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***Joined-up Governance of Agri-Food Systems in Canada:  
An Examination of Food Policy Councils as a Form of Joined-up Governance***

**Master of Arts in Public and International Affairs**

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**Abstract**

Agri-food policy has traditionally been addressed by different governmental agencies and jurisdictions. Departments of Agriculture and Health as well as provincial and municipal governments shape the different aspects of agri-food systems, generating disjointed policies (Barling *et al.*, 2002). Food policy councils (FPCs) at the local and regional levels have emerged across North America, both in response to this fragmented approach and to the detrimental effects of the dominant agri-food system. One of the main objectives of these councils is to bring diverse stakeholders together to address the multiple and related challenges within agri-food systems including food access, environmental sustainability, and health (Borron, 2003). Within this context, this explorative research examines how and in which ways existing FPCs can contribute to a national food policy framework in Canada. Drawing on literature from public management, this paper demonstrates in what ways FPCs contribute—or have the potential to contribute—to a joined-up governance of agri-food policy in Canada. It also highlights what FPCs can learn from existing studies and experiences of joined-up governance initiatives in other sectors as a way to increase their effectiveness.

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## Key Words

Food policy councils, agri-food systems, agri-food policy, joined-up governance, multi-scalar governance, collaboration, network governance

## Acronyms

AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-food Canada
APF	Agricultural Policy Framework
DFPC	Durham Food Policy Council
DRRCC	Durham Region Roundtable on Climate Change
EFC	Edmonton Food Council
FSC	Food Secure Canada
<i>fresh</i>	Edmonton's Food and Agriculture Strategy
GWERT	Guelph-Wellington Food Roundtable
HFC	Halton Food Council
JUG	Joined-up Governance
NFP	National Food Policy
NPM	New Public Management
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OMAFRA	Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
PMFPC	Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council
SNO	Social Network Organization
TFPC	Toronto Food Policy Council

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## Chapter 1: Literature Review and Rationale

### Globalization of Agri-food Systems: the need for strong governance structures

Strengthening agri-food governance is important for a variety of reasons, and Food Policy Councils (FPCs) have arisen in part because of the implications that have resulted from increasingly globalizing agri-food systems. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the problematic nature of the dominant agri-food system, Harper *et al.* (2009) highlight that:

[the] food crisis [of 2008/09] indicates that our food system is in crisis, with hunger being only one of the symptoms. Environmental damage from agriculture is mounting. Pollution from confined animal feedlot operations fouls the air and contaminates aquifers. Agricultural runoff chokes rivers and estuaries with nitrates, producing a ‘dead zone’ in the Gulf of Mexico the size of New Jersey. Industrial agriculture is now a primary contributor to climate change, and many farming regions are drawing down their groundwater supplies (p. 11).

In addition to the environmental implications of the dominant industrial food system, these authors also discuss the economic challenges producers face and the rising levels of obesity and diabetes rates around the world. It is becoming more and more evident that today’s food production and processing methods are harmful for the environment and human health. However, among academic disciplines there are various perspectives towards the effects of agri-food globalization. In particular, Wright *et al.* (2007) contrast the perspective of a number of economists with other social scientists, observing that the former tend to view the dominant food production methods in a positive light by pointing to the increased efficiency gains associated with larger farms, mono-cropping, and globalization. The latter tend to emphasize the vulnerabilities that have been generated due to ‘global restructuring’ (p. 48), including increased price volatilities, land grabbing, food insecurity, increased food miles, soil and water contamination, and decreased biodiversity (Clapp, 2016).

Despite the debates about the extent of the responsibility of agriculture in deepening environmental and social problems and what types of agriculture are mostly to blame, a majority

of analysts agree on its significant role in anthropogenic climate change (Stavi & Lal, 2013; Vermeulen, 2012). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), agriculture is responsible for as much as 20% of anthropogenic greenhouse gases (Horrigan *et al.*, 2002, p. 448) when including the cost and uses of petroleum associated with processing, transportation and packaging, for example. Lang *et al.* (2009) also observe the trade-off between the supply of an “unprecedented quantity and choice of food to hundreds of millions of people” and the mounting evidence as to “food’s impact on health, the environment and social structures” (p. 5). To address these negative impacts, strong governance structures would contribute to ensuring adequate policy responses to the multi-faceted and complex problems linked to today’s crises of the globalizing agri-food system<sup>1</sup>.

From this premise, this research analyzes FPC literature and four FPCs in order to explore to which extent they are participating in the various *processes* of enabling a model of joined-up governance. In so doing, I will demonstrate that indeed FPCs are taking part in most of the JUG elements that have been identified as ‘what works’ in joined-up governance by public management scholars. The study is divided into four sections: Chapter 1 briefly outlines the contestation of the dominant agri-food system paradigm, the nature of agri-food policy, and the concept of JUG, in order to justify the importance of examining the role that locally-based FPCs can play in redesigning existing agri-food policy and transforming practices. Chapter 2 presents the framework of analysis based on the various elements of JUG and the research methodology.

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<sup>1</sup> The continuous form of ‘globalizing’ is chosen instead of ‘globalized’ to emphasize that the globalization of agri-food systems is dynamic and incomplete. For example, Lang (1999) argues that “even though there are strong pressures to globalize institutions of governance, in fact, regional groupings are much more powerful politically at present, e.g., the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-ordination (APEC). There is also growing awareness of, and opposition to, the current package of globalization measures” (p. 169). Moreover, there are still many different agri-food systems, beyond the dominant one that is certainly spreading out but still contested and globalizing beside alternative agri-food models. The dominant one here refers to the one that some authors refer to as “corporate” or “industrial” agri-food system, or the neoliberal food regime in Philip McMichael’s analysis (2009).

Chapter 3 discusses the research findings in light of the conceptual framework and with support from FPC literature. Finally, Chapter 4 provides a discussion of these findings and suggestions for future research on the role that FPCs can play in contributing to joined-up agri-food governance.

### **Contestation of the Dominant Agri-Food System Paradigm**

When considering governance structures to address the symptoms of the dominant agri-food system, it is important to note two connected aspects associated with the embeddedness of this system. First is the consideration that the globalizing agri-food system has been a product of path dependency and broader societal values. For example, a 2016 report by the International Panel on Sustainable Food Systems describes how path dependency, export orientation, the expectation of cheap food, compartmentalized thinking, short-term thinking, ‘feed the world’ narratives, measures of success, and concentration of power have each contributed to keeping industrial agriculture in place (IPES-Food 2016). Many researchers have argued that the dominant agri-food system has been ‘locked in’ for a variety of reasons<sup>2</sup>.

Additionally, while not speaking directly to the agri-food system, but to the over-arching paradigm in which both food and health are linked, Fierlbeck (2011) situates the focus of individual responsibility and self-reliance regarding health outcomes in the solidification of neo-liberal values during the 1980s and 1990s. Lang *et al.* (2009) also argue that “countries that espouse neo-liberal economics tend to emphasize the primacy of individual choice in food policies. They often prefer to advise or educate consumers to ‘choose wisely’, putting the onus of responsibility ideologically on choice, and existentially on the consumer” (p. 16). Therefore, the

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<sup>2</sup> For example, see Vanloqueren and Baret (2009) who demonstrate how genetic engineering in food has been prioritized in research and development which has “locked-in” this paradigm and “locked out” agro-ecological engineering. Barling *et al.* (2002) discuss how a productivist model in the UK context is rooted historically in both industrialization and the goal of self-sufficiency of food production that arose after the Second World War.

globalizing agri-food system and its associated environmental and social impacts are embedded in historical processes and broader societal values.

The second aspect to note is that the dominant view is contested. There are individuals and groups working to create space within agri-food systems that lobby for the environmental, health, and social impacts of current food production methods to be addressed. For instance, Lang *et al.* (2009) note that “for years [leading up to the food crisis of 2008-09], observers of food policy had been quietly warning that the food system is taut, highly stressed and lacking global resilience” (p. 4). The challenges often come from the non-governmental sector (Barling *et al.*, 2002), and shift the focus from food production to its environmental impacts, labour issues, nutrition, and health impacts. However, MacRae (2011) observes that the impacts of the dominant system are “only partially understood and quantified” (p. 428) and that this poses challenges to the inclusion of health, environmental, and social considerations in agri-food policy development. Nevertheless, there are various frames with which agri-food systems are perceived<sup>3</sup>, and when evaluating any agri-food policy initiative, it is important to recognize these underlying ideological tensions and disagreements within and between agri-food systems.

### **The Nature of Agri-food Policy**

Contestation to the dominant agri-food system is one of two components that leads me to characterise food as a ‘wicked problem’. Wicked problems are “wicked because there is agreement neither on their nature nor on possible solutions (Karré *et al.*, 2011, p. 58), and these

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, Wright *et al.* (2007) argue that food production is framed in two contrasting ways. The first aligns with the perspectives that have ‘locked in’ the dominant agri-food system. This frame is called the ‘agrarian fundamentalism’ frame that puts agricultural production at the base of society, with any notion of withdrawal as a threat to a thriving society. In contrast, the frame ‘civic agriculture’ “serves multiple social needs, from community solidarity, integration, social equality, and democratic engagement” (Wright *et al.*, 2007, p. 43). This perspective challenges the dominant agri-food system by identifying the need to broaden the scope of agri-food policy by embedding social and environmental considerations into policy-making.

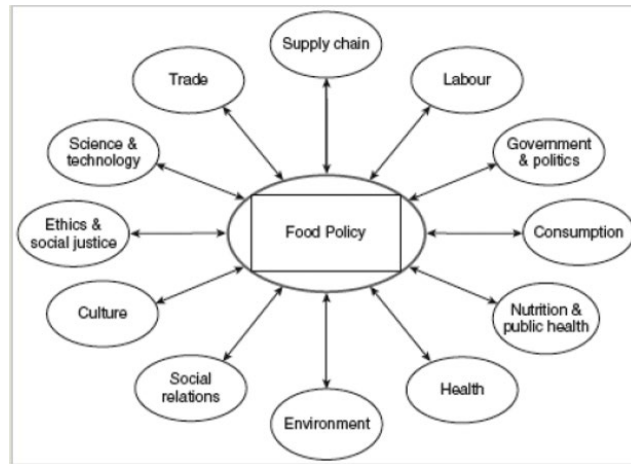
disagreements are often based in value judgements (Klijn *et al.*, 2010). For instance Klijn *et al.*, (2010) provide the example of traffic policy, noting that “some stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Transport, may value ease of transport, while others may prioritise liveability or environmental responsibility over convenience” (p. 165). Hospes and Brons’ (2016) note in their review of food systems governance, that agreeing on and defining the issue is a “key challenge of food systems” and that “the problem of food insecurity and food systems has indeed been framed as a wicked problem” (p. 24)<sup>4</sup>.

The second component explaining why food is a ‘wicked problem’ is that it is a cross-cutting issue. A wicked problem is “hard to localize, is ill-defined, [and] has many different layers” (Hospes and Brons 2016, p. 24). Lang *et al.* (2009) note that “food policy covers immense and diverse terrain” (p. 4). Agri-food policy spans multiple departments at various scales (federal, provincial, and local), and is also governed by non-governmental actors which shape policies in Canada. Because of this, agri-food policy has traditionally been fragmented, with food issues being addressed in silos. There are risks associated with this as “the weakness of one level of governance may negatively affect other levels” (p. 31). Moreover, inherent tensions exist across sectors that deal with food issues (see Figure 1 below).

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<sup>4</sup> Conversely, commentators from the Toronto Food Policy Council have framed food as an instrument or a tool for positive policy change at the local level (Mah *et al.*, 2013), arguing that “food initiatives are ways for a variety of city departments to take advantage of unique opportunities to articulate their own agendas (that is, the idea of food being the vehicle, and not necessarily the object, of policy change)” (p. 70). For instance, climate change policy could take advantage of food and agriculture by acknowledging and providing incentives that encourage healthy agricultural soils, which act as a carbon sink, absorbing emissions to alleviate the pressure of climate change (De Schutter, 2012).

**Figure 1: Food policy as an intersection point of competing issues**



(Lang *et al.*, 2009, p. 10)

In Canada, there is no Department of Food (MacRae, 2011). Table 1, p. 11 presents the mandates of Canadian government agencies that are responsible for various aspects of agri-food policy. Although not exhaustive, the breakdown illustrates the many areas of government which have a role to play in shaping Canada's agri-food system. However, this list excludes the role of local governments despite their influence. Planning departments in municipalities are responsible for zoning and could make spaces for urban agriculture. The transportation department can encourage or deter urban sprawl which has an impact on surrounding farmland and food access. Municipalities can instill local food procurement policies and enforce composting programs as they are responsible for waste disposal (Harper *et al.*, 2009, p. 14). Hence a variety of governmental agencies at different scales shape agri-food systems, but it is not clear that they are doing this in a coordinated manner, or in consideration of the principle of subsidiarity. The question of subsidiarity asks whether agri-food policy is addressed at the lowest possible level that is appropriate. Mah *et al* (2013) argue that cities [and I would argue local governance in general] are the most directly impacted by the consequences of the food system in terms of health and environmental outcomes; yet within the Canadian federalist structure they are viewed

as less legitimate than higher levels of government and the private sector to address agricultural production, food distribution, and retail – the causes of the impacts cities face.

**Table 1: Government Mandates of Agencies Responsible for Agri-food Policy**

Health Canada	Food safety and quality regulations; human health protection
Agriculture & Agri-food Canada	Food supply chain development; animal and plant research; export promotion
Canadian Food Inspection Agency	Food safety implementation; animal and plant health regulations and implementation; food import and export inspections and testing
Environment Canada	Environmentally friendly production and processes regulation; hazardous chemicals; pesticides
Industry Canada	Consumer protection; biotechnology; business promotion
International Trade Canada (in conjunction with several federal departments)	International trade agreements; <i>Codex Alimentarius</i> ; animal and plant health
Indigenous & Northern Affairs Canada	Health and welfare of native peoples; food security (ex. Nutrition North)
Provincial governments	Health care; education; social services; agricultural development; rural development
Medical research	Universities; private sector research; government research through the National Research Council, Medical Research Council; agriculture; nutrition

(Adapted from Hedley, 2006)

The Canadian federal government recognizes the fragmentation of agri-food policy making and has attempted to foster some coordination between departments and levels of government. First established in 2003, Agricultural Policy Frameworks (APF) are five-year agreements that seek to “coordinate Canada’s federal, provincial, and territorial governments’ agricultural programs and services” (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2017)<sup>5</sup>.

In 2018, the federal department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will launch the next APF, and will for the first time include a National Food Policy (NFP). The NFP would “bring increased attention to the central contribution of food to priorities such as population health, food security, environmental stewardship, and public trust in the agriculture and agri-food sector” (Meredith, 2016). A critical point to note is that the NFP will be one of nine sub-elements

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<sup>5</sup> An early assessment of the first APF (2003-2008) suggests that this particular agreement “covers only the agriculture and food sectors from the supply side, and only deals incidentally with the mandates concerning health and environment. Even so, it does so within the federal government and not the provincial mandates in health and environment” (Hedley, 2006, p. 23-24).

of the APF, and “complementary but distinct from the APF” (Meredith, 2016), raising questions about the reach of this policy in terms of linking up the demand and supply sides of agri-food systems. At the time of writing, there is online consultation regarding the NFP, providing space for citizens, organizations, and actors to voice their concerns and contribute to shaping this overarching food policy. Food Secure Canada (FSC), “a pan-Canadian alliance of organizations and individuals” is reaching out across Canada to develop a citizen-based policy position with respect to the NFP. Within this context, along with the rapid expansion of Food Policy Councils at the local and regional levels, analysts and governmental representatives are interested in exploring how these organizations could contribute to the broader agri-food policy governance system in Canada.

### **Food Policy Councils**

Food policy councils (FPCs) have appeared across North America since the 1980s, accelerating in expansion between 2005 and 2015 (see Appendix A, p. 79). Many academics and practitioners observe that FPCs have emerged in response to the environmental, health, and social impacts resulting from the dominant agri-food system. “The average citizen didn’t have much role in shaping [agri-food policy]” that directly impacted their daily lives (Purifoy, 2014, p. 393). FPCs thus widen food policy discussions at the local level, and could contribute to “democratizing food”, as Mooney *et al.* have argued (2014, p. 245). Burgan and Winne (2012) also note that “achieving food democracy and social justice is a key part of any Food Policy Council’s mission” (cited in Mooney *et al.*, 2014, p. 245).

Following the principle of subsidiarity, it seems that local and regional FPCs have emerged because this level is best able to respond to the specific context of communities and to some immediate or urgent problems such as food crises, riots, and food deserts (Harper *et al.*, 2009).

Additionally, many cities and FPCs are using a systems approach<sup>6</sup> to solve agri-food challenges by integrating agri-food systems into their departmental plans, policies, and activities (Mooney *et al.*, 2014, p. 245). For instance, “the City of Vancouver’s new food strategy calls for the use of a food systems checklist when planning staff review development applications, rezoning proposals, and community plans” (MacRae and Donahue, 2013, p. 4).

The various functions and models of FPCs have been discussed extensively in the academic literature (Harper *et al.*, 2009; Borron, 2003; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; Schiff, 2007; Mooney *et al.*, 2014; Dahlberg, 1994; Coplen and Cuneo, 2015). Typically consisting of a wide range of stakeholders and members of the public, FPCs partake in both program and policy activities, depending on what is needed in the specific context. They might respond to a pressing need such as food access, gather information and conduct analyses to inform policy and/or the public, advise or lobby government representatives, or support and collaborate with other agri-food organizations. Most FPCs participate in a combination of these activities, but not all FPCs participate in all of these (Borron, 2003). FPCs often consist of representatives and stakeholders from five sectors of the agri-food system: production, consumption, processing, distribution, and waste, and Harper *et al.*, (2009) argue that it is ideal when all five sectors are represented.

