



HOPE'S HARVEST RI

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2023

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INTRODUCTION

Hope's Harvest Rhode Island (HHRI) hit the ground running in 2018 and has already made a big difference in many people's lives. In its first two seasons, we rescued over 115,000 pounds of surplus food from 25 local farmers' fields and distributed it to 17 hunger-relief agencies, feeding more than 10,000 of the state's most vulnerable eaters.

The need for HHRI is urgent and, as a new program, we have only begun to meet the full scope of the need, particularly with a pandemic and subsequent economic collapse increasing the numbers of Rhode Islanders experiencing food insecurity and hunger. Farmers too are challenged in new, difficult ways. With plants already in the ground when COVID-19 hit, farmers have had to create new marketing strategies to survive. HHRI recognizes that these immediate issues are only worsened by the perils of climate change and a centuries-long legacy of racial injustice.

In the spring of 2020 we began an inquiry into how HHRI can best direct our limited resources to have an even greater impact – now, given our current historical context and associated challenges, and into the future. The results are presented here in this three-year Strategic Plan (2021-2023).

The plan is intended to be a living document that empowers HHRI staff, volunteers, consultants, funders, and other critical partners with greater clarity about HHRI's mission, vision, and values, and articulates goals and objectives that strengthen our organizational capacity and programs so HHRI continues to serve an essential role helping to ensure food security in Rhode Island.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

HHRI's core strategic planning team – Eva Agudelo, Executive Director, and consultants Katherine Brown and Megan Fischer – began work in April 2020 to design and set the timeline for a strategic planning process. Over the next several months, the process was guided by these key questions:*

- **Mission:** Is HHRI's mission compelling and precise? What values direct HHRI's goals, actions, and overall vision?
- **Power:** Are HHRI's pivotal decision makers and stakeholders clearly aligned and committed to mission, values, and vision? What's the most efficient and effective balance of responsibility and authority to enable HHRI's work to get done?
- **Structure:** What organizational structure will support all components (staff, volunteers, partners, infrastructure, and programs) to work together smoothly, joyfully, harmoniously, and powerfully, while incorporating humanity into the work? Are HHRI's current programs aligned with/essential to its mission? Where might HHRI's unique role expand to contribute solutions to community needs that are not currently being met?
- **Resources:** Does HHRI have the funds, personnel (including staff and volunteers), partnerships, and infrastructure it needs to ensure it meets its mission? What programs, administrative operations, and infrastructure are working well now and where does HHRI feel stretched or challenged?

The core team reached out to partner farms and agencies, long-time volunteers, previous program staff, and experts in the field of food recovery for their input at key points in the process. HHRI is grateful to Derek Bowman, Diane Calvin, Eliza Cohen, Diana Kushner, Melanie Saunders and Ruth Solomon for their thoughtful reflections on a draft of HHRI's values statement. Thanks also are due to Jesse Rye and Theresa Snow for their review and refinement of a draft of the Strategic Plan.

**See the appendices for materials developed in response to these key questions.*

Note: this framework is adapted from: Robert Terry: Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 1993. 61-62. It is Terry's observation that the solution to organizational problems usually resides in the level above where it is perceived. For instance, if there is a seeming problem with lack of resources, it's really a problem with organizational structure. Clarify structure and the acquisition and distribution of resources will more easily flow.



mission

To improve the livelihoods of local farmers, increase food security for our most vulnerable residents, and get everyone engaged in strengthening the food system by eliminating on-farm food waste in Rhode Island.

vision

Hope's Harvest RI envisions strong and connected communities where farmers are honored, valued, and compensated for their contributions, neighbors get their hands dirty and have fun helping each other, and everyone enjoys an abundance of fresh, healthy food.

values

It is unacceptable for our friends and neighbors to be hungry while good food goes to waste. Nourishing the Rhode Island community with fresh, healthy, locally grown produce is an act of love and justice with the power to transform our world.

Because **we believe everyone has a right to thrive, and there is enough for all of us**, *we take responsibility for our collective well being by (re)distributing resources for the common good.*

Because **we respect the labor** of our volunteers, our agency partners, and everyone involved in growing and harvesting our food, *we fill gaps, solve problems, and make it easy to help each other.*

Because **we take joy in our work and the connection it brings**, *we build power together in partnership.*

Because **we know our future is at stake**, *we offer solutions to the climate crisis by reducing RI hunger relief agencies' reliance on fossil fuels and making our local food system more resilient.*

Because **we honor the inherent worth and dignity of every human being**, *we stand against systemic inequality and stand up for food justice, food sovereignty, and the rights of all people to self determination.*

Because **we can always do better**, *we continuously strive to learn from and be accountable to our partners and our community.*



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives will guide HHRI's work over the next three years. Annually, HHRI's Executive Director will consult with staff and community partners and prepare a detailed work plan in support of each objective. HHRI's Executive Director and Advisory Committee will monitor progress in accomplishing these goals and objectives, while ensuring we remain true to HHRI's mission, vision, and values.

