

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



FROM OUR DIRECTOR

2021 was a year of reimagining for CFPAC, as our board, staff, partners, and broader community negotiated the new normality of life under the pandemic with so many shifting social, political, and economic conditions. In our network organizing, policy advocacy, and relationship building, we prioritized how to build systems that would not revert us to the “business as usual” before COVID-19, but rather supported a vision of what could be in its place: equitable investment in local food resilience, care of our food system’s impact on people and ecosystems, and community control over food production and access. The theme for the 16th Annual Chicago Food Justice Summit, held virtually February 24-26, 2021, was “Radical Re-Imagination,” which invited the broader food justice community to co-create this vision of a more equitable, sustainable, and nurturing food system for Chicago and the surrounding region.

As we reflect on the past year, we are excited about both the new processes and outcomes emerging in support of food justice and sovereignty right now. One newly developed structure that we believe will have a profound impact on the Chicago foodshed is the formation of the City of Chicago’s Food Equity Council. Their inaugural Food Equity Agenda prioritizes food access, public procurement of good food, urban agriculture, and support for food businesses run by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and People of Color. We are celebrating the corresponding announcement of a Chicago Food Equity Fund in the City’s approved budget, which will invest \$10 million directly in emerging farms and food businesses through 2023. We are also thrilled that Cook County Government has allocated \$4.5 million to addressing food insecurity and access in their American Rescue Plan Act budget, which includes significant investments in their Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) implementation.

There is much work ahead to cultivate a racially equitable, just, sustainable, humane, and healthy food system for all Chicagoans. Greed, discrimination, division, and climate crisis make for a hostile environment to be tending to such seeds, but our community is full of hardy varieties: resilient, cooperative, and generous stewards of the earth and each other. We are grateful for all who are part of this movement to grow food justice & sovereignty across the region, and hope that CFPAC can bolster your efforts through our advocacy, networking, and relationship-building.

rodger cooley

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

NEW STAFF

In January, 2021, Ashia Aubourg joined our staff full time! After serving as one of the Communications and Engagement Summit Working Group Leaders, she is now our Operations and Culture Specialist. Ashia comes from six years of work with community organizations, public health departments, start-ups, and public schools, and currently handles our internal operations as well as co-leads our internal equity forward learning journey.



In May, we welcomed Zuri Thompson of The Doula Part as our principal consultant in organizing the Good Food in Healthcare Cohort. Zuri has over 15 years of experience directing, managing, and developing programs in neighborhoods throughout Chicago to address critical needs in the areas of senior citizen care, affordable housing, veteran services, economic development and food security. Zuri has been working with CFPAC, the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) to build a cohort of local hospitals focused on good food purchasing, develop and disseminate educational materials, liaise with healthcare and local food supply chain partners, routinely collaborate with project staff and partners, and support hospital cohort members with long-term planning to adopt good food purchasing standards.

To organize the 17th Annual Chicago Food Justice Summit, we re-welcomed Enrique Orosco to our Summit Steward team! Last year, Enrique worked as our Data Specialist, where he facilitated a working group that created a food access map for Chicagoans. As a Bolivian immigrant, activator, and organizer, he brings several years of volunteer coordination experience, phenomenal facilitation and collaboration skills, and a unique perspective to our summit planning team.

In addition to new core staff, we had the privilege of hosting three Emerson Hunger Center fellows, Saadhana Deshpande, Fatima Wahidi, and Artis Trice.

At the end of 2021, CFPAC's Systems & Strategies Manager, Ma'raj Sheikh, transitioned to the role of Grassroots Director for the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) in Washington D.C. We are so excited to stay connected with her in her new position!

