



SALINE COUNTY
FOOD ACTION COMMUNITY TEAM



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026



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FACT Team Members

The Saline County Food Action Community Team is a cross-sector group of dedicated volunteers working to improve food access and reduce food insecurity across Saline County. Grounded in a food systems approach and guided by findings from the Saline County Food Assessment, the team collaborates to identify gaps, align resources, and advance strategies that address both immediate needs and long-term structural challenges. Team members represent transportation and mobility, education, government, nonprofit organizations, and community advocacy, ensuring a comprehensive, data-informed approach to building a more equitable and resilient local food system. The 2026 Team Members are:

Sheila Kjellberg, Kansas Wesleyan University, *Chair*

Megan Rico, Saline County Health Department, *Vice Chair*

Tara Baxter, Salina Church of the Cross, *Secretary*

Karen Couch, Salina Emergency Aid Food Bank, *Treasurer*

Lisa Newman, K-State Research and Extension, *Community Needs Specialist*

Danielle Ast, Kansas Center for Rural Health

Michelle Coats, North Central Kansas Mobility Manager

Kirsty Hartley, Prairieland Market

Erica Kruckenberg, Schwan's Company

Beks Lohmeier, Opaa! Food Management

Mission:

Our mission is to build a strong, culturally appropriate local food system and improve access to healthy food for all in Saline County.

Vision:

We envision a thriving community with open pathways leading to healthy living fueled by local food resources.

Executive Summary:

In 2026, FACT will focus on sharing the results of the Food System Assessment with the public and key stakeholders. By publishing the assessment on the website, issuing press releases, engaging local media, and leveraging partner networks, the team aims to raise awareness, promote dialogue, and provide a foundation for informed community action. Making the assessment accessible and widely shared will ensure that local findings and community perspectives guide future initiatives and decisions.

Community education will also be a central focus. FACT will highlight the work of local organizations and use storytelling to communicate key issues around food cost, access, and recovery. These efforts are designed to increase understanding, reduce stigma around food insecurity, and foster meaningful engagement across the county. By centering local voices and experiences, FACT seeks to create an informed and involved community ready to support positive change in the local food system.

Policy exploration will be another key area of work in 2026. The team will research existing food-related policies and ordinances, identify gaps and opportunities, and begin community conversations around healthy food environments, local food production, and food recovery. This foundational policy work will help lay the groundwork for future advocacy and ensure that FACT's strategies are aligned with both community needs and local regulatory frameworks.

Finally, FACT will focus on securing sustainable resources to support its ongoing work. With the Local Food Works fiscal sponsorship already in place, the team will develop a budget and funding plan, research grant opportunities, and explore the potential for 501(c)(3) formation. These efforts will help position FACT to sustain and expand its initiatives, ensuring the continued advancement of equitable food access and stronger local food systems in Saline County.

Together, these strategic efforts reflect FACT's commitment to using research, education, policy exploration, and funding planning to create lasting, community-driven impact. The 2026 plan lays a strong foundation for both immediate action and long-term growth in building a more resilient and equitable food system for all residents of Saline County.

2026 Work Plan

Objective 1: Launch the Saline County Food System Assessment

The Saline County Food System Assessment is a completed, data-informed analysis of how food is produced, distributed, accessed, and experienced across Saline County. The assessment captures both quantitative data and community perspectives, offering a comprehensive snapshot of the local food system, including its strengths, challenges, and opportunities. Launching the assessment publicly is a critical step in increasing awareness, transparency, and shared understanding of food access issues in the county.

A coordinated public launch will ensure the assessment reaches a broad audience, including residents, community partners, decision-makers, and funders. By intentionally sharing key findings and elevating community voices reflected in the assessment, FACT can use the assessment as a catalyst for conversation, collaboration, and action. The launch will position the assessment as a living resource that informs future planning, policy discussions, and collective efforts to strengthen a more equitable and resilient food system in Saline County.

