CHARTER
Solano Local Food System Alliance

MISSION / VISION / VALUES

Mission / Purpose: To create an environmentally regenerative, economically viable, socially just and equitable local food system in Solano County.

Vision: To diversify, expand and safeguard a healthy food economy that will preserve farmland, its integrity and biodiversity in Solano County, and ensure food access for local communities.

Values:

- Sustainable / regenerative ag practices
- Access to healthy food for all
- Inclusivity
- Collaboration
- Holistic & systemic approaches
- Finding common ground, promoting dialogues and looking for shared solutions

Goals (for current year 2026):

- Build public awareness around General Plan update and Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation process. The Alliance seeks to make sure its proposals and input are documented in these final plans and that support of the local food system is mentioned and used as an approach – “Local food for local people”;
- When feasible, hold a public forum around the SALC process or General Plan;
- Conduct planning and create a blueprint for ways to strengthen the local food system to address future crises, particularly addressing food insecurity in a county where the top industry is agriculture. Support resiliency through local food/supply chain;
- Secure future funding for the Alliance and its local food system work in the county;
- Explore the collaboration and possible merger of the Alliance with the Food, Agriculture and Nutrition Network of Solano County (FANNS);
- Promote key concepts that support the local food system and farms, including regenerative agriculture, agritourism, and Food as Medicine;
- Build awareness of the Alliance’s work in the county and with county leaders.

Methods / How we create change

The Alliance creates change through

- Advocacy
    - Voice of sustainable agriculture in Solano County
- Education

- Building Awareness
- Collaboration with partners
- Policy work
    - Local, state and national policy that affect the local food system, eg.
        - Fee structures for farmers markets
        - Deed restrictions for grocery stores
        - Farm Bill
- Systems change work
- Clearinghouse for knowledge of funding sources
    - Grants
    - Programs

ALLIANCE STRUCTURE & MEETINGS

Council Structure: The Solano Local Food System Alliance began as an advisory board to Sustainable Solano in 2017 when the organization worked on the Solano Local Food System Feasibility study, funded by the USDA LFPP grant. At this time, the group began to understand local food systems and committed to continuing the work of strengthening the food system in Solano County. Today, the Alliance is composed of a wide variety of stakeholders from both public and private sectors, including County departments, small businesses, farmers, educational institutions and community-based organizations whose work intersects with and supports the local food system.

Steering Committee: The Steering Committee comprises around 8-10 members of the Alliance who meet monthly; one Steering Committee member is the Chairperson (a Co-Chair may be added later). The Steering Committee advances the work of the Alliance, plans and sets the agenda for upcoming meetings and acts upon issues identified by the full Alliance. The Steering Committee also screens potential members.

Members must have been on the Alliance for at least 1 year before being eligible to serve on the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members commit to a 2-year term. To become the Chair, Steering Committee members must serve for at least 6 months on the committee. The Chair's term is 6 months. After the terms expire, if no other Alliance members want to fill the positions, the current members are given the option to continue on in their roles, but an effort will be made to rotate the Chair position. Terms for all will begin upon adoption of the Charter and will then be staggered to retain institutional knowledge as new members join the Steering Committee.

Meeting Schedule:
There are three types of meetings:

- **Steering Committee** meetings – monthly, on the 2nd Thursday at 5 pm
- **Educational Forum** meetings – quarterly, on the 1st Thursday in February, May, August and November, usually at 4 pm. These Alliance meetings are also open to the

public and focus on educational topics that are relevant to the local food system.
- **Collaborative Action** meetings – quarterly, on the 1st Thursday in March, June, September and *either* December or January, usually at 4 pm. These are business meetings for all Alliance members to discuss issues affecting the local food system, shaping strategy and to propel action steps forward.

Agenda formation/contributions: The agenda is drafted by the Steering Committee, which takes into consideration input and feedback from general Alliance members.

Positions (timekeeper, secretary, etc.) – To be determined

MEMBERSHIP

Categories of members

Members can be both representatives of organizations as well as individuals. Passionate individuals can be an important part of the Alliance because they can advocate for change within their communities and to elected officials.

The Alliance will have voting and nonvoting members. As they join the Alliance, new members automatically have voting privileges, but continuing members need to have attended 5 out of 8 meetings annually (barring absences excused for extenuating circumstances) and show active involvement to remain voting members. (Meetings are generally recorded, so members who miss meetings may have the opportunity to listen to them.) While some organizations may have multiple participants attending, they are allowed only 1 vote.

Any voting member can recuse themselves from a vote if they have a conflict of interest or are restricted by requirements of their agency.