Although there are identifiable trends and similarities across FPCs, each FPC is unique and is adapted to its own locality. Schiff (2008) observes that the aim of the earliest FPCs was to form close relationships with local governments, citing Knoxville, Toronto, and Hartford as

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<sup>6</sup> MacRae and Donahue (2013) define “systems thinking” as “a recognition that complex issues are linked, that there are multiple actors in the system and they are connected, and that integrated solutions are required” (p. 5).

examples. Over time, and as more FPCs were created, they often came in the form of grassroots<sup>7</sup> or non-governmental organizations. The three main categories in which FPCs can fall are:

governmental FPCs... advise government agencies as commissions, task forces, or advisory boards; utilize staff support; and have limited decision-making power. Non-profit and independent FPCs operate autonomously, without formal government affiliation. Quasigovernmental and hybrid FPCs may be affiliated with government agencies, but like independent councils, maintain full decision-making power within the organization (Coplen and Cuneo 2015, p. 5)

Hence, FPCs may emulate each other in terms of structure or model but they do not necessarily operate in the same manner (Schiff, 2007, p. 102). Moreover, local conditions may affect the interest in agri-food policy-making, and in turn impact the development and sustainability of FPCs. For example, in the Waterloo Region, “the local and historical contexts were critical factors defining regional government’s participation in food system planning activity” (Wegener *et al.*, 2012, p. 4107). When analysing the governance role of FPCs, it is essential to recognize both the unique model and context within which each one is created. Table 2 below provides an overview of each FPC under study including the date and context in which they were established, organizational type, geographical location, and the self-declared role and over-arching activities of each FPC. The next section narrows in on the concept of joined-up governance that will be used to analyze the work of FPCs within broader Canadian agri-food policy systems.

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<sup>7</sup> Grassroots organizations have been defined as “local political organizations which seek to influence conditions not related to the working situation of the participants and which have the activity of the participants as their primary resource” (Gundelach, 1979, p. 187). In other words, grassroots organizations are comprised primarily of un-paid volunteers in a community.

**Table 2: Overview of Four Food Policy Councils**

Food Policy Council	Date & Context Established	Organization Type	Location	Self-Identified Role of Food Policy Council
<b>Halton Food Council</b>	Collaboratively created in <b>2009</b> with support from the Halton Region Health Department, other food system stakeholders, and community members	Independent, volunteer-based non-profit organization. Became an incorporated non-profit organizations in November 2016	Operates in Halton Region and in all four municipalities of the region, in Ontario: Oakville, Burlington, Milton, and Halton Hills  Mix of rural and urban  Halton Region population: <b>569,591</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• networking/education – build new partnerships and enhance networking between existing food system stakeholders in Halton</li> <li>• coordinate/analyze – identify and prioritize food system needs in Halton and support creation and implementation of initiatives</li> <li>• evaluation – establish benchmarks and targets for achievement of mission/goals</li> <li>• funding – lever community resources to support mission/goals</li> <li>• policy – identify policy changes which support goals and advocate for their implementation [HFC Terms of Reference]</li> </ul>
<b>Edmonton Food Council</b>	Created from strategic direction under <i>fresh: Edmonton's Food and Agriculture Strategy</i> in <b>2013</b>	Volunteer Committee of Administration: mandate to advise and act on Edmonton's food strategy ( <i>fresh</i> )	Operates in the City of Edmonton, the Capital of Alberta, in the most northerly metropolitan region in Canada.  Primarily urban  Edmonton population: <b>1,432,572</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide advice to the City and other key stakeholders</li> <li>• monitor and report on the progress of implementation [of <i>fresh</i>]</li> <li>• identify emerging issues and opportunities</li> <li>• propose key work priorities to the City</li> <li>• maintain relationships with the food and agriculture community</li> <li>• engage with the community on relevant and timely issues</li> <li>• facilitate connections between key players, such as various City departments, community partners, and local food businesses [EFC Terms of Reference]</li> </ul>
<b>Durham Food Policy Council</b>	Formed out of the core membership of the former Durham Food Charter Working Group of the Durham Lives! Coalition and the public consultations conducted by this group. Officially established in <b>2010</b>	Community-based group, volunteer led organization	Operates in Durham Region and in all eight lower-tier jurisdictions in the region (Cities of Oshawa and Pickering, Towns of Ajax and Whitby, municipalities of Clarington, Scugog, Uxbridge, Brock)  Mix of urban and rural  Durham Region population: <b>671,839</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• networking/education: building new partnerships and enhancing networking between existing food system stakeholders</li> <li>• coordinate/analyze: identifying and prioritizing food system needs and support creation and implementation of initiatives</li> <li>• policy and programs: identifying policy and program changes which support the goals and principles of the Durham Region Food Charter and advocate for their implementation</li> <li>• evaluation: establishing benchmarks and targets for achievement of mission/goals/identified activities</li> <li>• funding: utilizing community resources to support mission/goals/identified activities [DFPC Terms of Reference]</li> </ul>
<b>Guelph-Wellington Food Roundtable</b>	Established in <b>2009</b> by a grassroots network of advocates from different sectors and the collective desire to build a food charter	A network for coordinated action for a socially just and environmentally sustainable community food system	Operated primarily in the City of Guelph, but represented stakeholders and interests throughout the Wellington County  Mix of urban and rural  Guelph-Wellington Region population: <b>226,096</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• build a network for coordinated action based on the principles of collaboration, open dialogue and transparency.</li> <li>• research advice, and advocate for food policies that create an accessible and fair food system in Guelph and Wellington.</li> <li>• foster relationships between stakeholders in the local food system to increase viability of local food.</li> <li>• promote social learning within the community that will bring about systemic change and movement towards a fair and democratic food</li> <li>• support infrastructure development that furthers access to healthy food system.</li> <li>• launch and support programs and services that address local food needs [GWFRT vision and mission]</li> </ul>

## Joined-Up Governance

As just mentioned, agri-food systems are complex because they cross many sectors and scales, and are contentious because of ideological differences regarding how to define and solve the problem. Joined-up governance (JUG) has been at the forefront of solving ‘wicked problems’, indeed “some posit JUG-style approaches are modus operandi for 21<sup>st</sup> century governance” (O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011, p. 245). The joined-up governance literature is vast<sup>8</sup> and fits within the broad literature and practitioner depictions of increased coordination and integration across governmental and non-governmental sectors to shape public policies and manage complex issues (Keast and Mandell, 2014; Carey and Crammond, 2015; Bogdanor, 2005; Christensen and Lagreid, 2011; Bogason and Musso, 2006). The literature on coordination is not new. Pollitt (2003) notes that “in both social services and health care there are immense (and immensely forgotten) literature – and policy documents – on working together, collaboration, etc. across services, from the 1960’s onwards” (p. 36). It is important to note that a collaborative approach is different from the devolution of government through division of tasks and specialized roles.

Involving citizens in decision-making processes has occurred in many countries, either through direct democracy or by empowering citizens and NGOs to participate in policy formulation. Decentralization of decision-making to regions or local governments has also been part of the trend towards increased collaboration and citizen inclusion (Bogason and Musso, 2006). Collaboration in the public sector speaks to a change where “relationships and common vision replace traditional hierarchy authority achieving public sector goals and creating public

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<sup>8</sup> For instance Carey and Crammond (2015) identified 823 articles between 1990 and 2014 after conducting a search including the terms “joined up government, joined-up government, and whole-of-government” (p. 1022). Examples where collaborative approaches have been utilized include “the greening of government initiative” in the United Kingdom (Barling *et al.*, 2002, p. 559), the “Government Service Delivery (GSD) Project” in Australia (Keast and Mandell, 2014, p. 14), and from the mid-1990s, “the Canadian government launched what were labelled horizontal management initiatives to tackle policy issues such as innovation, poverty, and climate change” (Christensen and Lagreid, 2011, p. 16).

benefit” (Keast and Mandell, 2014, p. 10). Therefore while decentralization might have been a goal in New Public Management<sup>9</sup>, institutional hierarchies and the siloed nature of government are not well-suited for increasingly complex public policy problems. In contrast, collaborative networks offer “a level of flexibility, experimentation, political accommodation, and collective intelligence” by “self-organizing, innovating, and integrating across sectors of society” (Bogason and Musso, 2006, p. 14).

Joined-up governance (JUG) is one of many terms used to describe the post-NPM reforms calling for collaboration and coordination across sectors and scales of government. Fafard (2013) observes that “[there is a] bewildering blizzard of terms that sometimes refer to more or less the same thing: joined up government, horizontal government, collaborative government, network government, governance, etc.” (p. 2). JUG is often promoted and adapted to suit specific needs and contexts. Barling *et al.* argues that “in an era of multi-level governance...policy integration is not only required horizontally across policy sectors, but also vertically through different levels of governance” (2002, p. 557). Some conceptions of JUG are narrow, where “different public sector bodies coordinate their actions” and exclude NGOs (Pollitt 2003, p. 37), while others encompass the non-governmental sector. In general, the term joined-up government is often used for the former definition, as opposed to joined-up governance for the latter (Pollitt, 2003, but see Bogdanor, 2005, p.2).

Hence, because it is a flexible, adaptable and rather abstract concept, in this analysis, JUG refers to an overall framework of horizontal and inter-organizational relationships across

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<sup>9</sup> New Public Management (NPM) proposed applying private sector management techniques such as specialized roles, functions, and tasks to the public sector while the post-New Public Management proposes integration, cross-sectoral working, and coordination. The need for post-NPM reforms addressed the inability of NPM to address ‘wicked problems’ which required increased cooperation between departments and agencies, as well as with the non-governmental sector. However, NPM has not entirely disappeared, indeed “NPM is still of vital importance in many countries, but now exists alongside new reforms and developments that go beyond NPM” (Christensen and Laegreid, 2011, p. 11).

government departments and agencies, including private and voluntary non-governmental sectors (i.e. coordinating and collaborating with actors at the same level). It also insists on the value of vertical coordination and collaboration through multi-level, or multi-scalar relationships between government departments and agencies, private and voluntary non-governmental sectors across scales to shape and coordinate policies (adapted from Bogdanor, 2005 and Pollitt, 2003)<sup>10</sup>. Finally, Carey and Harris (2015) use the terms “joined-up working” to refer to “day-to-day implementation practices” and joined-up governance to refer to a “design” (p. 112-113). In this paper, FPCs are studied for both their day-to-day practices (how they work), and for their potential to contribute to an overall design framework of joined-up agri-food governance in Canada.

### **Rationale for Joined-up Governance Lens**

A joined-up governance lens was chosen for the analysis of FPC governance because it provides a method to conceptualize how FPCs are working, and because agri-food systems are complex and require strong but flexible governing structures. In their analysis of municipal food strategies, Mansfield and Mendes (2013) demonstrate that the “implementation of food strategies...involve an unusually high degree of coordination and collaboration both within local governments themselves, but also with other levels of government, organizations and citizen groups” (p. 55). Based on three case studies, Mansfield and Mendes (2013) note that “strategic brokers” such as FPCs contribute to the successful implementation of these strategies.

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<sup>10</sup> While the global or inter-state scales are not included in the definition, Lang *et al.* (2009) observe that agri-food governance includes international level agreements such as the Agreement on Agriculture of the World Trade Organization. However, this scale is excluded for this research considering that FPCs emerged at the local and regional scales, and considering the scope of this paper in terms of length restrictions. Another caveat relates to how the relationships between these scales and levels are far from harmonious and trustful between all actors. While power relations are sometimes evident and should be further studied, this research did not focus on these debates due to time and paper constraints.

Therefore, the present study analyses FPCs in light of “what works” in joined-up governance initiatives to provide insight into the extent to which these organizations are partaking in or promoting best practices, as identified in the JUG literature. While there have been calls for a joined-up agri-food policy in Canada, to the author’s knowledge, no in-depth studies have been conducted on the role that FPCs might play in contributing to such a framework of governance. Utilizing a JUG lens to analyze FPCs offers a model that FPC practitioners could use to improve their practices and contribute more strategically to ‘joining up’ agri-food systems governance. This paper asks, of the 10 elements that have been identified in the JUG literature (to be explained in detail in Chapter 2, p. 18) as key characteristics of JUG *in practice*, which ones are demonstrated by FPCs and what can be learned from the experiences of FPCs working within a complex environment with multiple scales, actors, and institutions?

## **Chapter 2: Framework of Analysis and Research Methodology**

### **Unit of Analysis and Evaluation Type**

Ysa and Esteve (2011) observe that it is important to carefully assess the unit of analysis in network studies, and that there is a differentiation “among those [focusing on] the whole network, those focusing on an organization in the network, those focusing on the manager of one organization in the network, or those focusing on the ties between the organizations in the network” (p. 47). Moreover, Bogason and Musso (2006) note that “governance networks span a continuum from those with a genesis in the state to those that are progeny of civil society organizations” (p. 5). The unit of analysis in this study is the FPC as an organizational type and analysis focuses on how FPCs contribute to the overall network of agri-food governance in Canada.

MacRae and Donahue (2013) observe that FPCs perform a variety of functions related to agri-food system sustainability and policy, yet it is often difficult to prove their direct impact. Therefore it is critical to choose an evaluation approach that is appropriate for both the unit of study and the capacity of the researcher given the time and length of paper restrictions. The two broad categories of approaches to evaluate FPCs and JUG initiatives are outcome vs. process based methods, and the chosen approach for this study is a process-based method. Pollitt (2003) identifies that although evaluating outcomes “may seem the most reliable... in that it directly addresses the impacts rather than the processes... it is also likely to be... complex, expensive, and time-consuming” (p. 45) due to the time-lags associated with outcome-evaluation, the need for counterfactuals and the need for clarity in terms of the relative importance of objectives. FPCs are also a relatively recent phenomena, and in some cases here only just emerging, thus this calls for a review of their processes to be able to assess results through longer term periods of analysis.

Using the elements of ‘what works’ from past experiences of JUG initiatives to assess the processes of FPCs is the primary method. Pollitt (2003) notes that the limitations to this approach include that best practices are “highly context-dependent” and that “the literature gives little indication of the relative importance of these different devices and procedures” (p. 43). Despite these two limitations, “checklists incorporate a great deal of practitioner wisdom and knowledge” and that “they can be used at an early stage in an initiative, long before results or outcomes-based evaluations are even possible” (Pollitt, 2003, p. 45).

Moreover, strong administrative and supportive architectures are important to the success of FPCs and JUG initiatives. Indeed, O’Flynn *et al.* (2011) observe that “without careful attention to, and investment in, creating [a supportive architecture], most attempts at JUG are

doomed to fail, as the power of embedded ways of doing things restrains innovation and undermines cooperation” (p. 253), and Schiff (2008) identifies the need for “further research to examine the various components of administrative and operational capacity building [of FPCs] that could potentially point toward administrative models that prove effective in fulfilling the functions and roles of FPCs” (p. 226-227). Therefore the specific research questions are described below.

### Specific Research Questions

- Are FPCs demonstrating elements of ‘what works’ in JUG *within their own organizations and processes among the different participating members of agri-food systems locally?*
- Are FPCs demonstrating elements of ‘what works’ in JUG in their interactions *with other organizations involved in the over-all system of agri-food governance at the local and regional scales in which they have been created (horizontally)?*
- To what extent, if at all, do FPCs interact, collaborate, or coordinate *with other organizations at a scale aside from the jurisdiction in which they were created (vertically)?*

### Elements of What Works in Joined-up Governance

The process-based evaluation approach of FPCs incorporates elements of analysis (see Table 3) that draw heavily on Carey and Crammond’s (2015) evidence synthesis of ‘what works’ in joined-up governance. A description of each element is discussed in this section.

**Table 3: Elements of ‘what works’ in Joined-up Governance**

Element	Key Characteristics
Mandate from the Political Level	Endorsement to provide political legitimacy of FPC
Leadership at Multiple Levels	Leaders that facilitate collaboration, maintain stability of the FPC, have the ability to think broadly
A Call to Action or Rallying Point	A mission statement or focus point that helps to create a culture of collaboration and inspire joined-up working
Deliberate and Strategic Focus on Collaboration	Creation of a new whole, work in new ways, members are mutually dependent with a high degree of trust through relationship building, all relevant actors need to be included
Dedicated Resources	Funding, staff, flexible implementation
Training and Skill Development	Training to foster new leaders, technical and soft skills to better collaborate
Information Sharing	Freely sharing information and ideas, technology can assist
Decentralized Control at the Bottom	Ability for lower levels to make important decisions

Accountability and Incentive Mechanisms	Accomplishes tasks together, avoids undermining the common interest, accountability to the organization (the new whole, i.e. the FPC)
Interaction at Multiple Scales	Extent of collaboration, coordination, at various governmental scales
Adaptive Management	Considers feedbacks, is willing to adjust based on results at various stages

**A mandate from the political level** is “universally regarded as key to [success]” (Askim *et al.*, 2009; Cowell and Martin, 2003; O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011 cited in Carey and Crammond, 2015). Politicians can provide a mandate for change and set strategic directions (Carey and Crammond, 2015). Sullivan (2005) identifies endorsement from central government as one of three key strategies to the success of JUG initiatives (in Darlow *et al.*, 2007). Pollitt (2003) observes that while political actors may not independently ensure the success of JUG initiatives, they can “certainly undermine it” (p. 47).

**Leadership at multiple levels** and a specific type of leadership is also crucial to the success of JUG (Carey and Crammond, 2015; Mandell and Keast, 2007; O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011). Because joined-up working requires organizations and individuals to work together and build consensus, a special type of leadership is required. In particular, leaders should be able to “blend the many different members of the network into a working whole... facilitating and furthering interaction among members, promoting communication and the exchange of ideas...building trust, and having an impact on how members see their roles in a network” (Mandell and Keast, 2007, p. 582-583). Similarly, O’Flynn *et al* (2011) observed the importance of the ‘craftsmanship’ of leaders in the Australian Indigenous Coordination Centres JUG case which included “the ability to shape mandates, systems, structures, and programs... to think broadly, marshal resources, and reconfigure them to meet their aims” (p. 251). However, although there was strong political support and leadership by most senior civil servants, the model had still under-performed in this case (O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011).

