



# Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance

# 2022

## Annual Report



As we look back on 2022, we are overwhelmed with pride for our Syracuse, Onondaga County, and Onondaga Nation community. In collaboration with our amazing partners, SOFSA has accomplished many feats over the past year. This Annual Report is a celebration of the ways in which we prioritize interconnectedness, sharing of resources, deep listening, and community engagement.

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# Membership & Participation

Growth can occur in many different forms, but one of the best examples of our growth is in our membership. Anyone who eats, grows, or loves food in Syracuse, Onondaga County, and Onondaga Nation is welcome as a member of SOFSA. The following are some of the ways we measure our membership:

**516**  
Facebook  
and  
Instagram  
followers



**357**

listserv &  
newsletter  
subscribers



**219**

individuals who  
participated in one or  
more SOFSA-hosted  
event this past year



# Network Building and Community Engagement

A primary component of SOFSA's mission is to strengthen networks, build relationships, and deepen community connections. This aspect of the work takes many forms, but our Open Meetings, committee meetings, site visits, social meet-ups, affinity groups, and other events are all ways to get engaged.

## In 2022...

We held 4 Open Meetings, with 7 Featured Speakers total who taught us about various topics in our local food system.

We hosted 7 Coffee Clubs at various locally-owned coffee shops and cafes throughout Syracuse and Onondaga County.

We created intentional space for LGBTQ+ identifying folks at 4 Pride @ SOFSA meetups and for Black, Brown, Indigenous, Asian and other non-white folks at 7 Chop, Chat, Chill meetups.

We participated in, co-facilitated, and promoted these other amazing events:

- Upstate New York Food Policy Council Convening
- Double Up Food Bucks Kick-off Celebration at the Downtown Coop at Salt City Market
- Lender Symposium for Social Justice
- Health Beyond Weight in Food Justice Learning Opportunity
- Syracuse Grows Resource Drive Community Cleanup at Pioneer Homes Umoja Garden
- Tree Planting with SUFFP & OEC
- Collective Wayfinding: Growing a Justice-Based Organization from the Start with the Food Systems Leadership Network
- Valley Plaza Farmstand Kick-off
- Advisory Board / CL / Staff / Intern get-together facilitated by Jamila Walida Simon
- Site Visit to CNY Regional Market



# Earned & Self-Published Media

As a relatively new and growing organization, sharing our accomplishments and uplifting our partners achievements are key components of our work. In the past year, SOFSA was featured in the media 6 times. Additionally, we self-published several stories on the SOFSA blog highlighting important issues and stories from our work.

We published a Statement of Solidarity in Response to the 2022 Buffalo Tops Market Massacre and submitted it as a Letter to the Editor.

We also wrote about the success of the Restaurant Resiliency program and SOFSA's role in connecting the Food Bank of CNY and Salt City Market to make this happen.

## SOFSA's Statement of Solidarity in Response to the 2022 Buffalo Tops Massacre

by [Avalon Gupta VerWiebe](#) | May 26, 2022 | [Announcements, Reflections](#)



## NY State Program Supports Restaurants & Families in Onondaga County

by [Maura Ackerman](#) | Jun 21, 2022 | [Announcements, Successes & Celebrations](#)

Two highlights from our Policy & Planning work include the results of our 2022 Candidate Questionnaire as well as the coalition-wide letter supporting the implementation of ReZone Syracuse. You can read more about both of these policy efforts on page 6.



## SOFSA Letter Supporting Implementation of ReZone Syracuse

by [Maura Ackerman](#) | Aug 2, 2022 | [Announcements, Food Policy](#)

The implementation of ReZone with a focus on equitable food access in the Valley Plaza is a specific focus on SOFSA's drafted Policy Platform.

We also worked with a local reporter to connect our partner Monu Chhetri to highlight the work of her organization, Deaf New American Advocacy.

# Storytelling

Beyond our partnerships with media, and articles published on our blog, we also maintain Facebook and Instagram pages. Our social media is not only used to promote our work and the work of our partners, but also to tell the story of what we do. In 2022, we published 40 Friday Features and Friday Inspirations, highlighting work done by our staff, interns, Advisory Board members, Community Liaisons, and community partners.



Additionally, we piloted 5 Community Listening Sessions with 4 different organizations. These sessions were attended by over 48 participants, who received gift cards for their time and stories. Through these stories, we learned about the visions that individuals and organizations working in and with marginalized communities have for change in their food systems.