1. Nourish the Rhode Island community with fresh, healthy, locally-grown produce.

- Supply an increasing quantity of nutritious fruits and vegetables to a growing number of individuals experiencing food insecurity.
- Distribute food through strong and steady partnerships with hunger relief agencies.
- Ensure that at least 70 percent of food is distributed to communities impacted by the effects of systemic racism.

2. Support local farmers' ability to thrive as essential contributors to a local food system that works for everyone.

- Cultivate strong, consistent and efficient, mutually-beneficial partnerships with local farmers.
- Direct an increasing quantity of financial incentives and resources for surplus produce to local farms, prioritizing payments to benefit BIPOC farmers.
- Promote farm partners to develop customer awareness, relationships, and loyalty between HHRI stakeholders and the local agricultural community.

GOALS and OBJECTIVES

3. Facilitate joyful volunteer investment in redistributing resources for the common good.

- Recruit and maintain a vibrant and engaged base of registered volunteers who contribute time and/or financial resources.
- Provide exceptional training, clear communication and expectations, and ongoing support so volunteers work safely, efficiently, and amiably with all program partners.
- Nurture a community of volunteers who feel connected, appreciated, inspired, and fulfilled in their work with HHRI.
- Intentionally recruit and design program activities to provide access for BIPOC volunteers, and foster an organizational culture that promotes a safe and welcoming environment for people from all socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

4. Ensure a strong and sustainable organization that provides exceptional value to HHRI's stakeholders and has the capacity to achieve our mission and goals.

- Establish and strengthen systems, processes, software and other resources to support HHRI's financial management, fundraising, and operations.
- Hire, motivate, and support high-quality staff.
- Develop and maintain strong stakeholder relationships and communication.
- Design and implement explicit strategies for accountability to our community.

5. Leverage our role and assets as an organization to advocate – locally, regionally, and nationally – for food sovereignty, racial justice, environmental sustainability, and the rights of all people to self determination.

- Intentionally and continuously situate HHRI's work in the context of broader campaigns and efforts toward a world that exists in alignment with our organizational values.
- Host at least four education programs annually in collaboration with partners to inform, engage, and inspire our community to take action around food justice and sovereignty, anti-racism, and environmental sustainability.
- Participate in at least 1-2 working alliances with aligned organizations and government agencies to leverage HHRI's influence and outreach in support of system-wide policies and community actions that address issues relevant to HHRI's mission.
- Develop and maintain a communications strategy that highlights and cultivates support for our work, as well as the accomplishments and efforts of our networks and partners.



APPENDICES:

STRUCTURE
POWER
RESOURCES





Structure

Fiscal Sponsorship

Hope's Harvest RI is fiscally sponsored by Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FFRI), a registered 501(c)3 organization. HHRI intends to continue the fiscal sponsorship arrangement at least through the scope of this strategic plan.

Personnel

- **HHRI's full-time staff** includes an Executive Director (Eva Agudelo) and Operations Manager (Mollie Rose Siebert, hired in August 2020). The addition of an Operations Manager will enable the Executive Director to step away from day-to-day supervision and operations to concentrate on big picture planning and strategic priorities, while still making time to stay connected to HHRI's core field-based work.
- **AmeriCorps VISTAs**, provided by FFRI, offer operational support to staff, primarily with programs, volunteers, communications, and general administration.
- **Volunteers** support HHRI's program activities, primarily by gleaning, and provide some administrative support.
- **Consultants** are hired on an ad hoc basis to fulfill specific needs – for example, accounting and communications.

