

Internal Governance

A Document for the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council

I. Name, Location and Current Status

The full name of the Policy Council is **New Mexico Food and Agricultural Policy Council** (Policy Council). The address of the **Policy Council** is 3900 Paseo del Sol, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87507.

The **Policy Council** is an unincorporated association, democratically constituted, of private organizations and providers, public and governmental agencies, groupings of people who have come together around common interests and beliefs about the food and agricultural systems and individuals including those who are recipients of various food and agricultural benefit programs. These are the members of the **Policy Council**. It does not have a formal incorporation but does, by the creation of this document, recognize the need for rules and guidelines of its internal governance.

The **Policy Council** adheres to: its mission statement and preamble; goals and principles; articulations of its role in the food and agricultural systems, and in the conduct of all of its activities and endeavors, to generally recognized educational and charitable purposes. In its formation, current and anticipated activities, the **Policy Council** acts, and intends to act, in compliance with the requirements of its fiscal sponsorship with Farm to Table, a non profit corporation with 501(c)(3) IRS tax exempt status.

II. Preamble

The New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council is a democratically based organization, composed of a variety of groups and individuals, working on issues arising from the food and agriculture systems. The Policy Council will perform its work and activities in a collaborative manner. It will bring forward to the public eye a discussion of these issues for more comprehensive examination. It intends to educate and inform the public, those directly affected by food and agriculture programs, and public and legislative decision-makers about selected policy issues, openly arrived at by deliberations of its members. It will advocate for these policy issues in a variety of forums and will develop and disseminate viable policy recommendations and alternatives.

III. Outline of this Document

Besides providing a statement of the **Policy Council**'s preamble, purposes, goals and guiding principles in the following sections, this document outlines two basic areas of governance.

1. The process by which advocacy issues are considered, discussed, reviewed and adopted by the membership, and then approved by the governing board, becoming selected and designated Policy Issues for the work and activities of the **Policy Council** in the various forums where policy consideration of the food and agricultural systems are made.
2. The providing of reasonable rules and guidelines for the internal governance of the **Policy Council** covering, among a number of topics, the full **Policy Council** membership, the governing board, the committee structure including issue group committees and standing committees, and the other miscellaneous rules deemed necessary for the current functioning of the **Policy Council**.

IV. Vision, Purpose and Goals

The vision, purpose and goals of the New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council shall be the following:

Vision:

1) Focus on key food and agriculture policy issues and opportunities that are affected by government and legislation, 2) address top policy issues as priorities when set forth by the Council, and 3) strengthen advocacy among agencies, organization, individuals and communities for New Mexico food and agriculture.

Purposes:

The NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council was initiated to:

- Broaden the discussion of issues to examine more comprehensively the food and agriculture systems and how federal, state and local government and public bodies shape the food system
- Create a forum by which people and the public in conjunction with institutions involved in food and agricultural systems, including government, can meet to learn more about what each one does and consider how their actions impact other parts of the systems.
- Strive to balance a safe, nutritious, affordable and adequate food supply for all New Mexicans that will prevent food insecurity and hunger.
- Strive for fair food and agricultural systems that supports the needs of producers and consumers economically, culturally, environmentally and socially
- Focus on food access, production, distribution, and consumption issues.
- Advocate for selected food and agricultural policy issues in various forums and venues.

Goals:

The NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council has as its initial goals:

- Develop, coordinate and implement a food system policy linking economic development, social and environmental impacts with farming, ranching and urban issues.
- Review and comment on proposed legislation and regulations that have an impact on food and agricultural systems and their security.
- Make recommendations to the executive and legislative branches of government on food and agriculture policy.
- Develop local farmers' markets, support the maintaining of local food production and enable local purchasing of New Mexico's farmers' produce and products as a way to increase the agricultural economy and local food production
- Establish an on-going educational program and projects for the public about food and agricultural systems based upon accurate facts and reliable reports and analyses
- Promote the viability of local farming and ranching and the retention and recruitment of small farmers and ranchers in New Mexico.
- Be aware of and work to prevent food insecurity for families and children in New Mexico.
- Develop and support greater access for New Mexicans who are in need of nutritious foods at reasonable prices, in both rural and urban communities, and to be sensitive to cultural and traditional food preferences.
- Educate farmers, processors, and consumers regarding safe food production, handling, and preparation.
- Educate about and promote stewardship and conservation of land and resources

V. Principles

In keeping with our vision and purpose, we recognize and support the following principles:

1. "Asset-Based": Focusing on assets of a diverse group of people, organizations and agencies rather than problems and liabilities ultimately provides a better return on invested time and resources by the Policy Council.
2. "Community –Based Partnerships": Projects, programs and the policies that guide them are most vital and responsive when they are rooted in local communities. When partnerships among individuals, organizations and government agencies are formed around a policy issue at the local or regional level, people and members are more invested and committed.
3. "Conflict Resolution": Conflict is a predictable result of collaboration and provides positive benefits when it is cooperatively resolved.
4. "Consensus and Decision Making": Decisions will be made by consensus and reaching unity whenever possible. Unity does not necessarily require unanimity. It requires that all present avoid obstruction in a common search for agreement and has the great advantage of not leaving behind an unhappy minority.