# Funding

Coalition building like we are cultivating at SOFSA does not happen in a silo. Another primary goal of SOFSA is to help folks who have ideas, dreams, and visions access the resources they need to achieve their goals. In 2022, SOFSA helped secure over 1.6 million dollars in funding for our partners through grant writing assistance, letters of support, and partner matchmaking. These funds will be used for projects supporting farming, food access, and food sovereignty in the Syracuse, Onondaga County, and Onondaga Nation area.

In addition, SOFSA secured over 1.1 million dollars in funds from the USDA and other organizations to support our network-building efforts and enhance collaboration across our region's food system. This crucial funding will allow SOFSA's work to continue and grow over the next three years.

As part of our efforts to share abundance across our network, SOFSA's Fundraising Committee established a goal that 15% of any fundraising efforts for SOFSA would go back out to partners. In 2022, we exceeded this goal by distributing 19% of funds raised by SOFSA to partners in the community. We've also worked with our partners at academic institutions to begin tracking this in their own fund-seeking to continually reinvest in the important efforts happening at all levels of our region's food system.

**\$1.6 million**  
secured for our  
partners and  
projects

**1st**  
in the Nation  
to be awarded  
two USDA-RFSP  
awards

**19%**  
of funds  
distributed  
to SOFSA's  
partners

# Policy and Planning

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy found that for every dollar invested by grant makers and other donors in community engagement and policy, there was an average return of \$115 to that community. With that fact in mind, one of our main directives is local, regional, state, and even federal policy change to create the conditions for a thriving food system in the Syracuse-Onondaga area.

Over the past year, SOFSA facilitated six Policy & Planning Committee meetings, with participation from community members and various elected officials. As we completed another election cycle, we began work on SOFSA's first Policy Platform. This platform — drafted with support from community members, experts, elected officials, and SOFSA's Equity, Inclusion, and Accountability Committee — focuses on:

- 1** Supporting ReZone Syracuse with attention to increasing food access and expanded opportunities for urban agriculture
- 2** Aiding the CNY Regional Market's campaign to update its aging infrastructure
- 3** Advocating for Universal School Meals and increased Farm-to-Institution purchasing
- 4** Increasing state money budgeted for Double Up Food Bucks

SOFSA also completed our second annual candidate questionnaire focusing on food systems issues. We received responses from 7 different candidates representing three different political parties running for office on the local, statewide, and Congressional level.





# Gratitude & Reciprocity

We are grateful to all our partners, funders, and everyone who contributed – in dollars and in action – to our work in 2022.

## Partnerships

We owe our achievements to the vision, passion, and contributions of our many partners. Without them, we could not have accomplished all that we have this year.

In particular, SOFSA's fiscal sponsor – **Syracuse Grows** – has been key to our successes together.

## Leadership

We especially want to thank our Advisory Board and team of Community Liaisons. Their expertise and effort shaped our 2022 operations and strategies.

Julia Carboni  
Brandy Colebrook  
Jeremy DeChario  
Manika Gautam  
Christina Hudson Kohler  
Estelí Jimenez-Soto  
David Knapp  
Jessi Lyons  
Emilija Postolovska  
Peter Ricardo  
Rachael Ristau  
Jonnell Robinson  
Rachel Murphy Viens  
Brittany Taylor  
Caitlin Toomey  
Rhonda Vesey  
Curtis Waterman  
Mable Wilson



Support SOFSA!

## In-Kind Support

Our systems change work would be impossible without community support. We are grateful to those who generously provided no-cost services, leaving more funds for SOFSA's mission-oriented efforts.

- Bousquet Holstein PLLC
- Dennis Brady, CPA
- M.S. Hall & Associates
- Syracuse University, Maxwell MPA students
- Field & Fork Network

## Funding

Thank you to our donors and all those who supported SOFSA's work this year.

- United States Department of Agriculture
- Central New York Community Foundation
- Onondaga County Agriculture Council
- Allyn Family Foundation
- Food Systems Leadership Network
- Gifford Foundation

To help SOFSA expand and deepen our impact in 2023, scan the QR code or visit the link to donate:

[www.donorbox.org/support-sofsa](http://www.donorbox.org/support-sofsa).

# Join Our Community!

There are so many great ways to engage with our network. You can participate in a working group or committee, attend our monthly Social Hours or affinity group meet-ups, join a site visit or special event; or simply just reach out to discover the best place for you to plug in. Be sure to also check out our regularly updated community calendar to find events and volunteer opportunities throughout the CNY region!

Join our listserv and follow our social media to stay up to date on our projects and projects our partners are leading!



**Get Involved**



 @syrfoodalliance

 <https://facebook.com/syrfoodalliance/>