**A call to action or a rallying point** focuses on changing attitudes and culture within which joined-up working can occur. Many commentators have pointed to the need for a shift in *culture* and that a call to action or a rallying point is a key element in encouraging joined-up working. A call to action or rallying point can be a *narrative* that “attempts to unite actors behind a common goal” (Carey and Crammond, 2015, p. 1026), a *common mission* whereby individual perspectives within a network structure are “reformulated into a new overarching goal or set of goals” (Keast *et al.*, 2004, p. 367), or an “upfront agreement that forms the basis of what will hold the network together” that may lead to a *program rationale* (Mandell and Keast, 2007, p. 582). Perhaps, as Carey and Crammond (2015) note, a call to action or rallying point can “create shifts in values and the ways in which problems are perceived, which is seen as an important precursor to change” (p. 1026).

There is a distinction between collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, with collaboration being the tightest relationships between actors within a network (Keast and Mandell, 2014; Mandell and Keast, 2007; Carey and Harris, 2015). A **deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration** is an important element found to increase the effectiveness of JUG initiatives and a vital aspect of successful collaboration efforts is that there must be a high degree of trust within the organization and network (Mandell and Keast, 2007).

**Dedicated resources** have been identified as critical for collaborative efforts and in turn JUG initiatives to succeed (Carey and Crammond, 2015; Keast and Mandell, 2014). Carey and Crammond (2015) found that because joined-up working can be expensive in terms of “staffing, financial costs, and time” (p. 1027), that dedicated resources are essential for success. Additionally, Carey and Crammond (2015) emphasize the importance of dedicated resources for

lower levels of JUG initiatives and the need for **flexibility** with respect to how these resources are used.

Many researchers have discussed the **need for training and skill development** to nurture the development of leaders (Darlow *et al.*, 2007; Schiff, 2007; O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011; Carey and Crammond, 2015; Keast and Mandell, 2014; Carey and Harris, 2015). Schiff (2007) notes that nurturing the emergence of new leaders is critical in “building stability so that collaborations avoid vulnerability to dependence on and loss of a singular course of guidance” (p. 143). The particular skills needed for joined-up working include “problem-solving skills, coordination skills (getting people to the table), brokering skills (seeing what needs to happen), flexibility, deep knowledge of the system... and a willingness to undertake the emotional labour associated with relational working” (Carey and Crammond, 2015, p.1027)<sup>11</sup>.

**Sharing information** is another element identified as a contributor to the effectiveness of JUG initiatives (Darlow *et al.*, 2007; Carey and Crammond, 2015). Successfully sharing information is made simpler with technical knowledge and supportive technological systems<sup>12</sup>.

**Decentralized control at the bottom** is also needed in JUG initiatives. Carey and Crammond (2015) identify that “those at the ‘bottom’ or street level are often more advanced [than those at the top], as joined-up working is often demanded in case management and responsiveness to local issues” (Cowell and Martin, 2003; Darlow *et al.*, 2007 cited in Carey and Crammond, 2015, p. 1024). O’Flynn *et al.* (2011) note that the decentralization of power and resources enables those at the ‘bottom’ to “broker deals” (p. 253), and Keast (2011) cited in Carey and Crammond (2015) notes that “bottom-up autonomy and control.... enables

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<sup>11</sup> For example, in the case of the Australian Indigenous Coordination Centres, O’Flynn *et al* (2011) observe that the lack of investment in training “frustrated their ability to fulfill mandates” (p. 123)

<sup>12</sup> For instance, “confounding factors in the progress of joined-up working were sometimes as simple as email for appropriate platforms for data integration and sharing” (Carey and Crammond 2015, p. 1027).

unregulated, rule bending practice that enables the patterns of siloed working to be broken” (p. 1026).

Stoker (2005) notes that “joining-up gives a special place to organizations with a multifunctional structure rather than a single goal” (p. 161) and there is evidence that lower levels “have the commitments, skills, and capacity to make joining-up work” (Stoker, 2005, p. 161). Similarly, Keast *et al.* (2004) note that “hierarchical control will not lead to results [in a network structure]. Rather, the ability to build coalitions, mobilize support, and make mutual adjustments [are] needed” (p. 369).

Furthermore, JUG initiatives require that political actors themselves “give up some of their traditional, hierarchical authority if partnerships are to have the requisite space to breathe and grow” (Pollitt, 2003, p. 41). Askim *et al.* (2009), Cowell and Martin (2003), Darlow *et al.* (2007), Larner and Craig (2005), and Signoretta and Craigla (2002), cited in Carey and Crammond (2015) point to how “the creation of positions, groups, or whole agencies that sit outside the system and are not governed by the same rules” (p. 1026), have been found to contribute to the success of JUG. These “adjacent bodies assist in balancing the control and flexibility required for system change” (p. 1026).

The “unwrapping [of] some of the hard incentives and accountability requirements...is required if JUG is to work in practice and....some loosening is required to enable joined-up approaches to work” (O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011, p. 253). However Keast and Mandell (2014) propose that [network] structures “should be loose enough for interaction, but not too loose...that outcomes [are] impeded” (p. 22). Indeed, rules must be established that “make interactions and mutual action possible and provide actors with a context and basis for their actions” (Koppenjan and Klijn, 2004, p. 215). While decentralized control at the bottom is important, a balance must

be struck between decentralization and the need for **accountability and incentive mechanisms** (Pollitt, 2003; Carey and Crammond, 2015; O’Flynn *et al.*, 2011).

Some researchers have identified mechanisms to ensure responsibility within a network organization. For instance, Carey and Crammond (2015) found that shared outcome targets between traditional departments and the newly created network organization may strengthen structural links. Mandell and Keast (2007) identify that for collaborations to be effective, “parent organizations” (i.e. the organizations that members in a network represent) need to “support members of a network but also be willing to take the political risks needed to change their organization’s operations vis-à-vis other organizations” (p. 579). Mandell and Keast (2007) also suggest using *relational contracts* that “commit members to act, not independently, but on behalf of all members of the network” (p. 582) to ensure that members feel responsible for the JUG initiative.

Unless organizations created for the purpose of joined-up working are well integrated into existing structures, the original siloed departments or organizations will continue to “carry the burden of accountability and implementation, while [the newly created organization] generates ideas, but lacks the implementation capacity or accountability mechanisms to get things done” (Carey and Crammond, 2015, p. 1027). If these organizations meant to contribute to JUG initiatives are viewed as ineffective, they risk facing budget cuts that further decrease their effectiveness.

Bogason and Juliet (2014) notably bring forth another consideration related to accountability, by discussing it in terms of democracy. These authors discuss whether network organizations disenfranchise particular segments of the population, in particular those that have

less resources and are less able to organize themselves<sup>13</sup>. Ultimately, Bogason and Musso (2006) note that this can be the case in any democratic system, with the possibility or even tendency for certain powerful groups to dominate public discourse and “perpetuate their advantage through institutional means” (p. 14)<sup>14</sup>. In order to make governance networks *more democratic*, Bogason and Musso (2006) suggest that they should be as inclusive as possible and that they work to reach out to the disenfranchised.

**Adaptive Management**, another element of ‘what works’ in JUG, ties all the previous elements together and provides a strategy for managing JUG initiatives. Because approaches to JUG need to be flexible (Carey and Crammond, 2015) in response to the “dynamic nature of joining-up” (p. 114), Carey and Harris (2015) propose using adaptive management as a tool for dealing with the complexities involved in the implementation of JUG<sup>15</sup>. For this reason, these authors argue that adaptive management is a feasible approach to implementing JUG initiatives since this approach is based on “creating and harnessing feedback processes between learning and decision-making” (p. 115). This approach thus considers the complexities involved in the management of JUG, and responds to those complexities using a systems lens.

## Methodology

A review of the literature on FPCs, agri-food governance, and joined-up governance was conducted throughout the fall of 2016. Interviews with four FPCs further informed the analysis

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<sup>13</sup> “decisions may increasingly be made out of the public view, and consequently the system may involve fewer ‘publics’, with deleterious effects for democratic legitimacy. Given the complexity of navigating an interagency network, it is likely that those publics who do penetrate are likely to have greater resources, again calling into question the equitability of network processes” (Bogason and Musso, 2006, p. 8)

<sup>14</sup> The question is whether these problems are “greater within governance networks than within hierarchical forms of government” (Bogason and Musso, 2006, p. 14).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, “the factors influencing management and governance decisions include politics, change in other policy areas, organizational change, funding in addition to emergent relationships between governance instruments and organizational contexts” (Carey and Harris 2015, p. 114).

of FPCs in light of a JUG framework: the Guelph-Wellington Food Roundtable (GWFRT), Durham Food Policy Council (DFPC), Edmonton Food Council (EFC), and Halton Food Council (HFC). Grey literature, especially information and documents produced by these FPCs also informed the analysis.

FPCs were chosen based on a variety of criteria: (1) each FPC has a distinct relationship with government; (2) HFC, GWFRT, and DFPC are all regional FPCs, whereas EFC is focused on one city; (3) GWFRT is ‘in hiatus’ which offers insight into some challenges FPCs face; (4) all of these FPCs have not received a great amount of attention in the academic literature.

External reasons for FPC selection include: (1) the availability of FPC members to be interviewed within the research time-frame; (2) capacity of the researcher to interview members and researcher’s interest in examining certain FPCs. (3) EFC was selected both for its characterisation of having a close relationship to government, but also because of a unique opportunity for the researcher to attend the *Cultivating Connections: Alberta Regional Food Systems Forum*, in addition to the opportunity for the researcher to get first-hand insights into how the EFC worked together with each other and with city staff. Appendix B, p. 80 lists the key activities performed by each FPC, while Appendix C, p. 82 provides a map identifying the geographic location of the four FPCs under study.

A total of nine semi-structured interviews were conducted, transcribed and manually coded to inform this study. At least two members from each FPC were interviewed, with one participant from each FPC being either a Chair or a past-chair of the FPC, except in the case of HFC where the Chair was unavailable within the research time-frame. At least one member from each FPC had been active in the work for at least one year. In the cases where there are paid staff on the FPC, one of the participants was the staff member, as was the case for both the EFC and

the HFC. Because only nine interviews were conducted, systematic coding using software was not necessary. The semi-structured interview questionnaire, first taken from Harper *et al.* (2009) because it provided a good model, was then adapted to include questions related to the elements of analysis (see Appendix D, p. 83). The appropriate research ethics clearance was granted by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board under certificate 12-16-22. To guarantee the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, identifying information such as names and professions were replaced with coded information. All interviewees consented to being interviewed (Appendix E, p. 86).

Participants were asked to provide organizational documents that might not have been readily available to the public such as Terms of References, Organizational Structure documents in addition to any secondary literature that might be helpful for the researcher's understanding of FPCs more generally. Returning to the literature is described by Berg and Lune (2012) as the "spiraling research approach" whereby each stage in the research process can alter the previous stage. Secondary literature on FPCs as an organizational type helped inform the basis of the analysis, with interview data further supporting these findings.

### **Chapter 3: Research Findings**

This section presents the research findings based on FPC literature and supported by interview data from each FPC in light of the elements of analysis described in Chapter 2. I use the 10 elements of 'what works' in JUG to understand the processes of FPCs in relation to these elements. Table 3, on p. 21 summarizes the research findings.

#### **Mandate from the Political Level and Leadership at Multiple Scales**

A 'true' **political mandate** would provide a FPC with political legitimacy to work as an organization that facilitates collaboration around agri-food systems governance in a community.

As discussed in the description of FPCs (Chapter 1), there are a variety of models of relationships with government (see MacRae and Donahue, 2013), indicating that not all FPCs can be categorised as having a ‘political mandate’, and that some could be rejecting such mandate and interactions<sup>16</sup>. Interview findings also demonstrate that there are various relationships with government and that even if a FPC has a ‘mandate’ from formal political institutions on paper, it does not necessarily provide a mandate in practice. The EFC was created by City council as the first strategic direction of the *fresh* strategy<sup>17</sup>, an over-arching strategy that addresses food and agriculture in the city. This is a clear indication of a political mandate provided by local government for collaborative governance of the agri-food system in Edmonton. One interviewee noted that “[because it was created as a Committee of Administration], and since it has been off the radar politically, it means you can kind of get things moving along” (P3). Another respondent remarked how it was important to have this mandate from council:

I think the most important aspect of the EFC is that it is sort of an arm of the City Council – which legitimizes it [and makes it] about a municipal mandate... just that overall authority is important (P4)

While the EFC has a clear and direct mandate coming out of the municipal food strategy, the Halton Food Council (HFC), the Durham Food Policy Council (DFPC), and the Guelph-Wellington Food Roundtable (GWFRT) have an indirect mandate. In each of these cases, a Food Charter was created and endorsed by the regional and/or municipal council(s) in which they operate. For instance, the Durham Regional Council endorsed the Durham Region Food Charter and the principles of the Charter are reflected in the Region’s Official Plan (“Durham Food

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<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the literature is inconclusive in regards to the extent to which FPCs are more effective when they have a closer relationship with government

<sup>17</sup> *fresh*: Edmonton’s Food and Agriculture Strategy was developed and approved by City Council in consultation with citizens, interested groups, businesses and organizations

System Environmental Scan”). One participant remarked that “[the Food Charter] is the community’s document and [the regional government] has said [it] is behind this... and when they need to justify why [the regional government] is doing something, it will pull out the Charter” (P8).

Nevertheless, political endorsements of Food Charters may look better on paper than in terms of providing the FPCs who steward these documents an effective political mandate (i.e. political actors may have signed on to the Charter, but have no interest in its implementation). For instance, one DFPC member opined that “local government has been supportive, but not necessarily an ally... it almost feels like they can’t ignore the group because of the players around the table but that doesn’t necessarily mean they embrace [the FPC]” (P9). In the GWFRT case, the City of Guelph and some of the townships signed onto their Food Charter. Despite this political endorsement, when asked whether the GWFRT was independent from government, one respondent remarked “Oh entirely. The city didn’t care” (P6).

These findings indicate that although FPCs may have “official” political endorsement of their Food Charter and objectives, it does not necessarily translate such objectives into concrete practices. One interviewee suggested that the vagueness of the GWFRT’s Food Charter may have impeded the FPC from gaining effective capacities to receive a legitimate mandate. This participant noted that “the big thing [the FPC] learned in retrospect is that while it is positive to have a document signed, when you don’t put any concrete asks with it, it is really tough for that work to happen” (P7). This interviewee indicated that the Charter was broad and did not include detailed expectations from government for its implementation. In his/her perspective, the next step for the GWFRT was to develop a food strategy to outline implementable policy objectives, much like the *fresh* strategy in Edmonton. In the words of one participant, the development of

the food strategy “was very much driven by the hope or [with] the intention that [the FPC] would be able to gather more institutional support at some point” (P6).

Therefore, while the EFC has a clear mandate with concrete actions under the City’s food strategy, the GWERT and the DFPC do not. Working towards a food strategy was a major goal of the GWERT prior to going on hiatus, and this remains a key goal of the DFPC. The purpose of this, one DFPC respondent noted, is to “build our credibility for the conversation” around food policy in the region (P8) and to hopefully strengthen the FPC’s political mandate in the future.

The FPC literature highlights the importance of **leaders** or ‘champions’ to ensure the effectiveness of these organizations. Dahlberg (1994) notes that “dedicated, competent, compatible, and savvy individuals are needed [in FPCs] to make the right things happen at the right time” (p. 8). In both the DFPC and the EFC situations there was a clear indication of individuals who led the progress of these FPCs moving from an ‘idea’ into the implementation stages. One interviewee noted how the Chief Planner and Food Planner at the City of Edmonton was the impetus to make the EFC happen, stating that “even when there is a directorate from a City, what matters is that someone owns it utterly and absolutely and [this planner] did that” (P4). On the other hand, another interviewee argued that while many of the FPC members are leaders within the community in relation to food, sometimes it is tricky to motivate the members to do the “grunt work” as a group (P3). For instance, this participant noted how many of the members “are doers who want to do things and don’t want to [only] sit around and talk about policy” (P3). This demonstrates the need for the recruitment of leaders who are savvy at bringing people together, and motivating others to inform themselves and understand the importance of policy work in order to provide more integrated practices on the ground.

In the Durham Region context, findings demonstrate that over the past two decades key players have consistently led the progression from the development of the Food Charter into the creation of the DFPC and now onto the Food Strategy. Interviewees appear to be pioneers of food policy work in the Durham region and still lead the way in steering the FPC. Notably, these FPC leaders were also institutionally supported by the non-governmental organizations with which they were employed at the time. For example, the Community Development Council Durham (CDCD) “took an administrative lead under a member’s leadership” on the development of the Food Charter. While these two examples of leadership within the DFPC and the EFC are significant, they are only two examples. What may be more important in terms of understanding whether FPCs ensure leadership at multiple levels is the way in which or the conditions that these organizations attract, train, and retain leaders. This dynamic is expanded on and analyzed in greater detail within the context of training and development, the fifth element of ‘what works’ in JUG, below.

### **A Call to Action or a Rallying Point**

All four FPCs have a **call to action or a rallying point**, the second element of ‘what works’ in JUG. This element is related to the work of FPCs in two ways. Recalling that this element refers to a common mission, a policy narrative, or a program rationale, the first way is in terms of how food charters, vision and mission statements, and terms of references articulate the main goals and vision of changing agri-food systems in a community. MacRae and Donahue (2013) found that food charters and strategies “help foster organizational motivation, cross-sectoral understanding, and the introduction of food systems approaches to municipalities” and that “food strategies and action plans galvanize diverse actors, set a vision for their actions, and help leverage additional resources” (p. 20).

Interview findings indicate that each FPC uses their call to action or rallying point to motivate and find common ground among members and the public to work on agri-food system issues<sup>18</sup>. One participant discussed the importance of having the Food Charter in the Durham Region: "...the Food Charter is the ultimate document. The overall goal of the [FPC] falls back to the Food Charter which is to develop a healthy sustainable food system and that's a broad, visionary mandate. The individual goals of the group then flow from that" (P9).