BOARD MEMBERS

The Chicago Food Policy Action Council's board is comprised of leadership staff from organizations leading the fight for food justice in the Chicago region. Many of our board members are doing on the ground farming and food access work, which allows us to stay updated on the most pressing issues our local food shed is facing. To ensure we are advocating for and implementing equitable and just food policies, we confer with our board regularly to ensure those policies serve their missions and operations entirely. We are extremely grateful for their participation in our organizations development and their sound guidance throughout the years



Erika Allen
Urban Growers Collective



L. Anton Seals, Jr.
Grow Greater Englewood



Jose Oliva
HEAL Food Alliance



Kim Wasserman
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization



Daniel Block
Chicago State University

[To learn more about our Board of Directors, visit our website.](#)

16TH ANNUAL FOOD SUMMIT

Our 16th Annual Chicago Food Justice Summit was not only our largest to date, but the first time we hosted it virtually! Over 1,300 people registered to leverage collective power into policy. This year's theme was Radical Reimagination and featured Elena Terry of Wild Bearies and Joseluis Ortiz of the Biodynamic Association as keynote speakers.

The day consisted of lectures, interactive workshops, pre-recorded on-demand videos, a virtual marketplace of resources and small businesses, a community message board, and a particularly active job opportunities message board! Those who attended left with meaningful knowledge, relationships, and conversations to envision Chicago's food future in a new light. The themed tracks highlighted ways to ground policy in community action and engage participants in strengthening Chicago's foodscape, together.

One added benefit to doing the summit virtually was it enabled us to record and publish all of the live sessions! You can find recordings on our YouTube channel here.

760

People
attended

535

Posts in
Forums

36

Live Virtual
Sessions



URBAN STEWARDS



The Urban Stewards Action Network (USAN) brings together Black and Brown communities focusing on food justice. We believe food serves as a symbolic and historic tie binding people across cultures while reflecting injustices such as access to land, diet related disease, low paying jobs in the food sector, access to affordable healthy food, contaminated soil, among many other issues. Food is a focus for celebrating diverse cultures while providing direct projects and policies in which communities can collaborate. The space we hold through USAN as an integral part of just policy co-creation and advocacy.

In 2021, we gathered and embraced in ways we didn't imagine. The year started with abrupt and sad news, when we learned of the passing of a founding member of the USAN Leader's Council who passed away on March 5th, 2021, Jacqueline Abena Smith. Anyone that knew her was immediately drawn to her dedication to food sovereignty, empathy, community and kindness. Through GrowAsis and so many on the ground projects she carried her passion and spread her joy for food justice. If you are interested in learning more about her work please visit [Urban Garden Consulting](#) and her blog [Jackie Smith Urban Gardner](#).

URBAN STEWARDS

This year, USAN focused on gatherings as a critical step for healing, power building and stability. We celebrated the land through stewardship and volunteering for BIPOC growers with the Farmer's for Chicago at the Urban Growers Collective while rooted in ancestral music with Bomba con Buya. The Leader's Council was fortunate enough to break bread together to collectively strategize a new path in community crowdfunding using Tanda/Susu models. Details of this work will surface sometime in 2022.

We would like to honor Johnnie Owens, one of the initial founders of USAN, who passed away August 17th, 2021. He comes from a lifetime of community organizing on Chicago's south side, from working with a very young Barack Obama to Centers for New Horizons to several community-led projects in Bronzeville, including founding the Bronzeville Neighborhood Farm (Gofundme). Thank you Johnnie for all your tireless efforts and dedication to food justice and community power.

As we close out 2021 year we are reminded to stand in gratitude, grief and very much like Jackie and Johnnie, unapologetically embrace your power. They, along with many others lost in our communities, are forever missed and we continue to heal, grieve and cultivate the legacy of work they and the ancestors have left behind.



Photo taken by Alexy Irving

RHIZOME NETWORK



The causes of food inequity are massive, complicated, and systemic. To address these issues, the Chicago Food Policy Action Council facilitates the Chicago Food Justice Rhizome Network, a group of passionate food justice advocates who participate in working groups to build a more equitable food system in Chicago. This group is not specific to those who live in or work with Chicago and is open to everyone. We welcome all who are involved or impacted by Chicago's food shed, which includes all of Cook County, Illinois, and neighboring Great Lakes states.

While each of our individual working groups are crucial to supporting the development of a more equitable food system, if they are siloed, their impact will be stifled. We decided to call our network the Chicago Food Justice Rhizome Network because we want our network to operate similar to rhizomatic root structures. Growing horizontally, intricately interwoven, all working toward a single goal of food justice and sovereignty for the Chicagoland region.

PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPES

The Productive Landscapes Project identifies pathways and implements strategies for improving community access to underutilized public lands across Chicago and Cook County. The aim of this Project is to catalyze community-driven transformation of underutilized public lands into productive landscapes that meet multiple community needs. The project is stewarded by the Productive Landscapes Task Force, a group of 35+ stakeholders representing community based organizations, public land holding entities, and City and County governments. The Productive Landscapes Task Force convened three times in 2021.

In lieu of a 4th quarter meeting, Task Force Members completed end-of-year interviews to assess progress made by represented institutions and organizations in 2021 and to determine needs, opportunities and goals to advance the aims of the Productive Landscapes Project in 2022.

Two land assessments were conducted this year, one by Emerson Fellow, Riani Carr, published the report *Returning to the Land: Pathways and Barriers to Accessing Land In Chicago* after carrying out an extensive investigation into the land access policies and procedures of 16 public land holding entities across Chicago and Cook County, and another by DePaul University graduate student, Johanna Tuthill, who completed a historical land use analysis for the following communities: Little Village, Maywood, Englewood, Robbins.

The South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) built on Tuthill's analysis to incorporate historical land use data into the Productive Landscapes Map, a community planning tool for assessing public land parcels for community-based food production.

CFPAC submitted public testimony during the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Land Use Study Session to inform the District's Comprehensive Land Use Policy to improve community access for agricultural land use. Also Productive Landscapes Project Manager, Ma'raj Sheikh, presented on *Centering Communities in Land Use Planning* at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) 9th Annual Sustainability Summit. Catch the event recording [here](#).

To further the progress of the Productive Landscapes map, staff from both Little Village Environmental Justice Organization and Grow Greater Englewood participated in a demonstration and training session to provide feedback on the map's utility and usability. Partnership with Grow Greater Englewood continues through engagement with the Englewood Line Brain Trust, a group of stakeholders informing development of the Englewood Line Trail.

FOOD RESEARCH

The Midwest Consortium for Equity, Research, and Food Justice (M-CERF) is a group of university, government, and community-based researchers who collaborate with communities in Chicago's foodshed to answer questions related to food equity and support transitions to more equitable food systems. The group is convened by CFPAC and meets on a monthly basis.

- M-CERF completed a Food Hub Feasibility Study looking at trends in food hubs nation-wide and conducted a statistical analysis on food hub feasibility across the nation.
- An analysis is underway on how local institutions are currently tracking data around food purchasing to support implementation of the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP).
- A BIPOC producer survey and foodshed mapping effort spanning the 300 mile radius of Chicago is currently underway by DePaul University and Illinois Institute of Technology researchers.
- Members are developing a [Midwest Cold Storage Map](#) spanning the 300 mile radius of Chicago to help identify potentially accessible cold storage spaces for local to regional food distribution. This map will be built upon as new regional and local sources become available.
- Members continued developing the [Food Access Hub](#) in partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health, Cook County Departments of Public Health, ESRI, Chicago State University, and University of Illinois (UIC) Nutrition, Obesity, and Health Equity Research Group. This data gathering effort will continue into 2022 to make robust and regularly updated data accessible on food access points to the public across Chicago and Cook County.
- The publication, [Mutual aid organisations and their role in reducing food insecurity in Chicago's urban communities during COVID-19](#), was published in the Journal of Public Health Nutrition by Dr. Saria Lofton, Marjorie Kersten, Dr. Shannon Simonovich and Dr. Akilah Martin.

13

Food justice publications

31

Active Members

7

Contributing universities

GOOD FOOD PURCHASING

The Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago (GFPI) aims to ensure that the places that feed our communities leverage their food purchasing to advance an equitable, racially just, fair, healthy, local, sustainable, and humane food system while creating good food access for all. CFPAC is collaborating with the City of Chicago, Cook County Government, and many other community partners to support Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) implementation, build a more racially equitable food supply chain, and normalize a culture of good food across all Metro Chicago's institutions.

