

# Food System Values: Government and Philanthropic Perspectives

## SUMMARY

What does a desirable future food system look like in Flint to government and philanthropic leaders? What values underly this future and are they aligned with values shared by the community in Flint? Building on previous workshops with consumers ([see Briefing Note 2](#)), we held two additional workshops in January and February 2020. In one workshop we assembled local and state government leaders and the other we met with local and state philanthropic organizations all working on the food system in Flint. We learned about their vision for the future of the food system in Flint, what they thought was working well, and what they would like to see more of in the future in order to achieve a desirable food system. These groups identified eleven new values to inform future modeling work for this project, along with the values previously identified by Flint community members in earlier workshops. Gathering data on values from all perspectives is important for creating meaningful and productive partnerships in the future – this work is important for understanding where governmental and philanthropic organizations values differ from community perspectives.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

In analyzing the detailed conversations held with folks who work in governance and philanthropic organizations, we identified eleven new values that are reflective of themes discussed in detail. The eleven new values are described below:

Values	Statements Describing Each Value
Education—sub value	Residents should have educational opportunities that allow them to broaden their job skills and opportunities in the food system
Leadership	The food system should have leaders that are trustworthy
Collaboration	The food system should be a collaborative effort, involving residents, fostering partnerships among organizations, and building trust and efficiency throughout.
Innovation	The food system should be innovative.
Access	Organizations and residents, particularly disabled persons and senior citizens, should have access to the food system.
Efficiency	The food system should not be overladen with bureaucracy.
Empowerment	Organizations in the food system should empower residents.
Equity	Residents should have equitable access to the food system.
Sustainability	The food system should be sustainable.
Dignity	Residents should be treated with dignity when accessing the food system.
Choice	Residents should be able to have choices within the food system.

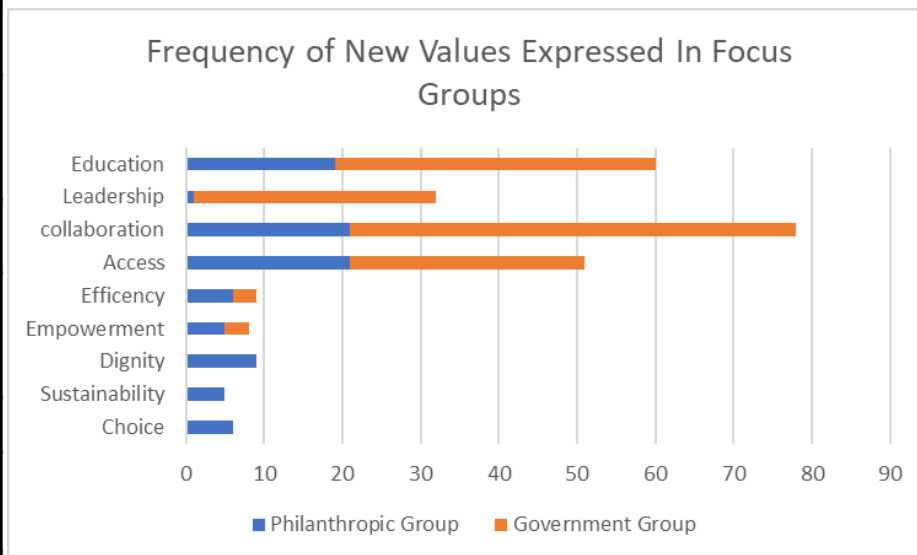


Figure 1: Graph representing the number of times new values were expressed by participants in the philanthropic and government focus groups

### Dignity and Choice

*“...and I think it gets back to that dignity piece, earlier. No matter what way a person gets their food, they deserve to be recognized as a human being. And to have choice and to have the opportunity to get what culturally fits their needs” (Philanthropic Workshop)*

**Authors:** Chelsea Wentworth, Jennifer Hodbod and Livy Drexler. Michigan State University. **Contact:** [wentwo21@msu.edu](mailto:wentwo21@msu.edu)

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## MAJOR FINDINGS, Continued:

Education was discussed by residents, philanthropic groups, and government groups. The philanthropic and government groups talked about this value in greater breadth than resident groups prompting us to develop a new subcode to distinguish these ideas. Members of the government group discussed education more broadly, and they discussed cooking classes, health education, agricultural education, and job and economic training. Both groups saw education as an opportunity to empower residents. Earlier consumer groups discussed education in the context of cooking skills and training they desired.