The second way a call to action or a rallying point is implemented by FPCs is by linking up with specific governmental mandates. MacRae (2002) for example, notes that "tying the [FPC's] work to a specific important issue, such as public health or community development, can give it more stability within the system" (cited in Borron, 2003, p. 5). The EFC is tied to the planning department for instance, and there is one full-time Food Systems Planner staff support. While the EFC is aligned directly with agri-food systems issues, is connected to the planning department, and has a dedicated staff member who works on agri-food issues, both the GWFRT and the HFC are connected to the regional public health departments (and in the HFC case, also with the planning department).

The DFPC is unique in that it has aligned itself with the regional government through the issue of climate change. The goal of the Durham Region Roundtable on Climate change, formed in 2009, is to "position the Region of Durham as a leader in addressing climate change issues at the community level" (Durham Food Policy Council, 2013, p. 4). One of the DFPC's high priorities for its research and policy working committee is to generate a position paper on climate change adaptation and the food system in order to champion the importance of food issues at the

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<sup>18</sup> For instance, the GWFRT's *vision* is that "everyone in Guelph-Wellington has access to nutritious, healthy food that is produced and distributed in ways that enable local communities, food producers and natural living systems to flourish" ("GWFRT Vision and Mission"). The HFC's mission is to "encourage and facilitate dialogue and collaboration among food related organisations, agencies, services, food producers and distributors, consumers, business and government to help develop strategies for the promotion and facilitation of the vision and bring it to action" ("Halton Food Council").

DRRCC (“Research Initiatives Workplan 2016-17”). One of the DFPC’s core members sits on and works with the DRRCC to represent the interests of the DFPC at meetings. An environmental scan funded by the DRRCC and completed in collaboration with the DFPC, produced recommendations around integrating food into climate change planning (P8). Therefore, each of the four FPCs have implemented the second element of ‘what works’ in JUG, through both the creation of a high-level visioning document and by aligning with a separate but related policy issue already recognized as important in the jurisdiction it operates.

### **Deliberate and Strategic Focus on Collaboration**

A **deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration**, the third element of ‘what works’ in JUG entails working in innovative ways and creating a ‘new whole’, where all actors in the group are mutually dependent with a shared orientation and tight linkages, with a high degree of trust through relationship building and where all relevant actors are included.

Building a *new whole* through the creation of an organization that brings together multiple interdependent actors is what Keast and Mandell (2014) refer to as collaboration. The goal is to find different ways of working together among organizations and to innovate to create solutions to complex problems. MacRae and Donahue (2013) write that “the most fundamental contribution of food policy initiatives is the creation of opportunities for discussions and action that would not typically occur” (p. 20). Others have noted that FPCs “create democratic spaces for convergence in diversity” (Harper *et al.*, 2009, p. 7). Furthermore, Schiff (2007) in her in-depth study of FPCs identified one of their roles as “facilitators for collaborative, innovative, food systems programs, projects, and restructuring” (p. 352).

Interviews also suggest that a key aspect of FPCs are to network, to bring together different stakeholders, and to engage the public, thereby creating a *new whole*. Three of seven

activities listed under the EFC's mandate incorporate collaboration and making connections<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, it is noted on the HFC's website that one of the roles of the FPC is to *network and educate by building new partnerships and enhancing networks between existing food system stakeholders in Halton*. An interviewee responded that "building the network of people involved in food work has been a really important part of what the council has accomplished" (P2)<sup>20</sup>.

A second characteristic to analyze whether or how FPCs demonstrate a deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration is through the interdependency of their members and whether there is a shared orientation and tight linkages. The concept of Food Strategies and Charters act as a shared orientation that strengthens the connections made through the work of FPCs. Mah *et al.* (2013) discuss how the Toronto Food Strategy, for instance, enables diverse actors "to engage in [and] are deemed legitimate and essential actors and agents of change, including determining policy directions and implementing and evaluating policy" (p. 71). Moreover, Schiff (2007) found that members of FPCs "work for their individual or organizations' interests, whether hunger or farmland preservation, while also working for the FPC's goal of food system sustainability" (p. 118).

Interview responses are in line with these findings, with participants from the EFC noting that the FPC's most important allies are those organizations which members are a part of. For instance, P4 noted that "because the 15 individuals on the council represent 15 different organizations, every one of those organizations is an important ally and interestingly, there is a motive within each of those organizations to want to participate". The DFPC demonstrates

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<sup>19</sup> Maintaining relationships with the food and urban agriculture community; engaging with the community on relevant and timely issues; and facilitating connections between key partners, such as various City departments, community partners and local food businesses.

<sup>20</sup> For example, HFC's 2016-2017 goals comprise mainly networking activities: food waste symposium in May 2017; supporting the work of the food security network "Food for Life" on a collective impact project; supporting Pillar B of Halton's Agriculture Strategy, linking food and health; developing a food strategy; supporting community gardens.

similar findings, with one participant noting that the FPC's most important allies are all of the organizations that enable their staff to participate, take the lead, and by supporting grants and other activities (P9).

On the other hand, one participant discussed some tensions between the DFPC and the Regional Public Health Department, caused by the advocacy work the FPC was doing on behalf of the community that the Health Department did not feel it could support: “[the Health Department] couldn't be a part of us because it would be taking a position opposite to the region – which just points to what people are saying – we would be really handicapped in our ability to speak appropriately to issues [if the FPC was a part of government]” (P8). This raises the question about the extent to which government departments can collaborate with non-governmental organizations such as FPCs when political actors have not provided a strong mandate. Hence, in the DFPC context the relationship between the FPC and specific government departments do not appear to be sufficiently developed to be deemed collaborative.

A third characteristic related to the interdependency of FPC members is the need for a high degree of trust through relationship building. All four FPCs illustrate a willingness to focus on displaying this characteristic; for instance, a member of the HFC spoke about the important process of building relationships and talking to people to get the message out:

I think the key is the networking part. Getting out there and talking to different organizations and people. So for example, I was in touch with our local Councillor who is also a regional Councillor and through him we were able to evolve our communications workgroup... he has opened a number of doors for us at the local and regional level (P2).

When the GWFRT was active, it too was working on building relationships and bringing community members together to discuss food issues. One interviewee explained how collaboration between the public and political actors was an integrated process:

it wasn't about telling Council about what needed to happen but getting the community in a room along with Council members, getting them working together to work on whatever food issue like food waste, or food access, and sort of having these Council members listen to what the community members were saying. It was sort of a more integrated approach, it wasn't just us going and continuously making presentations to Council (P6).

A fourth characteristic of deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration is that all relevant actors must be included for joined-up working to be effective. The food policy literature also demonstrates this need, with calls to include a balance of stakeholders from agri-food systems (Garrett and Feenstra, n.d., cited in Wright *et al*, 2007, p. 42), and for the seats at the table to “extend beyond those reserved for large players in the food economy” (Barling *et al.*, 2012, p. 568). Dahlberg (1994) also finds that of the FPCs included in his study, those which strongly emphasized hunger issues were the least successful overall. In contrast, “vigorous and diverse FPCs that address the full range of local food system issues can assist in the process of moving towards more sustainable and healthy cities” (p. 8). One interviewee saw the membership diversity of the EFC as positive because it gave them a different perspective of the agri-food system:

because if it was stacked with people like me, I'm not thinking everyday about food security. I'm thinking about local food and labels and marketing and I have a great in-depth understanding of the private sector and food industry and the drivers around growing an industry. But without a balance of people who are looking at things like food security or water security or permaculture, or the Food Bank, or Alberta Health or Alberta Food Council or the Alberta government, or the agriculture industry, those are all really important dimensions and they speak to the complexity around food policy (P4)

Participants from each FPC also made specific mention about including actors from across the food system in their Terms of Reference<sup>21</sup>. One interviewee noted that the HFC also made it a goal to have representation from each of the municipalities within the Halton Region.

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<sup>21</sup> The HFC expands on this with a statement about how “membership should reflect the region's diverse population including, but not limited to, ethno-racial, faith, gender, mental ability, physical ability, literacy or educational level, age, sexual orientation, rural/urban residency and socioeconomic circumstances” (“HFC Terms of Reference”)

Participants interviewed from the GWFRT mentioned the difficulties of ensuring that all areas of the agri-food system in the GW region were represented. A participant spoke to the nature of organizing, stating that “it’s all people who are doing work in this area or really interested in it. And the struggle was definitely to get folks who either were from a different background or had a different interest” (P6). Another participant remarked, “we were always cognisant of the fact that we had no farmers, no producers” (P7), and that the GWFRT was “slanted to social justice” (P7). A third participant echoed these observations, stating:

... because you can also become sort of heavy in one sector and suddenly you look up and the only people sitting at the table are those interested in food access and the intersection of poverty and food. You make decisions and prioritize different things than if you have people representing the farm constituency (P5).

An interesting interview finding was that there are trade-offs in terms of attempting to include all relevant actors *and* ensuring that FPC members are mutually dependent and contributing to the *new whole*. For example, a DFPC interviewee emphasized that “we say you are not here to represent your organization, you are here to bring your knowledge...” (P8), and another noted that “when we were recruiting originally, we tried to get everyone around the table that represented everywhere, but if they didn’t have the interest of the FPC at heart, and they only wanted to push their own agenda, it didn’t make sense for them to be there” (P9).

Interviewees from the EFC also emphasized the need to recruit members who were willing to prioritise the goals of the FPC. P3 noted:

So we are looking for some balance and diversity from the different parts of the food system. But it’s not a Council that mandates ‘one representative from Alberta Agriculture, one from Community Gardens, one from the Restaurant Sector...’ There was a discussion to go more towards the direction that we want people who are passionate, and come participate as a person rather than representing an organization. We are looking for people who have a bit of a holistic perspective and can kind of take a systems approach.

These findings indicate that there is a delicate balance between having diverse membership and the goal to create a new whole. While having diverse membership may allow for the alignment of contested frames to generate new ways of thinking, if members are unable to put the FPC first and to have a view of the whole, FPC goals may be undermined. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, the just mentioned quotations highlight possible tensions and lack of trust between various stakeholders, trust being a key aspect of collaboration discussed above. A lack of trust may impede both the goals of having diverse membership and creating a new whole. The lack of participation or interest in FPCs among farmers and food producers may also indicate that the functioning and governance structures, or the vision and priorities of FPCs, are not in line with their own. However, these are only reflections and further research is required due to the limited number of participants interviewed and FPCs under study does not allow for such concluding statements.

### **Dedicated Resources and Flexible Implementation**

A fourth element of ‘what works’ in JUG to be examined in light of the practices of FPCs is **dedicated resources and flexible implementation**. Indeed, Schiff (2007) finds that “there is no doubt that FPCs need paid staff, with two or three paid staff-persons seen as sufficient for operating effectively” (p. 360). Moreover, Coplen and Cuneo (2015) identify that the “struggle to obtain adequate funding for their work... can create hurdles related to the recruitment, engagement, and support of Council members” (p. 3).

Interview findings indicate that funding granted to each FPC is very piecemeal<sup>22</sup>. An interviewee noted that there was a strong partnership between the GWFRT and the Community

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<sup>22</sup> For example, the GWFRT received funding through project-based community grants such as the Community Well-Being grant, and through applications to other non-profits such as the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG). A large portion of the funding the GWFRT received was from the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, under the Healthy Communities

Health Centre because the FPC was a grassroots organization and not a non-profit, making it difficult to apply for funding on its own. However another participant discussed that at a later time, the GWFRT initiated communication with the Community Health Centre to jointly pursue funding for a project, yet the Health Centre had already put in funding for a project of their own. This circumstance demonstrates the challenges that can arise when a FPC is dependent on partnerships and does not have a dedicated and reliable source of funding. The HFC's work is sustained with an Ontario Trillium Fund grant to employ a staff member and aside from this, its funding is also mainly project-based. The DFPC too has a very disjointed situation with respect to the funding it receives<sup>23</sup>.

Interview findings indicate that the EFC might have the most consistent and dedicated source of funding, with the civil service covering "all reasonable administrative costs" (Edmonton Food Council, 2015). Winne cited in Borron (2003) notes that closer association with government makes it more likely for a FPC to receive funding, staff, and in-kind resources. However, an interviewee insisted that although "we have a fairly consistent amount dedicated to implementing *fresh*, there is not a separate pool for the food council and that budget includes the staff member's salary. So right now it's not clear-cut and it's not like [the EFC] has its own operating budget. It's more in-kind" (P3), which is not negligible. Indeed, a GWFRT interviewee opined that in-kind resources are in fact essential to a FPC's effectiveness, and that "access to that kind of thing is a fairly important part of the funding model [for grassroots organizations]" (P5).

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Partnership Fund. A public health staff member managed this particular fund and one interview participant indicated that it comprised about 95% of the funding that the GWFRT received (P7).

<sup>23</sup> For example, an interviewee explained the various sources where the DFPC seeks funding: to develop their website, the FPC received a \$500 grant from the region's Planning and Economic Development department; to print the council's brochures, the FPC received a personal donation; the council has a volunteer who helps with graphics free of charge, etc.

Respondents from the GWFRT, the DFPC, and the HFC indicated that funding was an issue for their councils. The GWFRT did not have a mandate from the political level and therefore the organization was working towards the development of a food strategy to help gain momentum and to instill concrete ‘asks’ into a document to bring forward to political actors<sup>24</sup>. However, there were a number of roadblocks related to capacity and resources that disrupted the development of a food strategy which might have led to a stronger political mandate (and in turn more resources, interview participants suggested). First, the roundtable had difficulty attracting members of the public to work on the strategy. Two interviewees indicated that working on food policy is not as “shiny” as for example consumer oriented food work, and that people generally are not able to see how an abstract food strategy might directly impact their daily lives. The second problem was that members were volunteering their time towards this, and not having a full-time staff to assist with its coordination, led to a realization that there was simply not enough capacity to assure continuity of the FPC.

The third roadblock was a re-directed attention in the community towards a newly established food organization in the City of Guelph called the SEED<sup>25</sup>. Interviews implied that the SEED emerged because it was ‘action-based’, and perhaps more appealing than food strategy development. Similarly, an EFC member indicated that policy work was at times not as interesting and motivating as action-based projects. Moreover, a key staff member from the Community Health Centre (the organization in which previously assisted the GWFRT to obtain funding) also shifted their attention to the SEED project. Indeed, an interviewee noted that “I

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<sup>24</sup> While there was endorsement, the Charter did not contain any concrete steps for implementation, as discussed in light of ‘commitment from the political level’.

<sup>25</sup> The SEED is a community food project of the Guelph Community Health Centre. The SEED’s mission is to use the power of food to build healthy communities and address the underlying issues of food insecurity and poverty in Guelph (The SEED, n.d.)

think another reason so many Community Health people turned away from the roundtable was because new funding would go towards the SEED” (P5).

GWFRF interviewees strongly emphasized that funding was a key issue leading to this lack of capacity as well, with one participant observing that “I think by the end of it, people felt stretched really thin and we had very few people and no money...” (P6). Another participant commented that “funding is what sunk the roundtable... [regarding the work for the food strategy], you need a [staff] person at least half time where they can devote to this” (P5). Another participant noted how the GWFRF had communicated their ideas to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and had received positive feedback. However ultimately there was little to no capacity left to apply for the Trillium Foundation funding that may have sustained the organization over the following three years. This example may demonstrate the cyclical dilemma that without dedicated resources to apply for funding, FPCs may struggle with sustaining themselves, which in turn can lead to the downfall of an organization. With even a small fund or a half-time staff person, the GWFRF may have been able to apply for funding and sustain the Roundtable into the future, as it would have built credibility and momentum in the political realm, and in turn led to more capacity.

HFC respondents reported similar issues with respect to funding. One participant spoke about how:

the main issue is funding and it’s really limiting what we can do because we focus so much effort on grant applications and creating partnerships that might not be successful. There is a lot of wishful thinking. We really envy the municipalities that have been given core funding for their work (P1)

Another participant echoed these comments, noting that grants and in particular bigger grants take a lot of resources (P2). Likewise, Rod MacRae of the Toronto Food Policy Council has advised FPCs to “avoid the task of fundraising as much as possible” (Borron, 2003, p. 5).

Another issue identified by a HFC participant was that because it is a newly incorporated organization, the FPC does not have much access to funding due to a lack of financial records. This participant noted that “in the short term it is preventing us from applying to [grants] because we still need a partner to apply” (P1), thus relating to the importance of collaboration, networking and building trust.

A DFPC participant also spoke to the need for core funding and the barriers that limited funding has placed on the Council, despite still moving forward with their work. This participant noted that “right now we have next to no money. Right now we probably have \$104 in our bank account” (P8). The DFPC participant described what the FPC could do with even \$10,000 in core funding per year, a small sum of money for the municipalities and the region to give, with numerous positive outcomes. For instance, P8 noted how \$5,000 could be used for a research project and the other \$5,000 could be used for promoting the DFPC and recruiting citizens to become involved. Even a small but consistent pot of money could encourage members to remain involved or attract new enthusiasts. Indeed, Schiff (2007) finds that when FPCs have more financial stability, they are “freed” to fulfill the other characteristics associated with FPC goals including membership, networks, priority setting and program implementation. One GWFRT participant discussed a strategy for core funding whereby a number of agencies supporting the goals of a FPC could each dedicate a specific sum of money that could spur a multiplier effect<sup>26</sup>.

Respondents from all FPCs had various perspectives on the need for staff members to assist with coordination activities. The GWFRT often had four members who were paid to attend meetings<sup>27</sup>. Because these individuals were not paid to provide administrative support, and only

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<sup>26</sup> The TFPC demonstrates the multiplier effect that can occur when a FPC is granted core funding for food initiatives. MacRae and Donahue (2013) note that “between 1991 and 1998, the TFPC, funded by the city at the rate of approximately \$220,000 a year, helped raise more than \$7 million from other sources for community food projects” (p. 15).