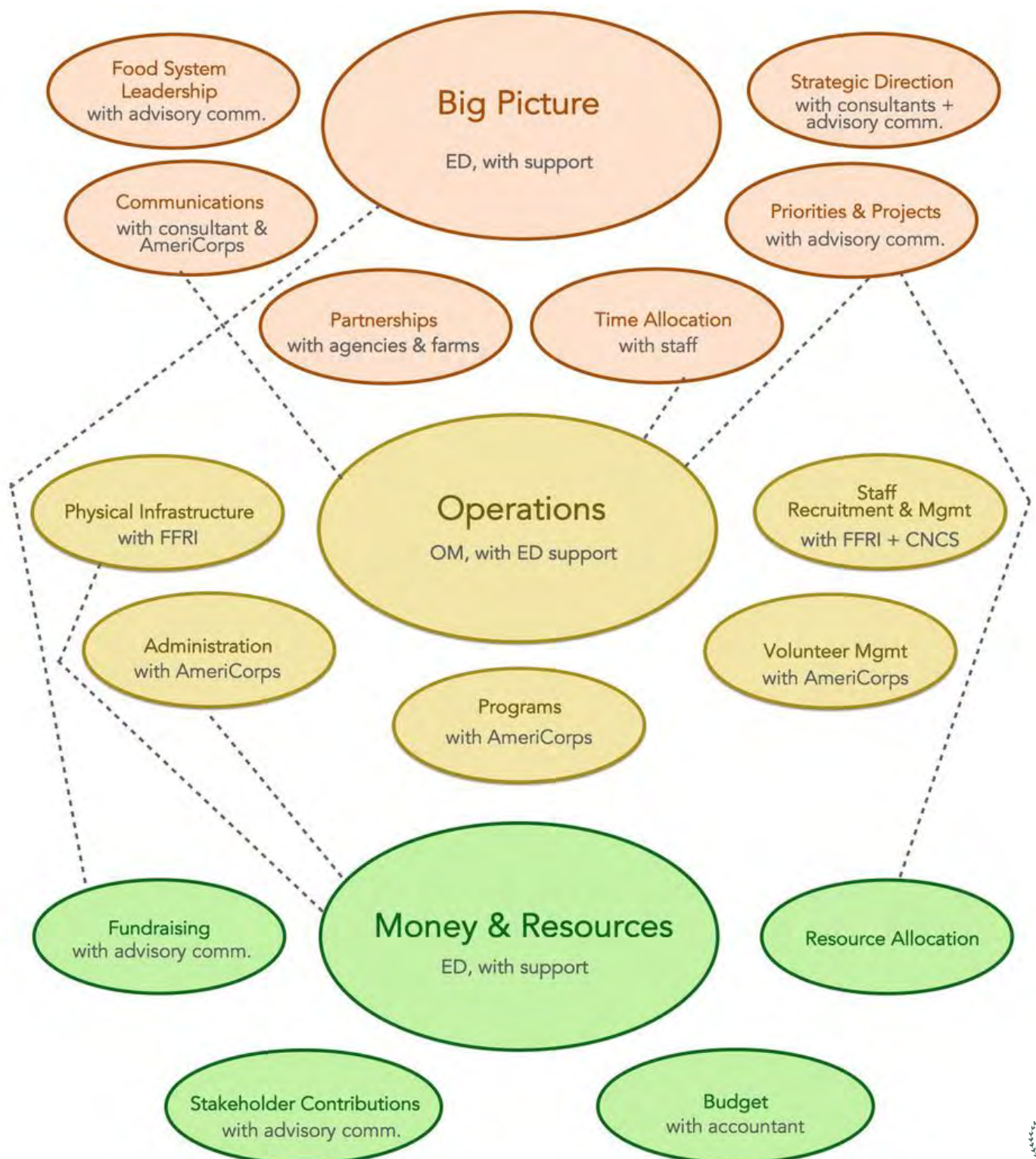
Programs

- **Gleaning:** Harvesting surplus food from farmers' fields and delivering it to hunger relief agencies for distribution. Includes recruiting farm and agency partners and recruiting, training and managing HHRI volunteers and developing trusted relationships.
- **Surplus Purchasing:** Providing financial support to local farmers in exchange for their surplus to increase the amount of healthy, fresh, locally-grown food distributed to hunger relief agency partners.
- **Food System Leadership:** Research, coalition building and participation, and advocacy for actions and policies promoting increased capacity for local food systems to meet food security needs throughout the state and region (ex. RI Food Policy Council). Collaboration and co-mentoring with regional and national leaders in gleaning (ex. Association of Gleaning Organizations, Boston Area Gleaners).





power and structure 2020-2023





Resources

HHRI's relationships are our most important resource. Our work only happens because of many hearts, hands, minds and wallets. Everyone's support is valued, whether we're harvesting and delivering food, advocating for increased food security across Rhode Island, hosting a film night, or paying bills to keep our doors open. HHRI strives for trust, accountability, transparency, good communication, gratitude, mutual respect, joyful effort, and a spirit of partnership and love to form the basis of all of our relationships.

Our funding partners include individual and corporate donors, foundations, and state and federal government agencies. HHRI's personnel includes full-time staff, AmeriCorps members, consultants and volunteers, described above. HHRI also relies on the generous contributions of our partner farms and food assistance agencies.

In addition to serving as HHRI's fiscal sponsor, Farm Fresh Rhode Island provides office space and equipment, use of space in their produce warehouse, and administrative support, detailed via contractual agreement. HHRI owns other infrastructure outright, including a truck, harvesting bins and equipment, donor database and other software, communications tools (website, social media).



HOPE'S HARVEST RI

www.hopesharvest.org