5. “Diversity”: Diverse groups, agencies, organizations and the Executive Branch, viewpoints and constituencies provide the greatest potential for sharing, learning, and developing policies that benefit our food system; enhance our local economies, honor our social integrity, and value our environment and its resources.
6. “Full Disclosure, Accountability, and Transparency”: Open and honest sharing of information; analysis that looks with a critical eye into systemic issues developed with accuracy, clarity and accessibility; and, that will generate the most opportunity for both individuals and the community as a whole.
7. “Participation and Decision Making”: Values the contributions of all that choose to commit to participation in the goals and purposes of the Council. Develop procedures to encourage community participation in the education, deliberation and decision making processes. Democratic ethics are at the base of decision making.

VI. The Process of Policy Issue Deliberation, Development and Selection

The **Policy Council** makes a distinction and identifies three primary roles: (1) the advocacy before pertinent forums and venues on issues, and the consideration of policy alternatives, that arise from the workings of the food and agriculture systems, (2) to gather and glean, through a process of open discussion, review and analysis, from its membership and other credible sources, the selection of issues for advocacy, and (3) educate the Council and the general public about food and agriculture issues.

1. The first step in the process is assembling the full **Policy Council** membership annually. This meeting will occur in the Spring. At this meeting all members are encouraged to bring issues for consideration that speak to their concerns and problems they perceive within the food and agricultural systems and that fall generally within the contours of the **Policy Council** enunciated preamble, vision, purposes and goals, and principles. This Spring meetings will be conducted openly and democratically with an emphasis on robust debate and an opportunity to hear all concerns and perceived problems that can reasonably and proportionately be heard within the constraints of time and practicality. Members, in their discussions, will winnow out the concerns, focusing on those that seem to significantly affect the food and agricultural systems. As Spring gathering comes to an end, the discussion will be more directed and attempt to define more clearly the emerging advocacy issues.

2. Those advocacy issues that arise from the members’ discussion and receive support by a flexible consensus will then be referred to one of the **issue committees**. These referrals and consequent committee deliberations constitute the second step in the process. Presently there are several such committees including **health, food security, environment and stewardship, retention and recruitment of small farmers and ranchers, tribal relations and cultural issues**. These are not exclusive or vested forever; other issue committees could be formed if the **Policy Council** membership or **Governing Board** sees a clear need.

As indicated, **issue committees** are established to further the articulation and development of policy issues for which the **Policy Council**, on an annual basis, will support, adopt and advocate. Each committee is formed around various topics and concerns and directs its work toward vetting

and molding the issues identified through more analysis and deliberations. From the time of the Spring gathering and throughout the summer, these various **issue committees** should meet and perform their respective work on the assigned policy issue or issues.

3. At a certain point in this process, but with ample time before the Fall membership gathering, the various **issue committees** will send their recommended policy issues to a separate committee called the **Policy Committee**. This is a standing committee appointed by the **Governing Board**. It is composed of members and other invited participants with a broad understanding of the food and agricultural systems who are well versed in these systems' operations and effects upon the public. The **policy committee** will be responsible for understanding the legislative process and the workings of administrative and educational agencies in New Mexico. Its members will to share their expertise in an unbiased manner, help develop the language and articulation that support the intent of proposed policy issues and point out any ramifications that the policy issues might have. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the **policy committee** will mentor the respective **issue committees** in the development of the policy issues. The **policy committee** will work on potential legislative priorities immediately following the annual priority setting meeting to prepare for and respond to potential Legislative Interim Committee hearings. It is preferable that **policy committee** members participate in specific **issues committees** to have a good understanding of the issues (see below).

4. Once reviewed and developed as described above, the policy issues are taken before the full **Policy Council** membership at its early summer gathering in anticipation of the upcoming Legislative Session and meetings of Interim Committees during the summer. The attending members will review and adopt selected policy issues based upon the work and recommendations of the **issue committees** and the **policy committee**. As priority issues arise, there will be additional opportunities to bring issues to the Council and committee work in the summer and early fall meeting.