<sup>27</sup> one from each of the following: the City of Guelph, Regional Public Health, Community Health Centre, and the Coordinator of the Food bank

to attend meetings, the level of engagement was highly dependent on the unique interests and characteristics of each individual. One participant noted that “because they are being paid does not mean they are going to be engaged, and even then, they are fully free to be completely unengaged to what is happening. [They can] just show up, sit there for an hour, and walk away again” (P5). Since these members were sometimes only expected to attend meetings or spend a very limited amount of time towards the FPC’s activities, it may have led to a systematic lack of engagement as these individuals were not always personally vested in the goals<sup>28</sup>.

A DFPC interviewee also discussed some struggles associated with staffing to support the FPC. This participant remarked that “when we had a staff assigned to us...it got us someone to do the paperwork and the minutes for the meetings but then that person disappeared when the funding dried up....your organization has to take a long time to re-adjust to that” (P8). This participant also commented that “it was frustrating to see a staff member come on and be paid” because for example, of the \$38,000 the DFPC received from the Greenbelt Foundation, only a small portion remained to dedicate towards activities and other goals of the FPC. Likewise, a HFC member discussed how the FPC’s coordination support is a 9 month-contract position with no guarantee of extension. When or if the staff member departs, the organization will have to adjust to this loss.

The EFC on the other hand, has a position dedicated from the City to support the FPC administratively while also fulfilling the role of Food Systems Planner for the city. This dedicated staff support with little turnover (due to its status as a full-time permanent position) is an improvement from the more negative staffing situations. However in relation to other cities,

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<sup>28</sup> Dahlberg (1994) identifies that having a dedicated staff support from a governmental department “seems to be much more effective than simply having them serve as regular members of the FPC” (p. 4).

one EFC interviewee noted that for instance, “in Vancouver they have two social planners where one is the Council coordinator and another is the Food Systems Planner. Here in Edmonton [the staff support] does both of those roles” (P3). Overall, interview findings indicate that staff support can be detrimental depending on how such support is structured. It appears that having more dedicated and consistent staff support results in positive perceptions of the role that staff can serve, and that having no support may actually be better than having fragmented or inconsistent staff support.

In terms of **flexibility** to implement funds, there are some interesting findings from the DFPC, the HFC, and the EFC. First, when the DFPC received funding from the Regional Health Department to create a brochure for the Food Charter, the FPC also hoped to produce a corresponding one-page ‘snapshot’ document that explained who the FPC was, its mission, and goals. However, despite the DFPC’s desire to create this second promotional document, the Region remained in control of these funds and ultimately decided not to permit spending this. This is one example demonstrating that even when the DFPC manages to receive funding, there might be a lack of flexibility in determining how those funds are implemented.

The HFC faces a similar dilemma whereby the Regional Health Department and the Planning Departments provide some steady administrative support through two staff members. However, there is a disclaimer in the FPC’s terms of reference, indicating that “in the event that the Halton Food Council decides to oppose a policy of the Regional Health Department, support will be withdrawn for the duration of that challenge” (“HFC Terms of Reference”). The staff members supplied by the Regional Health Department and the Planning Departments are non-voting members. While it may be reasonable for the Region to pull support during a challenge, this type of warning detracts from the flexibility of the HFC to use its resources – in terms of

administrative support - as it sees fit. It would lose its administrative support from the Region for the duration of the challenge<sup>29</sup>. Lastly, the EFC does not have a funding source dedicated to its work per-say, but the funding source available is rather focused on the goals of the *fresh* strategy.

One interviewee described the EFC's funding situation like this:

we don't have a dedicated amount or pool that is earmarked just for the Food Council. I think that would be something good for the future.....when you're a volunteer group you want to know what you are able to do. Because right now it's kind of like 'go ask your mom for...spending money'... (P3)

### **Training and Skill Development**

**Training and skill development** is necessary to foster strong leaders and build stability so that collaborations avoid the vulnerability associated with being too dependent on a core set of individuals. Indeed, one of four recommendations that came out of the failure of the Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council is the need for capacity-building (Coplen and Cuneo, 2015). A respondent explained that when a Community Health Centre staff member stepped away from the GWFRT, this individual's successor did not have the same deep knowledge of food systems in Guelph and in fact did not have knowledge of food systems at all, and that the loss of this staff member created instability in the GWFRT. Perhaps if the incoming individual was provided with training to foster the development of their skills, this instability could have been avoided.

That being said, there was some indication of training and capacity development attempts by the GWFRT, with one participant noting that at one point a Regional Health Department staff member implemented capacity building training sessions. This training included "walking through the policy development process, discussing what advocacy can look like, and how it can translate into something more tangible etc." (P7). While this was a step in the right direction

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<sup>29</sup> Of note, the HFC has not had the Region's support drawn at any time throughout the HFC's 10-year history. A member has noted that if the Council chose to oppose a regional policy, it would do so without the administrative support of the Region.

towards capacity building and training, this participant noted that due to the high turnover rate within the FPC, the training did not reach as many members as expected and those who did receive the training were not retained (for other external reasons – and perhaps due to the lack of accountability and incentive mechanisms embedded in the GWFRT).

Another method of training and skill development for FPCs identified by Dahlberg (1994) is for FPCs to make available “experienced and knowledgeable consultants and advisers whether on a regular or occasional basis....to produce important reports, conduct retreats and focus meetings, [while also offering] an independent source of ideas, evaluation, and judgement” (p. 6). One specific example of where this type of training was implemented, was the Food Policy Council Workshop that the EFC participated in, inviting a long-time FPC consultant Dr. Wayne Roberts to lead a training session for City staff from various departments on how the EFC can work most effectively.

When asked about training specifically, most interviewees had not explicitly thought about training for the development of leaders or to maintain organizational stability. However, one particular response from the DFPC highlighted that the FPC had informally trained him/her. This participant responded, “I wouldn’t call it formal training but I think there is probably a lot of education going on” (P9). The participant continued “I am here leading this [food security] organization not because of my formal education, but because of my work with the FPC. I couldn’t lead this organization otherwise. Yes, I have an administrative background but I don’t have the subject matter ease without the FPC” (P9). Hence FPCs participate in training and skill development, though not explicitly. The very process of getting involved, having to defend one’s idea or initiative, finding new members and learning from other members of the FPC, led this participant to expand their knowledge of agri-food systems and networking.

In the particular instance where capacity building training was intentional (the GWFRT), it was the external factor of high-turnover rate that led to its failure. Therefore while training and skill development can play an important role in creating organizational stability, it appears that there must first be other ways of maintaining interest and momentum in the FPC. From these few cases and without being able to generalise, it seems that each of the other elements discussed such as commitment from the political level and dedicated resources contribute to retaining members who then might benefit from training and skill development and in turn assist to sustain the FPC.

### **Information Sharing**

A related element that assists to analyze FPCs' contribution to the JUG of agri-food systems is **information sharing**. While the JUG literature specifically identifies technical knowledge sharing and supportive technological systems, the research findings focus on how FPCs participate in broader information sharing activities. There are four pathways that FPCs share information: within the FPC; across FPCs; between the FPC and the government; and with the public.

The first pathway where FPCs share information is identified by Schiff (2007): "in creating a venue for information exchange among participants, FPCs facilitate their own growth through the education of staff and members" (p. 352). A DFPC interviewee noted that there are "ongoing information sharing and educational activities" because most of the Steering Committee members are committed to agri-food systems policy work. Because of this commitment, members frequently attend conferences and activities individually, and then bring back such knowledge to the DFPC. This respondent commented that "we [the members] are all sort of staying connected to the different areas that make sense for the food system and then we

bring back and share. That's what we do – we bring back and share what we have learned” (P9). Furthermore, P9 discussed that the DFPC also shares information with the external organizations in which individual members participate. For instance, the DFPC conducted a scan of urban agriculture in the Durham Region. The results have been used by Feed the Need, a food security organization, to identify methods of expansion beyond the traditional foodbank.

Research findings indicate that a second pathway is the sharing of information across FPCs<sup>30</sup>. For example, the HFC hosted an event entitled *Assembling the Ingredients: planning for a food strategy in Halton* whereby a former employee of the City of Edmonton and who played a role in the development of Edmonton's *fresh* strategy, spoke about their experience during a panel presentation. At this same event other panelists spoke about and shared experiences from the Hamilton and Toronto food strategy processes. Another respondent noted how the EFC staff support/Food Systems Planner shares information with counterparts in other cities including Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary, noting that, “it's really nice to be in conversation and sharing ideas. Right now Toronto is testing out having food kiosks in subway stations...and now Calgary is exploring that...and now we are like ‘well how could we do that’...so it's kind of motivating to talk to each other”.

The third information sharing pathway is between FPCs and government<sup>31</sup>. The EFC participates in this type of pathway, with one respondent noting that the EFC is “almost like a... mini think tank” (P3), whereby City departments contact the Food Systems Planner/EFC Administrative support staff to request “a food perspective on [the City's] Parks Strategy, or a food perspective on a climate change adaptation strategy...so the EFC are like a consultation

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<sup>30</sup> Indeed, MacRae and Donahue (2013) identify a broad need for “actors and organizations working in municipal food policy across Canada to create a network to share information and best practices and build capacity for food policy work” (p. 3)

<sup>31</sup> Dahlberg (1994) finds that especially when there is a city staff liaison involved in the FPC, it encourages “a two-way information sharing between the FPC and the respective agencies” (p. 6).

forum. For example, when [the City] worked on amending the animal control by-law to include hens, the department came and talked to the EFC” (P3).

Another example of this type of information sharing and which leads into the fourth pathway, is FPCs facilitating discussion between politicians or government leaders and the public. For instance, the EFC’s events and communications committee hosted a Mayors’ Panel at City Hall with about 400 people in attendance. An interviewee noted that “it was really successful in terms of the public’s ability to speak to the mayors about food issues but also to watch the mayors speak to each other and potentially even transform their own conversations” (P4). The GWFRT hosted similar events between the public and politicians to bring attention to the goal of developing a food strategy in the county. Immediately preceding the municipal election in 2014, political candidates were invited to a public event to discuss agri-food systems issues. One respondent noted that “it was a pretty effective tool for getting what we were doing out more broadly but also getting it in the heads of decision-makers who were about to be elected and so that was a key part of our food strategy campaign” (P5).

The fourth pathway for FPCs to share information is with the public more broadly. Interview findings indicate that this is a main focus of FPCs. In particular, a member of the HFC noted that it often participates in events and sets up booths to converse with the public on agri-food issues in the Halton Region. The HFC has also been invited to different events within the community; for example an interviewee discussed the FPC’s involvement at a Healthy Living show in Oakville, introducing a food-waste film in Georgetown, and as a guest to brainstorm on food security and food literacy with a workshop put on by Community Development Halton (P1). A DFPC respondent emphasized that “one of the main things that FPCs are supposed to do is to connect the community and share information and that is one of the things the DFPC has

done over the years” (P9). This respondent discussed how the DFPC for example, hosts an annual community forum, “and the whole point of these forums is to bring people together to talk about the food system and share information...” (P9). It is clear that FPCs actively participate in the information sharing element of joined-up working.

### **Decentralized Control at the Bottom**

The seventh element of ‘what works’ in JUG is **decentralized control at the bottom**. This element recognizes that those at the street level are more advanced because joined-up working requires responsiveness to community issues; it posits that hierarchical control will not lead to results, and that joining-up is best done by organizations that have a multifunctional structure instead of a single goal. The creation of whole organizations that sit outside the system and are not governed by the same rules as traditional departments may also contribute to the effectiveness of JUG.

It is evident that FPCs fulfill this role, with interview findings and many commentators describing the work of FPCs in a way that aligns with the description of this element<sup>32</sup>. A DFPC interviewee highlighted the importance of the FPC sitting outside of the siloed policy system:

we are trying to work toward some kind of collaborative relationship because those are the kinds of things that are sustainable for a community in the long-run and to move people out of their silos. Because even just in the region we have health, social services, planning, and economic development and those departments don’t really talk to each other....they need [an organization] with a... vision to pull [things] together (P8).

The overall characteristic of FPCs is generally to “sit outside the system” as these organizations are external to the hierarchical bureaucracy of the policy world. However it is questionable

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<sup>32</sup> For example, the TFPC has been explicitly described as a FPC that “brings into focus the multifunctional character of the food agenda” and has been “astute at identifying food-related issues and moving them along various agendas to realize multiple dividends” (Blay-Palmer, 2009, p. 413). Schiff (2007) also finds that there is a need for FPCs to “maintain perspectives from ‘outside the system’” (p. 226-227).

whether they have the control to make decisions regarding agri-food policy at any government level. These organizations most commonly sit too far outside of the system and therefore these organizations do not make decisions on behalf of other departments. The extent to which they have decision-making ability in the policy realm is not great, though the case of the TFPC demonstrates that over time the influence of FPCs may be strengthened<sup>33</sup>. One EFC interviewee indicated that:

Something that's probably a little weak is the higher level accountability. One of the challenges we face is that the City has checked the box of having a food council, and that their responsibility and our responsibility to them is not very mature right now. And that needs to really grow – the City Council needs to be looking to us as a food council that is accountable to certain activities and we need to be looking to them to say you need to be accountable to us in terms of what your commitment is towards food policy in the City of Edmonton (P4).

This perspective illustrates that although a FPC may be decentralized in that it operates outside of traditional hierarchical structures, the latter half of this element *control at the bottom* may be missing from the work of FPCs, though this will be dependent on local context.

Interview findings indicate that FPCs operate in a decentralized manner, and allow for decision making to occur at the lowest levels. Particularly, each FPC interviewed utilizes the Constellation Model, which is in itself a decentralized model of working<sup>34</sup>. The GWFRT was comprised of a number of working groups including the community garden network, the food policy working group, and the food access working group. The FPC's Terms of Reference (ToR) describes these working groups as oriented toward specific projects that are relevant to the strategic directions of the roundtable.

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<sup>33</sup> See Mansfield and Mendes (2013) discussion on the TFPC's contributions to food policy making in Toronto. Members and the FPC are increasingly given more responsibility in terms of making decisions related to agri-food policy

<sup>34</sup> Surman (2006) describes constellations as "self-organizing action teams that operate in cooperation with a broader strategic vision. The structures and initiatives of the collaboration take the form of 'constellations' – clusters of activity in which a subset of the partners voluntarily participate" (p. 6).

The EFC uses a similar model, and is comprised of the communications, events, governance, measurement, and policy committees. One respondent commented that a previous challenge for the EFC was “how to harness the energy and abilities of members to amplify their voices” (P3) and to do so effectively. Since changing to a model with sub-committees, “people have more time getting to know each other in smaller groups, rather than having 15 members around a giant boardroom” (P3). Another participant emphasized that these committees allow members to be “really actionable on projects and on initiatives that are of specific interest to [the members] and so they can really focus” and that “as a result we have put a lot of power to committees, and decision-making happens at the sub-committee level now, which has gotten us away from a lot of the group-think that was happening at the council level” (P4). Notably, HFC’s ToR indicates that working groups are encouraged to include participants who are not Council members, further decentralizing control by including non-members in the process of achieving working group objectives.

### **Accountability and Incentive Mechanisms**

Joined-up working is more effective when there are **accountability and incentive mechanisms** in place. Without these, FPCs may simply be a host for ideas but may lack the capacity to assist with implementation, in turn potentially leading to a decrease in resources. This section discusses the work of FPCs in relation to a number of accountability and incentive mechanisms that have been found to increase the effectiveness of JUG initiatives.

FPCs can first be examined to determine whether these organizations have shared outcome targets with traditional departments. Another aspect of this mechanism involves whether FPCs have designed performance criteria linked to the practice of collaboration<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> MacRae and Donahue (2013) argue that “municipal food initiatives would benefit from identifying a range of ways to document and evaluate their work in order to demonstrate successful processes for social change” (p. 3).

Coplen and Cuneo (2013) found that the Portland-Multnomah Food Policy Council failed to ensure “supportive structures, formal organizing documents, written agreements, and robust communication pathways” (p. 9), contributing to the dissolution of this FPC. Moreover, the researchers recommend conducting biannual process evaluations and annual impact evaluations to hold FPCs accountable to their original goals and purposes while providing an opportunity to identify additional areas of focus.

Each FPC in this study has created documents with the purpose of holding members accountable. While documents such as Food Charters and Strategies have been discussed in relation to a call to action and a political mandate for change, these are also important for accountability and incentive reasons. An interviewee, for example, opined that the 36 recommendations in the City of Edmonton’s food strategy gives the EFC parameters: “[these recommendations] give us strategic directions and a roadmap...we have been figuring out that we are accountable to it as a city, as a food council, and it’s our job to make sure it gets implemented as best as it can” (P3). Similarly, a DFPC interviewee indicated that the Food Charter holds members accountable: “everyone is sort of accountable to a document that we have all agreed to support, and then we are accountable to each other as a result” (P9).

The EFC seems more visibly demonstrating shared outcome targets with the City of Edmonton, whereas the DFPC is more accountable to its internal members and to the community that provided input during the formation stages of the Food Charter. The HFC is much like the DFPC in that it is generally accountable internally and outwardly to the public, with the use of a Terms of Reference (each of the other FPCs have also developed a ToR)<sup>36</sup>. Another interviewee

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<sup>36</sup> For instance, the HFC’s ToR states that “members must endorse the Vision, Mission, Goals, and Values of the Council” (“HFC Terms of Reference”).

identified that the HFC is held accountable through the deliverables associated with each grant the organization receives (P2).

A separate mechanism identified to increase the effectiveness of JUG initiatives and in which can be utilized to examine the work of FPCs is the need for clear roles and responsibilities. Coplen and Cuneo (2015) found that it is essential for FPCs to “clearly articulate roles and responsibilities of council members, government staff liaisons, and elected officials” at the outset and to regularly reflect upon these definitions and lines of accountability “to maintain the relevance of an organization throughout its life” (p. 15). All four FPCs had established roles and responsibilities at their inception through the use of Terms of References. Additionally, each FPC outlined the length of terms for members and the EFC staggers its Co-Chairs to “ensure consistency and stability in leadership and to avoid situations where both Co-Chairs exit at once” (EFC, 2015). A GWFRT interviewee also noted that this organization learned (in hindsight) the importance of “replacing the people who have been there for a long period of time and...getting fresh ideas, approaches, and new people in” (P5).