Collaboration is an entirely new value emerging from these workshops, with an emphasis on working and communicating across boundaries. The philanthropic group focused on partnering and working with other organizations to support Flint residents and identified bureaucratic barriers to achieving this. Government representatives cited trust as the most significant barrier to collaboration, which is reflected in other research stemming from the Water Crisis. The barrier of trust is significant as it is repeated in other components of the FLPP as well.

Please note, these findings are based on data collected before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## APPROACH

- Building on our work with varying groups of residents in Flint (see Briefing Note 2), we held two additional workshops to learn specifically about the values of one workshop for staff representing philanthropic organizations in the city and state, and one workshop for government staff and leaders in the city and state.
- Workshops ranged from five to six participants in each group.
- Visioning activities lasted about one hour.
- The data from the workshops was analyzed using the list of values identified by residents of Flint from earlier workshops (see Briefing Note 2), and by inductive coding, meaning we identified new values based on what *participants from these two groups stated as values*. This is important to sharing values that come directly from participants rather than the literature or outside organizations.

## IMPLICATIONS

- As we expected, the values of these organizations differ from those of Flint residents presented in [Briefing Note 2](#) because they interact with the food system in different ways. Members of governmental and philanthropic groups talked more about collaboration and broader interactions than household level expertise, demonstrating the need to understand values of various stakeholders to unpack where conflict and collaboration can arise. Trusting those in leadership and ensuring collaborations between larger organizations and community groups build trust between community members and leaders is critical.
- This also highlights potential disconnects in the values of community leaders and Flint residents. In particular, government organizations are not necessarily reflecting values that communities have translated to philanthropy organizations, like dignity and sustainability.
- We suggest that interventions should account for bridging these gaps with concrete steps for improving communication, trust, and collaboration across stakeholder groups. Distinct priorities is not a problem, as a food system can support different goals, but understanding how priorities differ is key for accounting for all perspectives.
- Therefore, working to improve collaboration, overcome barriers affiliated with past harms, and facilitating conduits for action is essential to improving the food system in Flint.

## USING THIS RESEARCH

Together with the Community Consultative Panel (CCP), we outlined a list below that suggests these values can be used:

- to address and fix barriers that prevent organizations from collaborating.
- to design educational programs around ideas related to resident empowerment in the food system
- to identify ways to get youth involved in the food system
- As evidence in support of grant applications
- As a starting point for more work to identify how to overcome barriers to achieving these values, and build trust between organizations and community members
- Develop a framework for a universally accessible food system for senior residents or disabled residents within the city of Flint.

The visioning protocol we created is the first for urban food systems and is [available on the FLPP website](#) so other groups can use it to inform their futures.

## ABOUT THE FLINT LEVERAGE POINTS PROJECT

The Flint Leverage Points Project is a collaboration between researchers and community partners to find ways to change the food system in Flint so that it is more equitable, healthy, and sustainable. The Community Foundation of Greater Flint (CFGF) is partnering with Michigan State University (MSU) to conduct this research. We are advised by a Community Consultative Panel comprised of representatives from the Flint community who work in the food space. We look at the whole food system involved in producing, distributing, preparing, eating and recycling food in Flint to find patterns that are keeping it in an undesirable state. We will also identify strengths and opportunities within the food system that could be built upon. This project will produce an analysis of how community partners can intervene in the Flint food system to create positive change. For more information about the project, contact Damon Ross (CFGF) at [DRoss@cfgf.org](mailto:DRoss@cfgf.org) or Chelsea Wentworth (MSU) at [wentwo21@msu.edu](mailto:wentwo21@msu.edu).