5. The next step in the process is submission of the selected policy issues to the **Governing Board** for its approval and for which the advocacy efforts will be made. The **Governing Board** will approve these selected policy issues presented to it from the deliberations of the Fall gathering, unless it thinks, in its wisdom, that one of the presented policy issues goes beyond the generally recognized and perhaps, unspoken, parameters of good policy within the food and agriculture systems and does not conform with the vision, purposes and goals of the **Policy Council**. If the **Governing Board** questions and does not approve a presented policy issue, it must do so by unanimous vote. It must then formally request the **policy committee** to reconsider the issue's efficacy. Upon its reconsideration, the **policy committee** will decide whether the questioned policy issue does or does not go forward for advocacy. The **policy committee's** decision will be final.

6. The **Governing Board**, at its discretion and considering the recommendations of the Policy Council's coordinator, may appoint a **Legislative Session Team**. This Team may include members of the **policy committee** as they will have the greatest knowledge of the legislative issues. Its members will be charged with the advocacy of the **Policy Council's** selected and designated policy issues before the New Mexico State Legislature or before other relevant

administrative agencies. The Legislative Session Team is encouraged to partner/advocate with and build relationships with other legislative groups.

The Chair of the **Governing Board** and the Legislative Session Team have the authority to act on behalf of the **Policy Council** to make decisions, by consensus, on immediate and/or reactive legislative issues that occur immediately before and during the legislative session.

VII. Internal Governance

a. Council Membership

The membership of the **Policy Council** is democratically constituted and open to private organizations and providers, public and governmental agencies, tribal entities, groupings of people who have come together around common interests and beliefs about the food and agricultural systems and individuals including those who are recipients of various food and agricultural benefit programs. The **Policy Council** encourages representations from agriculture, health, human and social services, food related businesses and organizations, environment, education, economics, nutrition, transportation, and legal, such as but not limited to regional associations, land and water organizations, agriculture commodity organizations, small scale food industries and distributors, local farmers markets, grocers, cooperatives, restaurants, schools, recipients of food and agricultural programs and consumers.

This recitation of the sources of potential members is not exhaustive. All groupings are considered equal in the deliberations of the **Policy Council**. It is open to individuals and their contributions. Individual members may be designated by their group or organization to represent them in the deliberations of the **Policy Council**.

Members are expected to participate in the work of the **Policy Council** and its committees. Members, by attending and deliberating at the meetings and gatherings, agree in good faith to participate and act in accordance with the **Policy Council**'s preamble, goals and purposes and principles, or, through the deliberative process, in an open manner, to alter and amend them as circumstances necessitate.

All members shall sign an authorization form provided by the Council, either as an individual, organization or as an agency. Membership can be withdrawn at any time.

b. Meetings and Gatherings

Annual Meeting: The annual meeting for the **Policy Council** and election of the **Governing Board** will be held in the Spring at a time, date and place designated by the **Governing Board**. This meeting will include all **Policy Council**'s members who are participating in the **Council**'s work. Participation includes actively contributing to committee work, making one's views known during deliberations and discussion and generally any good faith work done for the **Policy Council**. A spring meeting will focus on new issue items (as stated in Section IV.1). A mid

Summer meeting will be held to select policy issues for advocacy. Additional important issues may be brought to the summer and early fall meeting that may arise. At the late Fall meeting additional priorities will be discussed by the full Council as to their merit. Ample notice of any additional priorities must be given to the Council with a minimum of two weeks prior to next scheduled Council meeting.

Governing Board and Committee Meetings: Regular meetings of the Committees and **Governing Board** will be held at a time and place to be determined respectively by the members of the Committees and the **Governing Board**.

Notice: Notice of each meeting of the **Governing Board** must be given to each member not less than five (5) or more than twenty (20) days prior to the day on which the meeting is to be held.

Quorum for Governing Board: The presence at any meeting of a majority of the **Governing Board** will be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Proxy voting is prohibited.

Annual Report: The **Governing Board** will present at each annual meeting a report of the **Policy Council's** activities during the proceeding year.

Conduct of Meetings: All meetings of the **Governing Board** will be conducted in accordance with acceptable parliamentary procedure and will follow the principals as set forth under Section V.

c. Rights and Responsibilities

The rights of members are to:

1. Create new and innovative ideas and plans for the food and agricultural systems and support the advocacy of those selected policy issues as described above in Section VI.
2. Be present and vote for the members of the **Governing Board** at the annual meeting.
3. Help to maintain the direction, purposes and goals, functions and responsibilities of the **Policy Council** through participation in the committee structure and deliberations.

d. Benefits of Membership

1. **Policy Council** members benefit from the opportunity to work with a broad based grouping of individuals, agencies and organizations centered on food and agriculture issues;
2. Members will glean a greater understanding of food and agriculture systems from working together on issues; and,
3. By working together there is a greater likelihood that food and agriculture issues that

are important to **Policy Council** members will get the needed recognition, support and reform from relevant decision makers and institutions.

e. Committee Structure

Committees perform the majority of the **Policy Council**'s work, directions and recommended action, including molding and selection of policy issues for advocacy. The council membership will establish the issue committees (as described in Section VI) and standing committees. As circumstances arise, the council membership can alter, change or drop committees. Currently, the standing committees are the following:

Meeting: plans and conducts the two membership meetings and gatherings in the course of the year; facilitates the location, logistics, elections and issue policy deliberations.