The HFC is currently in the process of re-evaluating their governance structure including reviewing members’ roles and responsibilities, and its recruitment process. This evaluation and reflection is in line with the recommendations put forth by Coplen and Cuneo (2015) to check in with the initial role descriptions and structure of the FPC in order to remain relevant. The DFPC is likewise reflecting on whether the current governance model has been effective in terms of holding members accountable. One respondent indicated that the DFPC is considering expanding its Coordinating Committee from 5 to 7 members to “get more hands on deck” but noted that any expansion needs to be balanced with the need to remain effective in terms of decision-making processes (for example this participant noted that it has so far been relatively easy to obtain

quorum). Another example of an accountability mechanism instilled by the DFPC is the requirement for the member sitting on the Region's Climate Change Roundtable to report back to the Coordinating Committee. Additionally, the DFPC has developed a position statement from which this member operates on the Roundtable. A Coordinating Committee member is required to sit on each sub-committee, ensuring consistency and accountability across the FPC.

There are a number of lessons that can be learned with respect to accountability and incentive mechanisms from the GWFRT experience. This FPC consisted of 30 to 50 members at one point in time and utilized an increasingly decentralized operating model. While the GWFRT used a Constellation Model like the other three FPCs, this particular FPC appears to have failed to include accountability mechanisms. One respondent expressed the difficulty of incentivising volunteers to do the grunt work: "the whole thing around motivation, achievement, responsibility or accountability – how do you get that whole cycle going? It's all sort of self-driven by volunteers. And you simply cannot criticize volunteers if [other priorities cropped up]" (P5). Another interviewee stated "that's just sort of how loosey goosey our governance was. To be perfectly honest if it was any more formal I'm not sure it would have resonated with the volunteers" (P7). For approximately one year prior to the GWFRT's dissolution, the organization was in discussion about how to restructure to work more effectively. One interviewee explains:

after 5 years of being around, the members were looking deeply at how they made decisions. Is the constellation the right model? How does it work? Should we as the Roundtable be telling the working groups what they can and can't do? Are they just free to do anything they want as a working group? What if those members who are part of the working group and not the Roundtable make decisions that the Roundtable fundamentally disagrees with or takes an approach or says things publicly?

While these were all important questions in light of accountability and incentive mechanisms, this respondent emphasized that spending too much time on these questions could easily "kill momentum in a grassroots organization" (P5). Therefore this observation highlights

that although there is a need to spend some time discussing and reflecting upon how to keep members and sub-committees accountable, it may not be possible when there are too many cooks in the kitchen. Perhaps having a Coordinating Committee or a Governance Committee (the DFPC has the former and the EFC has the latter) that focuses on developing governance structures and accountability mechanisms for the FPC would be most effective at ensuring strong governance structures while also maintaining engagement from the broader membership.

A third mechanism to ensure accountability and incentives is the use of a shared budget. FPCs are quite dependent on the will of their funders and it appears that there is no real accountability in place regarding budget sharing. However as discussed earlier in this paper, one respondent's suggestion to have each member organization contribute a specified amount of funding could be an interesting and practical idea that aligns with this mechanism.

A final aspect to consider in regards to accountability is the need for governance networks to remain accountable to the broader public. In order to fulfill this purpose, FPCs need to be as inclusive as possible. The detailed findings in relation to this aspect of accountability is discussed in the deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration. However it is useful to mention here how FPCs can realize this goal, and that is to “gather public input and translate it into the mission, vision, goals and functions of [the FPC]” (Fitzgerald and Morgan, 2014, p. 8). A clear example of a FPC that satisfied this step is the DFPC, with interviewees repeatedly emphasizing that the Food Charter is “the community’s document” (P8, P9). These findings and analysis demonstrate that while some FPCs have been successful in implementing accountability and incentive measures, it is an ongoing process to ensure continued success.

### **Interaction at Multiple Scales**

Determining if and how FPCs **interact with other organizations at multiple scales** is the ninth element used to assess FPCs' contribution to a joined-up governance of agri-food policy in Canada. This section explores how FPCs interact with organizations at different levels to begin to understand how they may contribute to joining-up, coordinating, or filling the gaps between various scales. Scaling up and coordinating local agri-food policy with higher scales has been recommended in the FPC literature<sup>37</sup>.

The means in which FPCs might contribute to the scaling up of agri-food systems governance include that FPCs 1) may be a 'testing ground' for agri-food policy making; 2) can advocate at higher scales; 3) may collaborate or share information at various scales and; 4) can be supported financially by higher scales. Several commentators have proposed that FPCs at the local level could serve as an innovative policy experiment for higher scales to later adopt (Mah interview with Lauren Baker of TFPC; Harper *et al.*, 2009; Mooney *et al.*, 2014). Indeed, Mooney *et al* (2014) argue that "this might be one of the most important roles of FPCs in the construction of alternative/oppositional practices: that they serve as incubators and diffusion mechanisms of a potentially diverse range of experimental practices" (p. 249). Conversely, Barling *et al* (2002) warn that "short-term, unsupported actions at the local level, while offering policy alternatives, may be unhelpful to the extent that they can generate a sense of a problem's being 'solved'" (p. 569). This observation infers that while the 'testing ground' theory may be feasible, there is also a risk that without upper-level scales contributing to structural agri-food

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<sup>37</sup> MacRae and Donahue (2013) recommend that "policy makers at various government levels should clarify jurisdictional food policy connections and define the linkages between municipal food policy efforts and provincial and federal food, agriculture, public health, and other policy domains" (p. 3) and Fiser (2006) cited in Mooney *et al* (2014) "suggests the possibility of constructing a cooperative network or a nested hierarchy of FPCs at neighbourhood, city, and state levels, with each level providing political input/influence most appropriate to scale" (p. 239). Nevertheless, some commentators note that the very nature of local FPCs is to focus on the local level through participatory means (Mooney *et al.*, 2014).

policy development, the work of FPCs could continue filling gaps, without making sustainable contributions.

There are various examples in the context of the United States where local FPCs have taken it upon themselves to advocate and in turn have affected national and state level policy debates. For instance, a report titled *The Role of Local and State Food Policy Councils in Federal Policy Making and Implementation (2015)* documents numerous examples where local FPCs have influenced agri-food policy development at higher scales of government<sup>38</sup>.

A third avenue for FPCs at the local scale to contribute to the scaling up of agri-food policymaking is through information sharing and collaboration with either governmental or non-governmental organizations at multiple scales. Borron (2003) notes that “as more statewide Food Policy Councils form, local councils may stay very much the same, but develop networks with the statewide councils to share ideas, maximize resources, and coordinate regional efforts” (p. 6). A number of examples of FPCs at the local scale sharing information and collaborating with higher scales exist in the FPC literature<sup>39</sup>.

Interview findings also demonstrate that there is currently some collaboration and information sharing taking place between FPCs and higher scales, in addition to a lot of opportunity for further development of this collaboration and recognition by some FPCs for the benefit of coordinating across scales. This recognition appears to have extended beyond the FPC and into the opinions of political leaders, with for instance, the Mayor of Edmonton speaking

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<sup>38</sup> One such example includes the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association that “has been engaging with the growing network of food councils around federal policy with the help of Community Food Strategies, a convener of FPCs in North Carolina” (p. 4). This FPC collaborated with this network to call and send emails and letters to oppose the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act due to its intention to remove states’ right to pass food labeling requirements

<sup>39</sup> For example, MacRae and Donahue (2013) note the case of a federal Member of Parliament for the West Kootenays who was the “biggest political champion...suggesting that [local agri-food policy work] may be raised to the federal level from the local constituencies in which important food policy activity is taking place” (p. 18). Mah *et al.* (2013) discuss how the TFPC has “supported the development and implementation of a regional agri-food strategy, a provincial Local Food Act, and worked with academic partners to develop a proposal for an international municipal food policy learning and research network” (p. 70).

about the need to establish partnerships with surrounding regions and the Alberta government, especially since “the province has a set of tools that are much more robust when it comes to agricultural land preservation”<sup>40</sup>. The DFPC also recognizes the importance of being aware of the policy and legislative framework that it is working within, for instance by listing the specific provincial, regional, and municipal government policies it needs to be aware of<sup>41</sup> in a report.

When asked about whether the EFC collaborates with higher scales, interviewees indicated that at the current stage of the council, it is “participating but it isn’t convening” (P3). For instance, both respondents discussed the most recent event that the EFC hosted, the Mayors’ Food Panel. One respondent explained that while the EFC may have hosted the panel, “it was almost happenstance rather than pro-active” (P4) in that it was initiated by a collaboration between FLEdGE research (a pan-Canadian academic partnership) and Alberta Food Matters (a provincial organization). The EFC was invited to host one night of the three day conference organized by these groups.

In Ontario, both the GWERT and HFC interviewees described their interaction at multiple scales through their involvement with Sustain Ontario at the provincial level<sup>42</sup>, but that they do not collaborate at the federal scale. Participants from both the HFC and the GWERT indicated that in 2015 these FPCs partnered with Sustain Ontario to host an event in Guelph to share information, discuss Food Strategies, and build connections. A GWERT respondent described Sustain Ontario as a good avenue for FPCs to have their voices heard at the provincial level:

[Sustain Ontario] is more successful at getting policymakers in the room from the provincial level just because of the pull they have – it is in Toronto which is where

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<sup>40</sup> The mayor spoke with other mayors from surrounding regions at a Mayor’s Food Panel hosted by the EFC in Feb 2017

<sup>41</sup> the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act; the Region of Durham Agricultural Strategy; and Official Plans, local zoning, and by-laws (“Durham Food System Environmental Scan”).

<sup>42</sup> an independent non-profit that works on collaborative policy and advocacy at the provincial scale

Queen's Park is, so they have some of these [food policy] conversations...so when [FPCs] sit on one of those networks you can see O.K. this is how we might be able to engage the people we need to engage – as a group of FPCs (P5).

GWFRT interviewees also explained that because the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is located in the City of Guelph, it was convenient for the FPC to have conversations with this provincial organization. However, conversations were the extent of this collaboration:

the great thing about being in Guelph was that just down the street is the Ministry of Agriculture so we did make some calls out to get some people who worked in provincial food policy on here. And they were willing to chat with us but never willing to sit on the table. And to be perfectly honest they just didn't see it as their role because their mandate is provincial and here we are – a small municipal group (P7).

A fourth method for local FPCs to participate in multi-scalar agri-food policy governance is through supportive financial schemes that upper scales of government could offer<sup>43</sup>. MacRae and Donahue (2013) demonstrated that food policy initiatives in British Columbia “proliferated rapidly when the province made ‘community food security’ a core public health function” and that “the pace accelerated when the BC Ministry of Health earmarked and began to deliver funds to health authorities to support community food action initiatives and food policy groups as part of its food security agenda” (p. 22). The BC government support is contrasted with the province of Ontario, with initiatives in the latter being “driven less by provincial initiatives and more from networking across interested Ontario municipalities” (MacRae and Donahue, 2013, p. 22). This demonstrates that the impetus for food policy initiatives may shift to different scales depending on if higher scales of government provide support, but that support from the provincial scale can spur the development of FPCs in the province.

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<sup>43</sup> One example, discussed in Harper *et al.* (2009) is the success of a Farm to School Project that expanded to reach 17 school districts throughout the state of New Mexico thanks to funding from the New Mexico Department of Agriculture and the USDA's Federal State Marketing and Improvement Program (p. 19).

Interview findings demonstrate that FPCs in Ontario have received funding from the provincial government through various means, however much like these organizations' general funding situation, funding from the province has been sporadic<sup>44</sup>. However an interesting perspective that came from an interview with the DFPC is that “when [FPCs] get funding from [for instance] the Greenbelt Foundation, [the FPC] interacts with the bodies around the greenbelt and the stewardship of greenbelt lands and things like that” (P9). Therefore the interactions that occur between funder and funded indicates an avenue for further collaboration to occur between the local FPC level and higher scales.

Interviewees from each FPC indicated that increasing collaboration with higher scales is something to consider in the future, but that their current organizational capacity is an impediment. An EFC member stated “I would say that the scale is local in Edmonton. We have had a few conversations and decided to keep our scope to the city...it's too big to go beyond that. Maybe in the future, but for now it's just Edmonton” (P3). This participant continued, “if you don't have proper resourcing at least to get things off the ground, it's hard to take it to the next level, to scale up right?” (P3).

Some respondents indicated that the focus of a FPC is and should be at the local level. One member from the DFPC indicated that the FPC could not spare the fee to have membership with Sustain Ontario, and that even if it did, it would likely put that money elsewhere. A HFC respondent stated that “[collaborating at higher scales] is not a priority. There is already so much work. I think the role of a FPC is to act locally really” (P1). This respondent explained “I think

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<sup>44</sup> For instance, one participant from the GWERT noted that “OMAFRA might not see it as their role or maybe the people that need to be connected to them are just not....also once the Local Food Fund evaporated, that probably slowed down some of the momentum of the work that was happening” (P7). The HFC received funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care through a grant to develop its Community Garden Policy Scan. Additionally, a DFPC member mentioned that they received funding from the Greenbelt Foundation during the initial stages of the DFPC's creation, but interviewees indicated that they have not received funding directly from the province.

it's more so the capacity issue. I think it would be great – but if we have to focus on something...then it would be the local issues” (P1). Similar responses came out of interviews with the GWFRT, with one respondent mentioning that the FPC could not afford the fee for Sustain Ontario, and indeed, that “I think our account actually has zero dollars in it right now” (P7). Another member responded “well we didn’t know how the provincial scale support and solidarity could give us the kind of capacity and support that the FPC needed at the local level” (P6). Therefore while collaboration with higher scales is something that FPCs may like to do and have done so intermittently, FPC capacity has hindered their ability to do so. Some FPCs have had more opportunity to do so and there is still room for growth, however it appears that this may depend on funding, timing, and capacity. As one GWFRT respondent explained “we were always hoping that something would happen [at the provincial level]” (P7).

Two interviewees were optimistic that collaboration at various scales will happen in the future, especially as FPCs develop, expand, and show their worth: “I’m really confident that more collaboration is going to take place and also that as the EFC sort of proves its role and its position, others will see us as leaders in a very specific area around policy and engagement and will come to us with opportunities” (P4). A DFPC member described the need to be ‘ready’ for when higher bodies of government begin working holistically on agri-food systems policy. This member opined that:

we need to make sure that if provincial and federal planning bodies decide to go forward with developing a food policy, they need to understand that there are groups that can inform them, groups that are already working in communities across the country...the people around the DFPC table are the ones who can tell you what you need to know about the food system in Durham.....and [as a FPC] we need to make sure that when provincial and federal governments work on food policy, that they understand the need to talk to the people already doing it locally (P9).

Members from the EFC and the HFC discussed that while these FPCs may not be collaborating deeply with organizations at higher scales, members are aware of the policy environment. A HFC member stated “we know that there is a food policy being developed so we want to know what is going on there”, and an EFC member explained that “I try to follow Food Secure Canada and I think another food council member went to the [Food Secure] conference in Toronto with her work” (P3).

### **Adaptive Management**

Adaptive management provides a strategy for managing JUG initiatives. Because FPCs deal with the complex policy area of agri-food systems, adaptive management can also provide a strategy for these organizations to work. Adaptive management recognizes the need to create and harness feedback processes between learning and decision-making. Calls for adaptive management have been made in the agri-food policy literature<sup>45</sup> and it has been identified that FPCs “often struggle to design and maintain an effective and adaptive organizational structure” (Harper *et al.*, 2009 cited in Coplen and Cuneo, 2015, p. 3). Therefore adaptive management, a tool that proposes having a plan, assessing the outcomes of that plan, and adjusting the plan accordingly, could prove useful for the work of FPCs, and already has in some cases<sup>46</sup>.

Interviews demonstrate that while FPCs face a number of challenges with respect to funding, capacity, or lack of a political mandate, these organizations continue to work towards developing stronger agri-food systems in their communities. These organizations have evolved since their inception, and have instilled the lessons they have learned from other FPCs into their

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<sup>45</sup> For instance, Hospes and Brons (2016) found that “several authors emphasize that cross-scale and cross-level interaction in and beyond food systems require adaptive governance” (p. 34) and MacRae and Donahue (2013) note that “food projects can be complex” but that over time FPCs can begin to have a stronger effect (p. 15).

<sup>46</sup> Mansfield and Mendes (2013) discuss how over the past 20 years, the TFPC has adapted to the ever-changing context with which it was working, is continuously involving and innovating, and has experienced ebbs and flows over the years.

practices. However, the challenges facing the GWFRT, including the context with which it operated, became too great for the organization to bounce-back and adapt. Leaders left with no replacements, there was high turn-over in membership, a more prominent food organization took precedence in the community, and there were very limited resources available.

The DFPC, HFC, and EFC have adapted their organizational structure in response to what was and was not working. The HFC is currently in the process of transitioning to change their recruitment model, for example. A DFPC respondent explained that the organization adapted its structure to the Constellation Model because the previous model did not allow the organization to be flexible to the issues that might arise. The DFPC has changed its recruitment process over the years, as discussed in the element *deliberative and strategic focus on collaboration*. One member stated that “over the years there have certainly been times where we have taken a huge step back and said ‘O.K. let’s look at what we have done collectively and let’s get back on track to meet our mandate. Over the years there was a lot of reflection” (P9).