GFPP Implementation Highlights:

- CFPAC staff provided over 140 hours in technical support to City of Chicago and Cook County meal programs that are working to shift their food purchases to local, sustainable, fair, humane, and healthy products
- Chicago Public Schools & the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center released food solicitations that include GFPP goals
- The Chicago Department of Family & Support Services awarded a contract with GFPP goals for their senior home-delivered meal program
- Chicago Public Schools and Cook County Health both finished collecting food purchasing data and submitted to the Center for Good Food Purchasing for GFPP Assessments (to be completed in 2022)
- Cook County Jails received an initial GFPP Assessment on their food purchases and began action planning to shift purchases
- CFPAC Supported the Cook County Department of Public Health with organizing three Cook County Good Food Task Force meetings and engaging over 70 attendees in a public webinar on GFPP for Cook County's Racial Equity Week. A recording of the meeting [is available via the Chicago Food Policy Action Council's YouTube.](#)
- CFPAC is co-chairing the City of Chicago Food Equity Council's Procurement Working Group to support GFPP implementation across City departments and Sister Agencies



GOOD FOOD PURCHASING

Equitable Supply Chain Development

- CFPAC co-presented “Too Small for Wholesale? Think Again” with Extension partners as part of their “Winter Webinar Series”
- CFPAC released published “The Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago’s Guide for Growers and Food Businesses: Selling to Your Community’s Institutions.” An online version of the guide can be found on the CFPAC website with a PDF version available for download.
- CFPAC held its first Buyer/Supplier Mixer in December 2021, bringing 80 stakeholders across 3 days of networking and relationship building at the Chicago Botanic Garden’s Windy City Harvest Farm on Ogden.
- With partners at Roosevelt University, HEAL Food Alliance, and Food Chain Workers Alliance, CFPAC formed a group of labor organizations and worker centers who will be exploring how to educate and receive feedback from food workers about GFPP, as well as strategically leverage the policy for local labor campaigns.

Good Food Culture Building

- In May 2021, CFPAC launched a “Good Food in Healthcare Cohort” of seven local healthcare systems with partners at The Doula Part and the IL Public Health Institute’s Alliance for Health Equity
- CFPAC supported the IL Public Health Institute with co-organizing quarterly calls for food pantries interested in good food purchasing strategies and nutrition guidelines

GFPI Strategic Plan

- CFPAC partnered with the groundswell alliance to develop a three-year strategic plan for the Good Food Purchasing Initiative of Metro Chicago. The process involved over 30 core and advisory planning partners, 13 one-on-one interviews, and 3 focus groups. The plan will be released on CFPAC’s website in 2022.

140

Hours of
technical
support

80

Attendees,
Buyer & Supplier
Mixer

30

Core and
advisory
partners

INTERNS & FELLOWS



Artis Trice's supported data collection and visualization for the Good Food Purchasing Policy (GFPP) for the City of Chicago and Cook County. His work editing CFPAC's GFPP asset map showed the linkages between local government, food service management companies, and food producers. His goal in highlighting these connections and linkages is to identify opportunities for smaller food producers to access contract information to possibly bid for new food supplier contracts with local governments.



Fatima Wahidi collaborated on building a StoryMapping project with local organizations, addressing a need to center and amplify Indigenous, Black, and Latinx-led voices, lived experiences, and wisdom to guide food sovereignty work across the Chicago area. She has been creating articles and interactive media pieces, utilizing storytelling as a basis for coalition building and dialogue.



Saadhana Deshpande worked with CFPAC to further Theory of Change developments by interviewing all staff on their work plans and conducting research into the current landscape of food system support networks. In addition to this internal work, Saadhana wrote a blog post envisioning more a more equitable food pantry system titled, "Transforming the Food Pantry Space: A Conversation with Dr. Rebecca de Souza" [which can be read here.](#)

THANK YOU

The work we accomplished this year would not have been possible without the support of our networks and funders.

Networks



**IL Food
Justice
Alliance**

Funders



Food:Land:Opportunity
Localizing the Chicago Foodshed



The
**ROCKEFELLER
FOUNDATION**



Illinois
Department of
Agriculture



Special thank you to all the individual donors who supported CFPAC's work in 2021