Actions:

1. Publish the completed assessment on the FACT website and ensure it is easy to locate, download, and share with community members, partners, and stakeholders.
2. Create a clear, accessible one pager summary that highlights key findings and priority themes.
3. Announce the public release of the assessment through coordinated communications, including a press release, media outreach, social media, and interviews to raise awareness of key findings and their relevance to Saline County.
4. Share the assessment with community partners, stakeholders, and decision-makers, including presentations at meetings, boards, and community events to encourage dialogue and understanding.
5. Work with the City of Salina to include results from the Saline County Food Assessment in the City of Salina Comprehensive Plan.

6. Work with Saline County to include results from the Saline County Food Assessment in the Saline County Strategic Plan.

Objective 2: Increase community education and awareness of food system.

Community education is a critical component of strengthening the local food system in Saline County. FACT will focus on increasing understanding of food costs, access, and food recovery by sharing clear, accessible information and elevating the work of local organizations engaged in food-related efforts. Using storytelling and real-world examples will help connect data to lived experience and make complex food system issues more relatable to the broader community.

By centering local voices and highlighting existing initiatives, this objective aims to build awareness, reduce stigma around food insecurity, and encourage informed community dialogue. Education efforts will be grounded in the findings of the Saline County Food System Assessment and designed to support collaboration, engagement, and collective action across sectors.

Actions:

1. Identify priority education themes related to food costs, access, and recovery, based on findings from the Food System Assessment.
2. Develop and share stories highlighting local organizations and initiatives working within the Saline County food system.
3. Create educational materials and messaging that are clear, accessible, and appropriate for diverse audiences.
4. Distribute education and awareness content through multiple channels, including community presentations, digital platforms, and partner networks.
5. Encourage community dialogue and engagement around food system challenges and opportunities.

Objective 3: Explore and advance food-related policy opportunities.

Policy plays an important role in shaping the local food environment and influencing access to healthy, affordable food options. FACT will begin exploring existing food-related policies and ordinances in Saline County to better understand what is already in place and where opportunities for improvement or alignment may exist. This initial work will focus on learning, relationship-building, and identifying potential entry points rather than advancing specific policy changes.

As part of this effort, the team will start conversations around policies that support healthier food environments, local food production, and food recovery. Areas of interest may include ordinances related to home and community gardening, local food and recovery laws, and approaches that encourage higher-quality food options within the community. This foundational policy work will help inform future advocacy, education, and collaboration efforts.

Actions:

1. Research existing local policies and ordinances related to food access, food quality, local food production, gardening, livestock, and food recovery in Saline County.
2. Identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities within current policies that may impact healthy food access and the local food system.
3. Begin conversations with community partners and stakeholders to better understand how food related policies are implemented and experienced locally.
4. Explore strategies for promoting healthier food environments, including policies or practices that encourage higher-quality food options over lower-quality, unhealth options.
5. Document findings and potential next steps to inform future policy education, advocacy, and strategic planning.

Objective 4: Explore and prepare sustainable funding and organizational options.

Securing sustainable funding and identifying appropriate organizational structures are critical to supporting long-term food system work in Saline County. In 2026, FACT will focus on researching and evaluating funding opportunities and organizational models that could support future implementation efforts. This work will emphasize learning, feasibility, and alignment with the team's mission and capacity.

The team will explore grant opportunities, assess budget needs, and research the requirements and implications of forming a 501(c)(3) organization. This exploratory phase will position the team to make informed decisions and pursue funding and formalization opportunities beginning in 2027.

Actions:

1. Identify and research potential grant opportunities that align with food access, food systems and community education priorities.
2. Develop a budget and funding plan using the Local Food Works fiscal sponsorship, including projected expenses, funding needs for initiatives, and strategies for effective fund management.
3. Research 501(c)(3) formation options, including legal, administrative, and capacity considerations.
4. Document findings and recommendations related to funding and organizational structure for team review and discussion.
5. Develop a preliminary funding and formation roadmap to guide grant applications and organizational decisions in 2027.