An EFC member discussed how it has also frequently reflected on its organizational structure, and continues to reflect on where the organization might fit within the agri-food governance system. This respondent stated that “that’s a constant topic of discussion of the food council... ‘what is our role?’” (P3). While this could be viewed in a negative light, in terms of FPC members not having a sense of purpose, it can also be viewed positively in that the EFC hopes to remain relevant and adapt to the ever-evolving policy context. This EFC member asked the rhetorical questions, “will the EFC continue to be an arm of the city? Will it one day become its own autonomous group? There is value in both of these models” (P3). These questions indicate that the role of FPCs is not static and that these organizations are always evolving.

Indeed adapting is necessary to remain relevant in the ever-changing agri-food policy landscape<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> For example, the Portland-Multnomah FPC did not respond to the context in which it was operating, with the City of Portland acknowledging that the FPC “was operating in a different food environment than when it had been conceived a decade ago” (Coplen and Cuneo, 2015, p. 12).

**Table 4: Summary of Research Findings**

<b>LEGEND</b>	<b>Secondary literature: Yes</b> FPCs: demonstrating this element	<b>Secondary literature: Inconclusive or variable</b> FPCs: working towards / with some challenges	There are barriers to the FPC demonstrating this element	Unknown – insufficient data
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Element	Key Characteristics	FPC literature notes importance of element	Is there evidence that FPCs are (generally) implementing the element?	Edmonton Food Council	Durham Food Policy Council	Guelph-Wellington Food Roundtable	Halton Food Council
Mandate from the Political Level	Endorsement to provide political legitimacy of FPC	There are varying opinions on the extent to which FPCs should have a relationship with government	FPCs have disparate relationships with government – some having a clear mandate, others being completely independent (see MacRae and Donahue, 2013)	Was a strategic direction from a City policy, has a clear mandate from the political level	Food Charter endorsement, and some indication that the region uses the charter to justify agri-food policy actions. But Council has ‘not been an ally’	Endorsement of food charter <i>only</i> on paper; aside from that, very weak political mandate	Endorsement of food charter, but insufficient data collected to make a valid assessment as to whether there is a ‘true’ mandate
Leadership at Multiple Levels	Leaders that facilitate collaboration, maintain stability of the FPC, have the ability to think broadly	Sources often refer to leaders as individuals who ‘champion’ an agri-food issue within a FPC	There are many instances where leaders have played a valuable role in contributing to the effectiveness of FPCs (see MacRae and Donahue, 2013)	Chief Planner was a leader in setting up the EFC	Core set of community leaders that have maintained stability of the FPC	Initially, however many leaders left and were not replaced	Insufficient data available
A Call to Action or Rallying Point	A mission statement or focus point that helps to create a culture of collaboration and inspire joined-up working	It helps to foster “organizational motivation, cross-sectoral understanding, and the introduction of food systems approaches to municipalities” and helps “galvanize diverse actors, set a vision for their actions, and helps leverage additional resources” (MacRae and Donahue 2013)	Many FPCs have a call to action (see MacRae and Donahue, 2013)	In addition to a strong mission statement, a Food Charter has been developed and published. EFC is connected to the planning department.	In addition to a strong mission statement a Food Charter has been developed and published. DFPC is unique in that it has aligned with the Durham Region Roundtable on Climate change.	In addition to a strong mission statement a Food Charter has been developed and published. GWERT was tied to the regional public health department.	In addition to a strong mission statement a Food Charter has been developed and published. HFC is supported by the regional public health and planning departments.

Deliberate and Strategic Focus on Collaboration	Creation of a new whole, work in new ways, members are mutually dependent with a high degree of trust through relationship building, all relevant actors need to be included	Sources agree that a focus on collaboration is important for the work of FPCs, with some commentators arguing it is the purpose. The literature especially focuses on the element the importance of including a balance of stakeholders from agri-food systems	Researchers have noted that collaboration is “the most fundamental contribution of food policy initiatives is the creation of opportunities” (MacRae and Donahue, 2013), and that FPCs “create <i>democratic spaces for convergence in diversity</i> ” (Harper et al., 2009, p. 7).	Three of seven activities listed under the EFC’s mandate incorporate collaboration and making connections, interview data indicate diversity in membership, and interdependency of members	Strong relationships and support from member organizations and community. Some barriers to collaboration with tensions between the FPC and the regional public health department	Issues with inclusivity – difficulty recruiting people with different interests and knowledge. The GWFRRT did not have farmers or producers, and was slanted to social justice.	As noted on their website, one of the roles of the HFC is to network and educate by building new partnerships and enhancing networks between existing food system stakeholders in Halton
Dedicated resources with flexible implementation	Funding, staff, flexible implementation	There is agreement that FPCs need to have sufficient funding and resources to operate effectively and achieve their goals and mandate	Focus is generally on the relationship between funding and FPC association with government; however funding/resources appear to be a central point of concern, although the extent of the issue has not been systematically examined	Despite having a relatively consistent source of funding and a full-time staff support, the FPC does not receive a dedicated operating budget	Funding and resources are piecemeal and inconsistent	Funding and resources were an issue, especially as members from different agencies left the roundtable. Little capacity to apply for new funding	Funding and resources are an issue. Although there is a staff member, contract based. Great amount of time/resources spent on applying for funding.
Training and skill development	Training to foster new leaders, technical and soft skills to better collaborate	Essential to foster strong leadership and internal capacity of FPCs while also helping to build the stability/sustainability	Existing literature has not explicitly assessed FPCs in light of this element	EFC has held or participated in events to not only improve members’ capacity but also various city staff.	Informally encouraged training and skill development through the process of being involved and working with and learning from other members.	Attempts of training and capacity development failed due to high turn-over rate of the FPC	Skill development happens through member participation at conferences (e.g. Food secure Canada past conference in Toronto), including the food summit organized by the HFC itself.
Information sharing	Freely sharing information and ideas, technology can assist. Four pathways (within FPCs, across FPCs, with government, and with the public)	Several authors discuss four types of pathways that FPCs can share information: within FPCs; across FPCs; between the FPCs and government; and with the public	Several authors demonstrate the different pathways that FPCs share information	Demonstrates all four pathways of information sharing; acts as a mini ‘think-tank’ to the City; shares information with other cities etc.	Shares information with government, the public, and other members within the organization; also shares information with external organizations	Shared information with government, the public, and other members within the organization	Shares information with government, the public, other members, and other FPCs across Ontario
Decentralized control at the bottom	Ability for lower levels to make important decisions	Researchers have suggested that FPCs should have a multifunctional	Several authors have noted that FPCs are inherently focused on multiple objectives and sitting outside of	A lot of decision-making power at the sub-committee level; good balance of decentralized decision-making in this	Use of the Constellation model, good balance of decentralized	Very decentralized, with 30 to 50 members at one point in time;	working groups encouraged to include members of the public, further decentralizing control

		character and should remain decentralized	bureaucratic structures (see Blay-Palmer 2009; Schiff 2007; Mansfield & Mendes 2013)	level and accountability to the whole	decision-making in the sub-committees and accountability to the whole	completely open doors, and consensus decision-making	
Accountability and Incentive Mechanisms	Accomplishes tasks together, avoids undermining the common interest, accountability to the organization (the new whole, i.e. the FPC)	Commentators recommend including the various aspects of this element in the structure of FPCs	Existing literature has not explicitly assessed FPCs in light of this element	Shared outcome targets with the City through the <i>fresh</i> strategy; roles and responsibilities defined in ToR; staggered leadership terms	Food Charter holds members accountable and is the 'community's document', displaying democratic accountability; various other internal mechanisms to hold members accountable (see p. 31)	Failed to attract and retain members; too decentralized and 'loosey goosey'; fear of losing volunteers prevented FPC to instill accountability measures etc. (see p. 57)	Members noted that the Food Charter holds the HFC accountable.
Interaction at multiple scales	Extent of collaboration, coordination, at various governmental scales	There are proponents on either side of the various aspects of scaling up FPC governance	Several examples of FPCs collaborating and interacting at higher scales	Participating at higher scales, but not leading collaborations; lots of potential for future interaction, as the EFC develops	Strong awareness of multiple scales of governance and prepared for a national food policy; due to limited resources, prefers to expend finances on local collaborations instead	Member of Sustain Ontario until ran out of funding for membership fee, collaborated to host an event with this organization; conversations with OMAFRA but no government official as member of FPC	Membership and collaboration/information sharing with Sustain Ontario, but collaboration at higher scales is not a priority
Adaptive management	Considers feedbacks, is willing to adjust based on results at various stages	several authors indicate a need for FPCs to adaptively manage, noting its relevance to agri-food policy (FPCs govern complex systems)	TFPC case demonstrating adaptive management, and PMFPC failing to do so	Always reflecting on the role of the FPC, asking questions, flexible, adjusted recruitment process	Adjusted model over many years, often reflect on structure, recruitment process. ex. Brought in Constellation model	Struggled to adapt to leaders leaving, high membership turnover rates, a new agri-food organization taking prominence, and lack of resources	In the process of transitioning and reflecting on current model of governance

## Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

This research paper asked three key questions in regards to how FPCs function and participate in the process of developing and implementing a joined-up governance that works. The first two questions asked whether FPCs demonstrate elements of ‘what works’ in joined-up governance within their own organizations, *and* with other organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) at a horizontal scale. The discussion of each element exemplifies the fact that these two questions are strongly related, and in some cases inextricably linked. In other words, if a FPC is demonstrating any one of these elements, it is also doing so in relation to other organizations. For example, in order for a FPC to demonstrate that it has a ‘call to action or rallying point’ in one aspect, it does so by having a Food Charter and mission statement; the other aspect of this element, a rallying point, generally is demonstrated when a FPC ties its organization to a specific government department or agency. The element ‘deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration’ clearly indicates that working within and between organizations are inextricably linked: secondary literature and each FPC demonstrate that collaboration occurs *between* organizations due to the work of FPCs, as we have shown indeed, especially in the case of the EFC, where they have a role in advising government departments on agri-food system policy (see p. 50 of this research). The discussion of each element highlights that to successfully implement or demonstrate these elements, a FPC must at some level interact and work with external organizations. Therefore the first and second questions are answered together.

The summary of findings displayed in Table 4, p. 68 indicate that the literature has discussed the importance of each element to the work of FPCs, and existing analyses of FPCs have exemplified the fact that these organizations display most elements of ‘what works’ in JUG. However, some studies demonstrate that certain elements are not being displayed by FPCs; for

instance FPCs have varying degrees of a political mandate, and varied success with adaptively managing. Additionally, there is not a significant focus on FPC implementation of the elements ‘training and skill development’ and ‘accountability and incentive mechanisms’ in the literature, and the focus on funding and resources has mainly been centred on the relationship between funding and FPC association with government.

Interview findings indicate that the four FPCs display most elements of JUG, with the EFC displaying these most clearly<sup>48</sup>, and the GWFRT the least clearly<sup>49</sup>. Interestingly, this FPC is no longer active and it appears that there are no intentions to re-instate the organization, indicating that perhaps there is a correlation between FPCs exemplifying the elements of what works in joined-up governance and the success of the organization, though a systematic test would need to be conducted to accurately confirm this finding. The element that FPCs most struggle to demonstrate is having dedicated resources. Even Edmonton that has a fairly consistent source of funding, lacks the flexibility of having its own operating budget. Each of the other three FPCs demonstrated severe challenges with obtaining funding. However there is indication that the EFC, DFPC and HFC are each displaying most of the other elements of what works in joined-up governance<sup>50</sup>.

The third key research question asked whether FPCs are interacting or collaborating with other organizations at various, and more specifically, higher scales. FPC literature indicates that there are various perspectives as to whether FPCs *should* scale up, and there are several

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<sup>48</sup> The EFC demonstrates 8 of 9 elements of JUG related to the first two questions, and demonstrates that although it currently does not have an operating budget dedicated to the FPC, it has consistent funding by means of the *fresh* strategy (see Table 4 , p. 68)

<sup>49</sup> The GWFRT did not have a mandate from the political level, did not have dedicated resources, was unsuccessful at training/skill development, did not have strong accountability and incentive mechanisms, and failed to adapt (see Table 4, p. 68)

<sup>50</sup> DFPC demonstrates 7 of 9 elements of JUG related to the first two questions, and demonstrates that it is working towards the remaining 2 (for example, it is working on developing a better relationship with government to gain a political mandate) See Table , p. 68

examples of FPCs collaborating and interacting at higher scales, especially in the United States. Interview findings demonstrate that while there is limited interaction between FPCs and organizations at higher scales, there is some evidence of such collaboration occurring, and for opportunity for more to occur in the future, especially as FPCs build capacity at the local and regional level. However FPCs indicated that at the moment, capacity to ‘scale up’ is quite limited, particularly due to funding constraints and the inability to pay membership fees, for example. This finding leads into a key observation, that there is often a strong relationship between the various elements of ‘what works’ in JUG.

In other words, the elements of ‘what works’ in joined-up governance are highly connected and interdependent. In the case of all FPCs, every element can influence the ability of an organization to interact at higher scales, since each element provides different capacities. Dedicated resources, as stated, would give FPCs the ability to pay membership fees to organizations at higher scales; a mandate from the political level would give FPCs more legitimacy to interact with organizations at various scales; and if a FPC adaptively manages, it can prove itself at the local scale, and in turn garnish support from higher scales of governance. Here I will provide a few more key situations where the interdependencies of the elements are exemplified in the interview findings. It is clear that the element ‘mandate from the political level’ has provided the EFC with fairly consistent funding (‘dedicated resources’), and the ability to collaborate with government departments. In contrast, the element ‘dedicated resources’ would have enabled the GWFRT to have the capacity to develop its Food Strategy, in turn gathering support from the political level – and in turn earning a ‘mandate from the political level’. Ironically, without a ‘mandate from the political level’, the GWFRT did not have the advantage of receiving dedicated resources, as does the EFC.

Another example is the relationship between ‘deliberate and strategic focus on collaboration’ and ‘accountability and incentive mechanisms’. The former requires that FPCs have a diverse membership and that all relevant actors be included. The latter discusses the need for democratic accountability. The relationship between these two elements are strong, in that when there is diverse membership and relevant actors are included, an organization is accountable to the public. In terms of the DFPC, although this organization focuses on recruiting members who prioritise the FPCs objectives, interviewees emphasized that the Food Charter is the ‘community’s document’, and demonstrated that the FPC reaches out to the public via ‘information sharing’.

A final example where the elements are inter-related involves the trade-offs between ‘decentralization’ and ‘accountability and incentive mechanisms’. The GWFRT is a prime example of this trade-off, where it was entirely open, and did not require members to submit an application to join the roundtable. While this model is highly beneficial for diversity of membership, democratic accountability, and decentralization, it made it difficult for the FPC to hold members accountable to the organization<sup>51</sup>. Because of this trade-off, FPCs must consider how to ensure that power relations within their organization do not hinder community participation<sup>52</sup> and recognize that it itself is a community organization and must be cognisant of the need to be inclusive as possible.

## **Looking Forward: Joined-up Governance**

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<sup>51</sup> Details about this trade-off are discussed in the element ‘accountability and incentive mechanisms’, p. 54

<sup>52</sup> For example, by holding meaningful public participation meetings, allowing the public to join working groups (in the case of HFC), by opening applications to the wider public, and engaging various other community associations etc.

An important question to address is what these findings mean for joined-up governance. If nothing else, this research has demonstrated that the development of FPCs presents an opportunity to explore how joined-up governance as a theory can be applied in practice. More specifically, the elements of analysis provide a useful lens for understanding the work of social network organizations (SNOs) such as FPCs. It has been argued that “for collaboration to be successfully employed as a management strategy, it must move beyond rhetoric and develop a coherent model for action” (Keast and Mandell, 2014, p. 10). I argue that the specific elements included in this research paper prove to be a useful model for conceptualizing the work of FPCs and provide a basis from which these organizations can be managed to better contribute to the joined-up governance of agri-food policy. Moreover, while FPCs have not explicitly been identified as working in a ‘joined-up’ manner, applying joined-up governance to analyse these organizations demonstrates the utility of JUG as a theory and practice.

The relative importance of the elements is also crucial to discuss. As mentioned, there has been “little indication of the relative importance” (Pollitt, 2003, p. 43) of the various elements of ‘what works’ in JUG. While research findings do not provide a clear indication as to the ‘order of importance’ of these elements, there are certainly some conclusions that can be made. First, despite the fact that the DFPC has struggled with funding and obtaining a mandate from the political level, it has managed to demonstrate each of the other elements of what works in JUG, indicating that perhaps strong leaders, collaboration between organizations in the community, and accountability mechanisms are form the basis for stability of the FPC. In contrast, the element ‘training and skill development’ proved to be less important, or at least irrelevant when other elements are not demonstrated. For example, despite the GWFRT’s attempts at building capacity, there were external factors preventing the FPC from grasping the benefits of training

sessions<sup>53</sup>. These findings from this exploratory research begin to demonstrate the relative importance of these elements, although a systematic analysis would need to be conducted to validate and expand.

### **Research Limitations and Further Research**

A number of limitations to the research must be noted. First is the consideration of context. Although it is a strength that FPCs are adapted to their local contexts, it is also an impediment to evaluating and generalizing the findings from any FPC study. Each FPC has different objectives, goals, purposes, and so the governing models implemented will likely vary depending on the local circumstance. It was a goal of this paper to overcome this limitation by teasing apart and expanding on the varying contexts, however it was outside of the scope to complete an in-depth examination of four cases.

The second limitation is with respect to the implicit biases of the interviewees and interviewer. For instance, interviewees from a dissolved FPC or interviewees who have left the organization may be more likely to speak critically about the problems it faced. Another bias to make explicit is the inherent power dynamics within FPCs, like any social network organization. A key question that went beyond the scope of the paper is an assessment of the various power relations between levels and among members of FPCs. There is bound to be power imbalances in an organization that brings together government staff members, academics specializing in agri-food systems issues, health and nutrition experts, interested activists, producers, and consumers which need to be considered in the context of the research findings.