Membership: invites new organizations, groups and individuals to participate as members; as the need arise, verifies membership for the meetings.

Finance: with the assistance of staff, raises funds for the work of the **Policy Council**, develops a budget for consideration and approval of the governing board and oversees the financial condition of the **Policy Council**.

Policy: See description under Section VI., paragraph 3.

Legislative Session Team: See description under Section VI., paragraph 6.

f. Governing Board

Number and Classes of Governing Board members: The Governing Board will consist of a broad representation from the Policy Council. There will be two classes; voting members and non-voting ex-officios. The full Board will consist of up to nine (9) voting members and up to seven (7) non-voting ex-officios. Voting members will be either individual **Policy Council** members or those members who represent private, non-governmental organizations, groups or industry associations. Non-Voting Ex-Officios will consist of representatives from governmental agencies and organizations. The latter will educate, advise, and participate equally in all decisions other than to vote. At the request of voting members of the **Governing Board**, non-voting ex-officios will be asked to serve on the **Governing Board**.

The **Governing Board** will be elected by the **Policy Council** membership at an annual meeting. The **Governing Board** will be elected for a one (1) year term. There is no limit on number of terms served.

Governing Board Members Responsibilities: The activities, affairs and property of the **Policy Council** will be managed and directed by the **Governing Board** except for the provisions and roles of the Council membership and Committees as otherwise directed in this document.

The **Governing Board** will be responsible for:

1. setting the guidelines and rules of deliberation and discussions;
2. making sure that the processes of the **Policy Council** are fair and followed;
3. the fiscal oversight of the **Policy Council**;
4. review of the legislative and policy issues selected in accordance to Section VI; and,
5. appointing the Legislative Session Team and working with it during the Legislative Session

The **Governing Board** or its authorized designee(s) will speak on behalf of the **Policy Council** and its issues. No one member has the authority to speak for the **Policy Council**.

Officers: Officers will consist of a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Resignations: Any **Governing Board** member may resign at any time by delivering a written resignation to the chair.

Removal: Any **Governing Board** member may be removed at any time for cause. Notice of proposed removal shall be sent to the subject **Governing Board** member and the member will have the right to be heard at a special meeting called by the chair. Missing three (3) consecutive meetings without informing the Chair is considered cause.

Vacancies: Vacancies, whether caused by death, illness, resignation or removal will be filled for remainder of the term by a **Policy Council** participant who will be voted on by a majority vote of the remaining **Governing Board**.

VIII. Miscellaneous Rules

Fiscal Year: The fiscal year of the **Policy Council** will be determined from time to time by resolution of the **Governing Board**.

Deposits, Checks, Loans, Contracts:

Deposit of Funds: All funds of the **Policy Council** will be deposited in such banks, trust companies, or other reliable depositories as the **Governing Board** may from time to time determine.

Loans: No loans or advances shall be contracted on behalf of the **Policy Council** and no note or other evidence of indebtedness will be issued in its name, unless accepted and authorized by the **Governing Board**.

Contracts: Any officer authorized by the **Governing Board** may, in the name and on behalf of the Council, enter into those contracts or execute and deliver those instruments that are authorized by the Governing Board. Any authorization may be general or confined to specific instances. Without such authorization from the **Governing Board**, no officers or other agent of the corporation may enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name and on behalf of the **Policy Council**.

Record of Accounting: The **Policy Council** will keep books and records of accounting and will keep minutes of the proceedings of all its meetings and meeting of its committees. It will also keep a record of the names and addresses of all members of the **Policy Council**.

All books and records of the **Policy Council** may be inspected by any member of the **Policy Council** or member of the **Governing Board** or his/her agent or attorney for any proper purposes at any responsible and reasonable time.

IX. Amendments to Internal Governance Document

This Internal Governance document may be amended, altered, changed, added to or repealed by the affirmative vote of a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members of the Policy Council at any regular or special meeting of the voting members of the Policy Board if the notice of the proposed change, amendment, alteration, addition or repeal is contained in the notice of the meeting at least five (5) days prior to such meeting.

ADOPTION OF DOCUMENT

This Internal Governance document of the **New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council** was discussed, amended and approved in all essential provisions by the members of the **Policy Council** present at the meeting held on the _____.

This Internal Governance document was reviewed and approved for compliance with the amendments from the **Policy Council** on this _____.

Chair, Governing Board