverty. Our work has three main pillars: increasing affordable access to culturally appropriate food; supporting thriving farm, fish, and food businesses; and cultivating a food system that sustains our natural resources.

Equity and Justice

RIFPC is committed to ensuring that people from every part of our food system, with no exceptions, are empowered to have agency (the capacity of people to act independently and make their own free choices) and sovereignty (the full right and power of people over themselves without outside interference), especially those who have been marginalized by racist, classist, and sexist systems. We believe that food consumers, food producers and processors, and food workers from every part of our state’s social, economic, racial and ethnic fabric should have the opportunity to participate and take a leadership role in developing our food policy and improving our food system.

RIFPC staff and Council members work together to strengthen our equity and justice work and to support the work of others who believe in the importance of these efforts in an ongoing effort. We are committed to advancing equity not only in the substance of our work but also in our own processes as an organization.

Find the full statement of our commitment to making racial justice and equity central in all RIFPC activities on our website under About Us.

Resources

- **Annual reports** for 2018-2021: [read them here](#).
- Our 501c3 organization’s [bylaws are here](#).
- **Relish Rhody**, a [statewide food strategy](#) released in 2017; [read full report](#).
- “Pivoting Policy, Programs and Partnerships: Food Policy Councils’ Responses to the Crises of 2020,” a report from Johns Hopkins University’s Center for a Livable Future. [read report](#).
Decision-Making Process

The Council members, staff, committees and workgroups make decisions and conduct their affairs through a system we’ve named “Modified Consensus Building” as follows:

1. Hear all viewpoints:
   a. Hear and address concerns
   b. Hear reservations
2. Seek consensus. If consensus is reached, move forward.
3. If there is no consensus, take a vote, noting:
   a. Blocking concerns
   b. Stand aside (abstain)
4. Decisions shall be made by a simple majority. When decisions cannot be made by simple majority, distinguish types of disagreement as either:
   a. Can live with it
   b. Strong disagreement
5. If more than 1/3 of the group strongly disagrees, reopen for discussion to reach compromise with at least 2/3 majority.

Council Membership

Council Membership Terms

Council members are elected for 2-year terms and may renew membership for an additional term of 1 or 2 years. Rotations in length of membership are intended to ensure continuity with new members joining experienced members. Individuals interested in serving beyond a second term must rotate off the Council for a minimum of 1 year before being eligible to apply to serve on the Council again.

Council Member Participation

The RIFPC is composed of 15-25 volunteer Council members and a network of volunteer supporters. As a Council for the state, the RIFPC strives to have its elected members reflect the diversity of the food system stakeholders, including the state’s wide range of food industry sectors, geographies, cultural backgrounds, races, religions, sexual orientations, and political affiliations.

The responsibilities of members are to:
a. Create new, innovative ideas and plans for RI's food system;
b. Monitor and promote the RI food system across multiple sectors; and
c. Help support the vision, mission, goals, objectives and responsibilities of the RI Food Policy Council through participation in its meetings, committees, work groups, activities, deliberations and events.

Council members are expected to actively participate in Council activities in two core ways:

1) Attend all full meetings of the Council throughout the year. Excused absences (sickness, death in family, business trips or emergencies) will not affect a member’s status. However, missing three consecutive meetings and/or more than three unexcused absences in a 12-month period shall constitute cause to recommend resignation and replacement of the position.

2) Actively participate in at least one Council committee or work group. Council members may participate in multiple committees as they are able, and may remain active committee or work group members after they step off the Council.

Benefits of Participation in the Council: RIFPC participants benefit from the opportunity to work with a statewide collaboration of diverse, committed, and engaged stakeholders from all sectors of the food system;

1. RIFPC participants will glean a greater understanding of food systems and community food security from working together on issues; and,

2. By working together, participants will increase the likelihood that the most pressing food systems issues will get the needed recognition, support and reform from relevant decision makers and institutions.

3. Council members participating on committees and project groups will have the opportunity to be change agents within the state and region.

Committees & Work Groups

All Council members are required to participate on at least one committee or work group.

RI Food Policy Council Committees and Work Groups are groups of RI food system stakeholders working together to achieve self-defined goals. Committees are standing groups and Work Groups come and go based on interest levels. The groups focus on discussion or activity around a specific subject. All people, both Council members and non-Council members, are welcome to join Working Groups.

A committee and work group’s performance is made up of the individual results of all its individual members. RI Food Policy Council staff support committees and work groups by scheduling meetings and events, taking notes, and performing other activities (e.g., research) upon request.