A final limitation is in relation to measurement and indicators. The intention for this research was to explore how FPCs work in relation to a joined-up governance framework. However this exploration was limited by the additional time and resources it would have taken to

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<sup>53</sup> Details about GWERT's training sessions discussed in 'training and skill development', p. 47

establish concrete indicators to accurately measure the extent to which FPCs are demonstrating each element. For instance, each element could become a research paper in itself. Moreover, there are inherent difficulties in measuring ‘collaboration’ as this would be a measurement of a relationship, for example. Measuring a ‘political mandate’ is also difficult to measure, for example, in the GWFRT’s case, it was clear that endorsement of a Food Charter was insufficient, therefore tangible indicators may prove useful for future studies. Perhaps measuring based on members’ perceptions of a mandate, or measuring the amount of funding in relation to other programs/services provided from the political level to the FPC would be appropriate indicators. Therefore while this research provides insight into how FPCs are displaying the elements of what works in JUG, future research could establish a set of indicators to quantify each element in relation to a tangible indicator.

Future research might also include a systematic review of FPCs in terms of how they display the elements of joined-up governance, where such tangible indicators are assessed in light of a greater number of FPCs to better understand their work in light of JUG. While the present analysis is but a snapshot in time, further research could compare individual FPCs over time, evaluating outcomes in relation to the elements demonstrated.

### **Looking Forward: Food Policy Councils**

Between 2000 and 2016, the number of active FPCs has increased 8 fold in Canada and 26 fold in the United States and Canada combined (Sussman and Bassarab, n.d.). As these organizations continue to emerge across North America, there is a need to examine what has worked for existing FPCs and what has not, in order to optimize the contributions these organizations are making to the governance of agri-food systems. The elements of ‘what works’

in joined-up governance provide a framework from which FPCs can reflect on their operating models in order to work better. Schiff (2007) notes that:

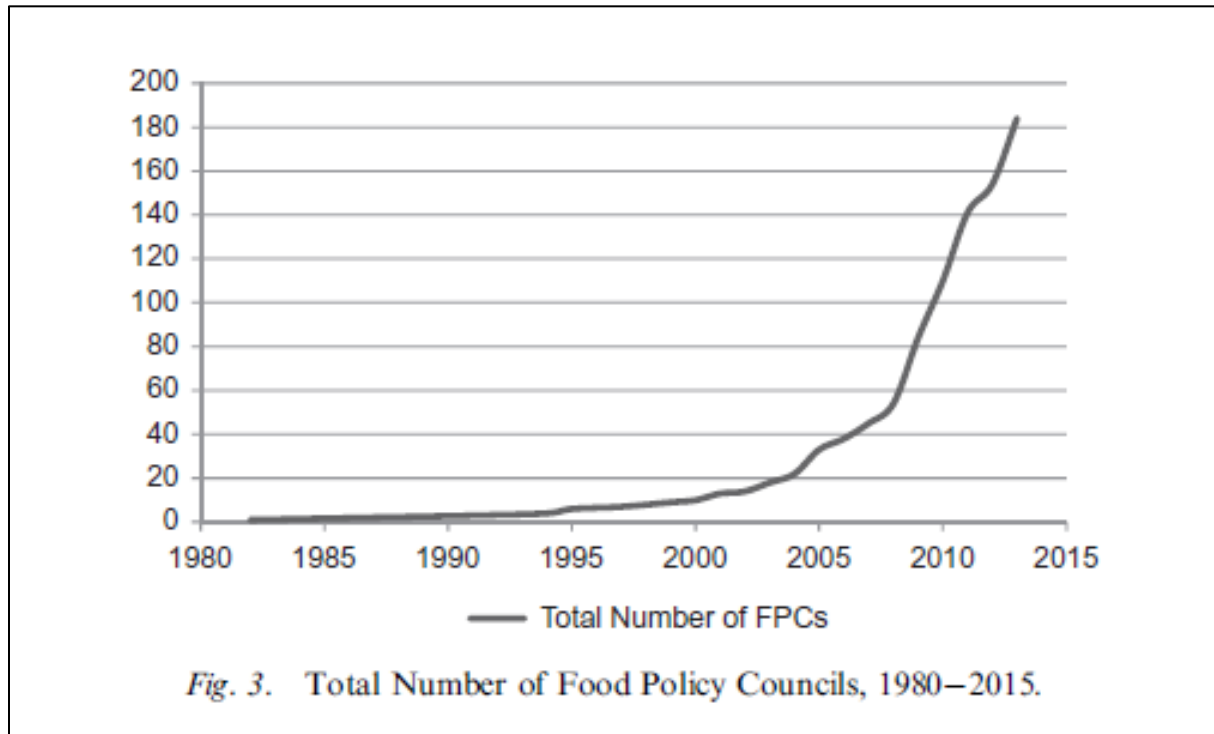
The profiling of FPCs indicates a lack of consensus as to the defining characteristics and approaches necessary for success previously defined by collaboration theory. Despite claims that this variation of structure is a characteristic of FPCs such that they are not ‘one-size-fits-all’ organizations, these variations may be due to the relative youth of the food policy council as a type of organization. This relative youth suggests that the establishment of common characteristics of FPCs, and what might be considered ‘best-practice’, still remains in the process of development.” (p. 131)

Utilizing a joined-up governance lens, this paper has identified and applied a set of elements to FPCs to help conceptualize the work of these organizations, and by doing so has attempted to outline a number of common characteristics that FPCs demonstrate.

It has been argued that “the lack of a coherent national food policy constrains the work of Food Policy Councils by limiting their scope” and that “as FPCs work to open up local policy spaces for food issues, they may also need to consider how to create more national policy space for themselves” (Harper *et al.*, 2009, p. 47). Findings demonstrate that indeed FPCs acknowledge the wider policy frameworks within which they are situated, but that a lack of capacity is a barrier to greater engagement at higher scales. Because this paper has given indication that FPCs are demonstrating elements of joined-up governance, and because there are calls to strengthen FPC processes to increase their contributions to joining-up agri-food policy, it is essential that a national food policy framework recognizes these players. As examined in Chapter 1, globalizing agri-food systems and the nature of agri-food policy, along with the fragmented approach to its governance indicates a need to transform practices. This research has begun to examine the different ways that FPCs exemplify a number of elements that have worked in implementing joined-up governance, to better understand how these organizations can contribute to joining-up agri-food policy governance in Canada.

## Appendices:

### Appendix A: Expansion of Food Policy Councils across North America since 1980



(Mooney et al, 2014, p. 237)

## Appendix B: Key Activities of Food Policy Councils

### ***Halton Food Council***

- 2011: Halton Food Assessment Environmental Scan – explores demographic, economic, health, social and cultural aspects of Halton. Designed to provide a baseline assessment of regional and local food systems, to increase awareness of food system issues and opportunities, and to help prioritize the work of other stakeholders who are working to create regional food security and promote local agriculture and a sustainable food system
- 2011: Halton Community Food Assessment Community Food Programs – environmental scan and inventory of community food programs and services and best or better practices in other jurisdictions
- 2013: Community Garden Policy Scan – HFC retained Dillon Consulting Ltd. To conduct an external scan of academic and grey literature as well as policies, by-laws and regulations adopted by municipalities predominantly in Ontario; used to support community gardening in Halton Region
- Current Goals (2016-2017): food waste (food waste symposium May 2017, creation of a food-waste toolkit for schools); supporting the work of the food security network “Halton Food Security Alliance” on a collective impact project; environmental scan published in November 2016; supporting Pillar B of Halton’s Agriculture Strategy, linking food and health; developing a food strategy; supporting community gardens

### ***Edmonton Food Council***

- Lending a ‘supportive voice’ to policy initiatives under *fresh* (ex. Backyard hens)
- The Measurement Committee has been looking into how to measure both the progress of the food council and then more broadly the progress of food in the city
- Putting on events (ex. For World Food Day, ‘Let’s talk Food: Mayor’s panel at city hall’)
- Communications group publishes a blog to engage residents of Edmonton
- Survey residents to gauge perceptions of local food

### ***Durham Food Policy Council***

- Early policy recommendation around urban development in North Pickering and its impact on watersheds and agricultural lands; presented to the Ontario Municipal Board regarding the protection of food systems and that food systems need to be considered in planning
- *2013 Durham Food Environmental Scan – a report from the Durham Food Council.* Presents a scan and analysis of the local food system in Durham, providing an overview of local food systems initiative and relevant policies
- *2016 Digging for a Just and Sustainable Food System* - a partnership between DFPC, Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- 2016-2017 Research goals: urban agriculture policy scan; seek further funding for research and other projects; position paper on Climate Change Adaptation and the Food System (to champion importance of food system issues at the Durham Region Roundtable on Climate Change); Durham-only data on food production and export (e.g. produce grown for consumption, % exported, etc.)

- 2016-2017 other goals: ‘local stories’ to make the DFPC more visible; learning from other jurisdictions to implement best practices
- Supporting the members who sit on the Climate Change Roundtable and members who attend other community events or conferences in other cities etc.

### ***Guelph-Wellington Food Roundtable***

- Food Access Working Group, formed in cooperation with the Task Force for Poverty Elimination and the GWFRT produced two comprehensive manuals: a food access guide for people of low income and a ‘how-to’ Collective Kitchen manual.
- 2010: prior to the municipal election, GWFRT hosted community talks about food and invited candidates to speak about food issues (20 candidates attended and 100 community members attended)
- Between 2010 and 2013 several community based research projects were conducted in partnership with the University of Guelph Research Shop to better understand the existing local emergency food system by creating a demographic profile of service users, identifying what is working with the current system, as well as areas for improvement
- 2014: webinar tells the story of how the community of Guelph is changing the way it thinks about food security through community-academic collaboration
- Early 2015: ‘building a food strategy for Wellington and Guelph’ – two public events (put on by the GWFRT and Ontario Public Interest Research Group for community members to ‘determine a regional food policy, investment and development priorities, and begin the process of developing a community-led Food Strategy’)
- Through the roundtable, a lot of Guelph’s community gardens came about

## Appendix C: Map of Food Policy Council Locations



## Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

### Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire/Guide

The purpose of this interview is to collect contextual information to support the analysis of food policy councils (FPC) in the Canadian context.

This interview will be approximately 50 mins in length, and if you agree, I would like to record it. The recorded interview will be transcribed or written out word for word. However your name will not be recorded on any interview or written documents, a pseudonym will be used in its place. If at any stage in the interview you do not wish to continue or you would prefer to stop recording, please feel free to let me know and we will stop.

The findings from this interview will be used for my Master's major research project and potentially for journal publications but all efforts will be made for maintaining your anonymity.

**The goal of this interview is to understand the functioning, membership, impacts, strategies and objectives of the food policy council the interviewee represents. Another aim is to identify the opportunities and obstacles or difficulties that your organization is facing to fulfill its mandate and especially to influence and help in the design or implementation of public policies related to food systems in Canada.**

*\*break the ice with less threatening questions first; give background about myself and the project and my interest in food policy councils/governance\**

*\*\*\* Based on the information that is confirmed before the interview, some of the questions will not be included, except if there is the need for cross-referencing or confirming some ambiguities.*

#### **Organizational Structure and Basic Information**

1. How many full-time staff does your FPC have?
2. What is your position or role in the organization/committee/FPC of [CITY] and since when have you been working (part time or full time) here (or volunteering)?
3. Do you know when the FPC was established and by whom (who or what organizations initiated)?
4. Can you discuss briefly the context in which the FPC was established in your municipality/region, or the reasons why it was created (citizens' initiatives, response to a report, specific problem/policy...), crisis, specific need?
5. How would you describe your organization, its mission and what it is doing? (non-profit, government agency). Based on this, what would you say is the most important work or contributions that the FPC is making that was not covered by any other organization before?

6. a) According to a report by the Canadian Agri-food Policy Institute, your FPC has been categorized as [DEPENDS]. Would you agree with this categorization?  
b) Why or why not?
7. How is the FPC connected to government, or is it? (independent, created by executive order, other). Do you feel it is essential or useful to work with gvtal agencies (or would be beneficial if very little to have more, or better to have other partners)?  
a) What is your funding source(s) and if there are many, can you explain which one is the most important in your view?  
b) Do the source(s) of funding need to be renegotiated every year or are they recurrent and stable? (grants, government funded, other)
8. a) How are FPC members/participants recruited, selected and/or appointed?  
b) Are there any specific criteria, procedures, or need for representation of various sectors for example, that the Council is pursuing?
9. a) How and who decides what to work on, who does what, or what are the priorities?  
b) How is power distributed in your FPC? (is there a steering committee, executive council, what model of decision-making do you use, etc.)
10. Could you share copies of your organizational documents? (Charter, organizational chart and/or a list of subcommittees and working groups, a description of your decision-making processes, an application for prospective council members, a list of the types of stakeholders the council is meant to represent, examples or list of projects and initiatives, leaflets, etc.)

### **Council Make-up and Activities**

1. a) Who sits on the council? (which food system actors are represented?)  
b) Do you know if and how the composition of the FPC has changed over time?
2. What are the FPC goals and priorities, and have they changed since the creation of the Council? (short and long-term);  
a) Who or what mechanism holds the Council accountable for achieving its goals and objectives?  
b) Are you, or do you need to use some methods or metrics to evaluate your work and determine whether the FPC is successful, or is it done by an external organisation—may be none, make sure not to make them feel “guilt”?
3. a) What policy recommendations have your FPC made and through which process or mechanism--discuss?  
b) Have any of these policies been enacted? If so, which ones and how, and if not why not?
4. a) What are your FPC’s other accomplishments and activities? (reports, policy briefs, campaigns, programs started, etc.).  
b) Does the FPC do any training or skill development activities?  
c) Does the FPC participate in any information sharing activities? If so, what types of information is shared, how, and with whom is it shared?  
d) To what extent does your FPC carry out advocacy or ‘movement-building’ work?

5. In your opinion, how successful has the current organizational model been in achieving the FPC's objectives?
  - a. What unique contributions or advantages of FPCs contribute to its success in comparison to other types of organizations like government only, or non-governmental NGO's or at different levels of government (i.e. provincial or national organizations)
6. In what ways, if any, does your FPC interact with municipal, federal or provincial governments?
7. In what ways, if any, does your FPC interact with CSOs at the municipal, provincial or national level? (knowledge sharing, finances, funding, influence, accountability etc.). Are you aware if there was an explicit discussion and decision-making process about this particular model of governance between NGO or civil society actors and the (municipal) government?
8. Are there any private sector participants or partners as well? If not, why not? If so, who are they and what are their specific role in the FPC?
9. In regards to your FPC's interaction with municipal/local, provincial or federal governments, and CSOs at multiple levels, how could collaboration improve across levels or is increased collaboration even desired by the FPC? (Or you think it's better to focus on local level only?) Are there any barriers to this type of collaboration?
10. Who are your most important allies, or partners to fulfill your mission and reach your main objectives?
11. What have been the FPC's limitations?
  - a. Are there issues you have chosen not to address?
  - b. Have any measures or initiatives been implemented to try to address these limitations?
12. Lastly, is there any specific person, or documents, that you would recommend that could be useful to deepen my understanding of the role and functioning of FPC in Canada?

Thank you very much for your precious time and help with my research project. This is extremely appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any doubt or would like some clarification or information later on.

## **Appendix E: Information Letter and Consent Form**



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## Exploring the role and contribution of Food Policy Councils in Canada Interview *LETTER OF INFORMATION*

Dear Food Policy Council representative:

I am writing today because I would like to ask you for an interview for my Master's major research paper at the University of Ottawa regarding your involvement with the food policy council. Below you will find information regarding the interview.

**Purpose of study:** My research project seeks to better understand the functioning, impacts, strategies and objectives of food policy councils in the Canadian context in order to highlight some of the opportunities, obstacles or difficulties that they are facing in meeting their objectives. Another aim is to identify who are the participants/members and what is the formal (legal status as non-profit for example) or informal nature of food policy councils in various regions of the country. The information collected will be analyzed and used for my Master's research paper and potentially in journal publications and presentations to different audiences.

**Confidentiality and anonymity:** This is an anonymous interview. You will be given a pseudonym when the interview is transcribed. To further protect your anonymity, I will attempt to avoid using any sensitive information, or information that may give away your identity. If you wish to be identified as a source of information, your name will be included only if you have given explicit consent. You will also have the opportunity to review the transcription of the interview, which will be sent to you in a password protected and encrypted Word document, if you so choose. The data will only be used by the investigator and will be saved on a computer with a protected password for a period of 5 years and stored in my supervisor's office. At the end of the conservation period, the data will be properly and securely destroyed.

**Voluntary participation and withdrawal:** Your participation in this study is very appreciated and useful. It is also voluntary, which means you may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions and may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable or do not wish to continue. You may also choose to not have your interview recorded or have the recording be stopped at any point in time during the interview. You are also entitled to have your interview data withdrawn from the study.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the study, you may contact the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Ottawa at 550 Cumberland Street, Room 159, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada, 613-562-5387 or by email at [ethics@uOttawa.ca](mailto:ethics@uOttawa.ca)

**Consent:** In signing the attached consent form you are confirming that you have understood the information provided. Please sign the form if you agree to participate voluntarily in this study.

Thank you for your time and for considering participating in this research.

Sincerely  
Sylvie La Forge,



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slafo024@uottawa.ca

M.A. Candidate, Public and International Affairs

**Exploring the role that Food Policy Councils bring to the table for Joined-up Governance of food in Canada**

**INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM**

I acknowledge that the purpose and topic of this research has been explained to me in a clear and comprehensible manner and that any questions I have asked have been answered and clarified. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation in this study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter of information provided by Sylvie La Forge and agree to participate in this interview.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I have given explicit consent to have my name used as a source of information in the paper. I acknowledge that no paper will be published without my explicit and prior permission.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to allow this interview to be audio-recorded and to be saved on a secure computer drive with a password. I understand that this recording will be transcribed and securely saved, and destroyed once the research is completed.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sylvie La Forge

M.A. Candidate Public and International Affairs - University of Ottawa

Email: slafo024@uottawa.ca

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Research supervisor

Marie- Josée Massicotte – Associate Professor

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