In summary, there are:
- Voting members
- Nonvoting members (based on organization affiliation/agency limits on participation)
- Nonvoting members who have not made the majority of meetings to retain voting status

Procedure for New Members

New members first complete an application form that gathers initial background information, their role in the local food system and identifies any potential conflicts of interest. The Steering Committee then determines if the applicant is a good fit for the Alliance, and the new member is invited to attend a Steering Committee meeting (as their schedule permits) to discuss their work in the community, and to communicate synergies between the Alliance and the new member. Once accepted, new Alliance members automatically receive voting privileges for Alliance decisions.

Voluntary Contributions

Alliance members are encouraged to contribute suggested amounts below, to support the Alliance's ongoing operating expenses for educational and collaborative action meetings (guest speaker fees, meeting room rental, materials/supplies, refreshments), lobbying work (attorney fees) as well as their benefits of being part of the Alliance for networking, gaining knowledge, and being part of a coalition to effect systems change.

Suggested amounts:

- Agencies/Organizations/Businesses: $100+
- Farmers: $25-$100
- Individuals: $10-$50

Contributions will be received and specifically earmarked by Sustainable Solano for the operating expenses of the Alliance outlined above. Administrative staff time provided by Sustainable Solano will *not* be covered by these funds and will remain dependent on grants. No one is turned away for lack of funds, but must align with the Alliance's mission, vision and values. Organizations/Members who can give more are welcome to do so.

Guest Policy

Educational meetings are always open to the general public. For strategic Collaborative Action Alliance meetings, members and invited guests may attend. During any meeting, all attendees must identify themselves when meeting attendance is taken; invited guests may observe the meeting, but participation is limited to specific agenda items and at the discretion of the Alliance members; invited guests may be required to leave if the Alliance needs to discuss personnel, legal, financial, real estate, or other confidential or sensitive matters. Attendees who are disruptive may be required to leave at the discretion of the Alliance members.

Termination of membership

An Alliance member can terminate their membership at any time with a written termination letter to the Steering Committee. The resignation shall become effective immediately without any action on the part of the Alliance.

An Alliance member may for failure to comply with these rules, or regulations of the Alliance, or for any other justifiable reason, be expelled from the Alliance by resolution adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all members.

Member roster

The full membership will be listed on the Alliance's webpage, currently held within Sustainable Solano's website.

PROCESS FOR DISCUSSION & DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making Process

Each Alliance member organization is an independent entity doing its part in the overall local food system. United by the shared vision and mission, the Alliance relies on the strength, commitment and work of each member in their respective field of action. The Alliance retains the ability to take positions on pending legislation and advocate on matters of interest separate from the individual members.

Any member can bring a subject to the steering committee for discussion. The steering committee will determine if an action or advocacy aligns with the Alliance's mission, vision and values. It will be brought to the full Alliance membership (generally during a Collaborative Action meeting) to discuss and vote on the action or advocacy. These votes must take place within the meeting, by those present (no post-meeting votes will be considered). Simple majority is required to move forward with action items/approval through a formalized vote among Alliance members. If the majority of members vote in favor of moving forward with an action/advocacy, a letter or other relevant document will be composed and distributed to the full Alliance for consideration.

At this point, member organizations must 'opt in' to signing onto an advocacy letter or aligning with an Alliance position. Those who do not respond will not be included.

If any member has a known conflict of interest, they must declare it to the Alliance and recuse themselves from any Alliance action related to that conflict of interest.

Note: The Alliance is independent from Sustainable Solano, which serves as administrative support to the Alliance, and Alliance positions may or may not represent the viewpoints of Sustainable Solano. (As a member of the Alliance, Sustainable Solano would need to 'opt in' to letters or positions, just as others would.)

In situations where there is a time constraint to engaging the whole Alliance, then the steering committee can take action on behalf of the Alliance as a whole to propose an action/advocacy strategy that will go out to the Alliance members for opting in or out. In urgent circumstances that affect the core values of the Alliance's work, steering committee *co-chairs* can take action on behalf of the Alliance as long as it is aligned with the charter, and inherent in that, the specific mission, vision and values of the Alliance.

Record Keeping

The Alliance will follow a formalized process of meeting that will include reported minutes from the meeting with a record of any votes taken. The steering committee will track the Alliance's stance on issues/topics over time. Positions taken by the Alliance will be published on the Alliance webpage, once formulated. The Alliance reserves the right to change, expire or withdraw its position, which will also be documented on its webpage.

AMENDMENT OF THE CHARTER

Procedure for Amending the Charter

An amendment to the charter may be suggested at a regular Alliance meeting, and any proposed change to the charter will be drafted and reviewed by the Steering Committee. The amendment will then be sent out to the full Alliance in advance of the next meeting, with a simple majority vote at that meeting required to approve.