



MICHIGAN  
**GOOD FOOD**  
CHARTER

# Michigan Good Food Charter Advocacy Campaign Discussion Guide

## Authors

*Produced by the Michigan Local Food Council Network*

**Keesa V. Johnson, MDes**

Food Policy Fellow

**Jordan Lindsay**

Grassroots Organizing Fellow

# Introduction

The [2022 MI Good Food Charter](#) outlines a shared vision for a good food system in Michigan with six goals, six strategies, and 22 action recommendations. The Charter calls for systemic change by supporting food systems that ensure food is accessible to everyone, promote healthy communities, use fair and sustainable production methods, and support a diverse and equitable society.

The goal of this discussion guide is to Support councils to make connections between their work and the MI Good Food Charter. The discussion guide can support your team to understand how The Charter can validate and give power to the work you are already doing, and how you can use it to build advocacy campaigns for food systems transformation.

## Getting Started: Equitable Participation Preconditions

[Equitable participation](#) and [dismantling white supremacy culture](#) are necessary components of advocacy that transforms our food systems toward justice and equity. Before diving into selecting which goals you will work toward, we encourage you to think about equitable participation as a **precondition** for any advocacy campaign.

### What is equitable participation?

In order to advance policy and programs that impact groups of people who have been historically and systematically excluded from decisions that impact their communities, you must be in authentic and collaborative relationships with them. *Essentially, you can't become the expert in the solution if you are not the expert in the problem.*

Authentic relationships begin with dialogue. Curiosity is essential as you start to have conversations with community members. We encourage you to enter into these conversations not with the answers but a curiosity to uncover community issues and solutions while building relationships that build capacity and power within affected communities.

### What is dismantling white supremacy culture?

[Dismantling White Supremacy Culture](#) is a resource developed by Tema Okun and many collaborators to help identify how the culture of white supremacy is normalized in many spaces and how it harms everyone.



We encourage you to familiarize yourself with [how these characteristics show up in the work you do](#) so you can actively create a different culture for your group that empowers all people. When we unconsciously perpetuate these characteristics of white supremacy culture, we continue to alienate and harm the folks we should be working alongside.

### Some questions to consider:

- Are you in a relationship with the people you say you are serving?
- Are you in a relationship with farmers? Food service workers? Those most impacted by food access and food justice issues? Groups and individuals involved in and leading food sovereignty efforts?

If you do not have these relationships, or they are merely transactional, we encourage you to think about how you can be in authentic and collaborative relationships that move toward equitable participation as you make progress on your advocacy campaign. Here is one tool for evaluating the quality of your organization's engagement with the community it serves- [Community Engagement Assessment Tool](#).



# Connecting the Charter: Questions for Discussion

The following questions are designed to support you to think about the work you are doing and how it relates to the MI Good Food Charter.

## Community Goals and Strategies

*For all of these questions, consider both the individual and group perspectives:*

- What community project(s) and policies are being worked on?
- What are you interested in working on while on the council?
- What is the overall goal and vision for your community project or policy work?
- What insights are there on the issues and challenges\* affecting the community that will be served?

***\*Issue/Challenge: Something that is happening in your community that creates inequity, lack of access, harm in the environment, etc.***



## Which of the six Charter strategies most closely align with your work?

**Cultivate thriving local/regional farm and food businesses:** Targeted investment, policies, and technical assistance can ensure the long-term financial viability of Michigan farm and food businesses while fostering financial empowerment for those producers who have been marginalized.

**Prioritize local and regional food systems within a global economy:** We can strengthen Michigan communities by growing the market for locally and regionally produced food, increasing transparency and communication in the food supply chain, encouraging values-based food purchasing strategies, and investing in local/regional food value chain infrastructure.

**Use the power of collaboration to dismantle racism and systemic inequity in food systems:** How we work together is as important as what we work on. Because no organization or community member can make the necessary systemic changes alone, collaboration and partnership are crucial. To successfully dismantle systemic inequities in the food system, we must increase the diversity and representation of people participating in food systems decision making at all levels.

**Establish fair compensation, safe working environments, and opportunities for career advancement in food systems:** Food business owners, workers, and public and private agencies must work together to develop quality food systems jobs, design equitable career pathways, and ensure that food systems jobs protect the health of workers, communities, and the environment.

**Foster climate resilience through equitable land stewardship:** We can invest in farmers and food producers as ecosystem stewards to protect rural and urban farmland, fisheries, and watersheds; reduce food waste; and keep plastic out of landfills. Additionally, land use policies and financial investment can improve access to land for current and future generations while advancing community food sovereignty.

**Support people to have real choices that lead to good food and health:** We must expand food access, foster the vitality of local/regional farm and food businesses, and address deeply rooted, systemic issues that lead to inequitable health outcomes. We can foster dignity and choice in food systems by prioritizing approaches that connect food, health, and community food sovereignty.



## Digging Deeper

For each of the strategies you identified, consider these questions:

- In what ways do the actions (see [2022 MI Good Food Charter](#)) under these strategies reflect your work?
- How could they be used to build on your work?
- What's missing?
- How can you use what the Charter outlines to advance council work and policy advocacy?



## How to apply the Charter in your work

- Use the Charter to identify others in the state who may be working on similar issues and make connections to collaborate and amplify resource sharing and impact.
- Illustrate to funders how your work contributes to food systems transformation.
- Create a policy action list or action plan for your council based on your findings.
  - Call in more resources: Technical assistance from a MLFCN facilitator or peer advisor, campaign planning resources
  - Use the Charter to uplift the work you are doing and ground in a larger context- can be useful when talking to decision makers

# Resources

[2022 Michigan Good Food Charter](#)

[2022 Michigan Good Food Charter Two-Page Summary](#)

[Community Engagement Assessment for Equitable Participation](#)

[White Supremacy Culture – Still Here by Tema Okun](#)

[Examining Whiteness in Food Systems by Duke Sanford World Food Policy Center](#)