RIFPC Committees

Policy Committee works to determine annual policy priorities for the council, reviews requests for support from other organizations on policy issues, offers regular training on policy engagement and advocacy, coordinates legislative outreach and events, and leads the annual policy retreat.
**Equity Committee** reviews and supports transformation of Council practices, policies, and culture in service of antiracism and equity. The Equity Committee also leads the equity retreat and develops and offers ongoing training opportunities for Council members and stakeholders.

**Recruitment Committee** conducts outreach to recruit new Council members, engages candidates in an interview process, and leads the Council member selection process. The majority of the work for this committee takes place during the spring when the Council is actively recruiting and selecting new members.

**RIFPC Work Groups**

**The Food Access Working Group** supports increased, equitable access to and advocacy for more healthful and culturally relevant food for Rhode Island residents. We do this by working with cross-sector leadership to build capacity of food assistance organizations, amplify the work of community food rescue, and integrate local and regional assets and resources into the work of community, non-profit, business and government stakeholders.

**The Food Business Working Group** has a goal to develop and sustain an economically viable local food system. It includes farmers, fishers, food entrepreneurs, chefs and restaurateurs, distributors, and retailers. It facilitates networking, educational, and business development opportunities for RI food and beverage producers and farmers and promotes local procurement opportunities in RI institutions.

**The Food Systems and Climate Working Group** set 'addressing climate change and food systems' as a policy priority in 2020. The group focuses on understanding how environmentally sound production and harvesting practices that sequester carbon or limit its usage can be encouraged via policy means, including both land and sea food.

**Recent Policy Priority Areas**

The Council's specific policy work may shift each year depending on members' interests and advocacy and . Recent examples of policy priorities include:

**Supporting the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grant Program, helping RI farms, fisheries, and other food businesses grow and thrive.**

LASA was established in 2014 through an innovative public-private partnership. In 2018, an evaluation of early grantees to assess the impact of the program showed multiple strong economic benefits. RIFPC is advocating for continued, increased, and sustained funding for this successful program.

**Sustaining Rhode Island's seafood sector.**

RIFPC will support and sustain the RI seafood sector through enhancing partnerships and involvement in seafood support efforts statewide, contributing technical & research support and critical “think” power on challenging topics, boosting seafood education and outreach, and informing aquaculture and wild harvest state policies. We will seek investment through grant and small business support to facilitate the legislative round-tables, provide technical research & expertise on dockside sales reform, and bump up the impact of aquaculture educational programs.

**Growing markets for local food products.**

COVID-19 taught Rhode Island some painful lessons about the food system. RIFPC will look into incentives for local procurement (e.g. incentives for farm to school purchases); opportunities for
investments allowing the development of new markets and economies of scale (e.g. new shared processing or storage infrastructure); technical assistance programs (e.g. for website/eCommerce development); capital access (marketing and sharing information about available funding sources/programs including COVID stimulus funds), and other initiatives we identify through research.

**Rhode Island producers and healthy food access.**

The need for greater resilience in our food system has never been more clear. Corporate farms, national food distributors, and international food conglomerates have brought us the benefits of scale and efficiency. That efficiency has lowered the cost of grain, meat, produce, and dairy and helped millions of Americans — despite stagnant wages — afford the food they need. But we have learned in the COVID-19 crisis that highly consolidated and efficient systems that emphasize benefits like low cost and convenience over resilience and equity can fail in the face of adversity. We will advocate for continued, increased, and sustainable funding for initiatives that buy food from our local farmers and fishers and provide it to our food insecure populations.

**Shared Work Platforms and Processes**

**Basecamp**

The Council uses Basecamp as its shared information management and communications platform. Here Council members create and share schedules, chat, make shared decisions via voting, maintain shared files, and link to Google Docs. Every Council member is included in the Basecamp system and is strongly encouraged to visit the Basecamp website to explore (and you might have some fun with this little Easter Egg) their quick user tutorials and recommendations. New Council members will be offered a Basecamp tutorial with a staff person.

**Zoom Conference Calls**

Committee and workgroup chairs can access the RIFPC Zoom account through that group’s staff liaison.

**Social Media**

Interaction with RIFPC on social media is encouraged as a grassroots way to share and celebrate the Council's work. Like, Share, and Follow: @rifoodcouncil

![Social Media Icons](image)

**RI Food Policy Council Members**

[https://rifoodcouncil.org/about-us/meet-the-council/](https://rifoodcouncil.org/about-us/meet-the-council/)

**RIFPC Board**

[https://rifoodcouncil.org/board-of-directors/](https://rifoodcouncil.org/board-of-directors/)

**RIFPC Staff**

[https://rifoodcouncil.org/about-us/meet-the-staff/](https://rifoodcouncil.org/about-us/meet-the-staff/)