

# **Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture - VCPSA Phase III (2006-2009)**

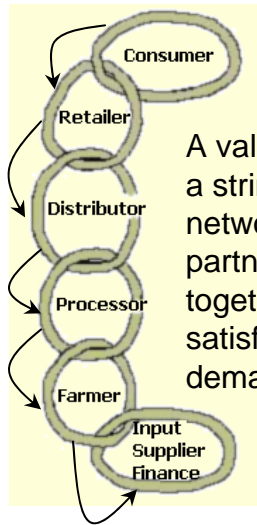
**Mission: Foster value chains that provide economic, social, and ecological benefits to Iowa farmers, communities, and landscapes.**



# Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture (VCPSA)



## What is a Value Chain?



A value chain is a string or network of partners working together to satisfy market demands

## Accomplishments

- ❖ Four university-community working groups have become key places to bring together technical/financial resources in addressing value chain challenges
- ❖ Worked with ISU Colleges of Agriculture and Business to offer an MBA degree with a minor in sustainable agriculture
- ❖ Leveraged over \$2 million in cash and in-kind resources

## Mission

- Foster value chains that provide economic, social, and ecological benefits to Iowa farmers, communities, and landscapes.

## Working Groups (communities of practice)

Four working groups have been established. Each supports value chains through collaborative technical assistance and R&D.

### ❖ Niche pork products



The Pork Niche Market Working Group launched in January 2002, has funded projects that address challenges facing specialty pork-marketing efforts.

### ❖ Bio-based businesses



The BioEconomy Working Group focuses on developing value chains for fiber and energy that are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable for all partners in the chain.

### ❖ Regional food systems



This working group focuses on the economic and community impact of regional food value chains, in order to better make the case for local and state investments.

### ❖ Flax oil products



The newly formed Flax Working Group supports agronomic research and market development for an organic flax oil value chain.

## Key Partners

- ❖ Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
- ❖ Practical Farmers of Iowa
- ❖ ISU Colleges of Agriculture and Business
- ❖ ISU Extension

## Major Contributors

- ❖ Wallace Center – Winrock Intl.
- ❖ Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
- ❖ ISU College of Agriculture
- ❖ ISU College of Business
- ❖ W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- ❖ Businesses, foundations, and government grants

## To learn more about VCPSA

visit

[www.valuechains.org](http://www.valuechains.org)

or e-mail

[valuechains@iastate.edu](mailto:valuechains@iastate.edu)



# VCPSPA Objectives (metrics)

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- Increase business sales
- Increase (individual) farmer sales
- Improve farmer profitability and operational efficiency (qualitative)
- Increase purchases of community-based foods
- Increase in jobs
- Leveraging funds, sustainability of two CoPs, create Value Chain Institute

# Regional Food Systems Working Group RFSWG

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Initiated October 2003


- Integrated with Leopold Center Marketing & Food Systems Initiative
- Over 25 organizations and businesses involved (Iowa and Minnesota)
- Funded 13 different projects in 2004-05



# Mission Statement

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RFSWG conducts research, supports education, and facilitates partnerships to increase investment and support of community-based, economically sustainable, and environmentally and socially responsible regional food enterprises.



# Developing a Vibrant and Sustainable Regional Food System

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- We already have learned a great deal about local and regional foods; lots of good projects, more CSAs, farmers markets, many food businesses established
- Significant percent of funding and capital investment is in special grant programs – *where is the local and state investment?*
- Many challenges still remain (meeting demand, infrastructure, access to capital, local/regional investment, moving beyond CSAs and farmers markets, policy obstacles)
- **Critical challenge** – making convincing case to local and state government, investors and funders that local and regional food businesses and the groups that provide assistance to them will improve the health of the economy, communities, and the environment

# Can we get there from here?

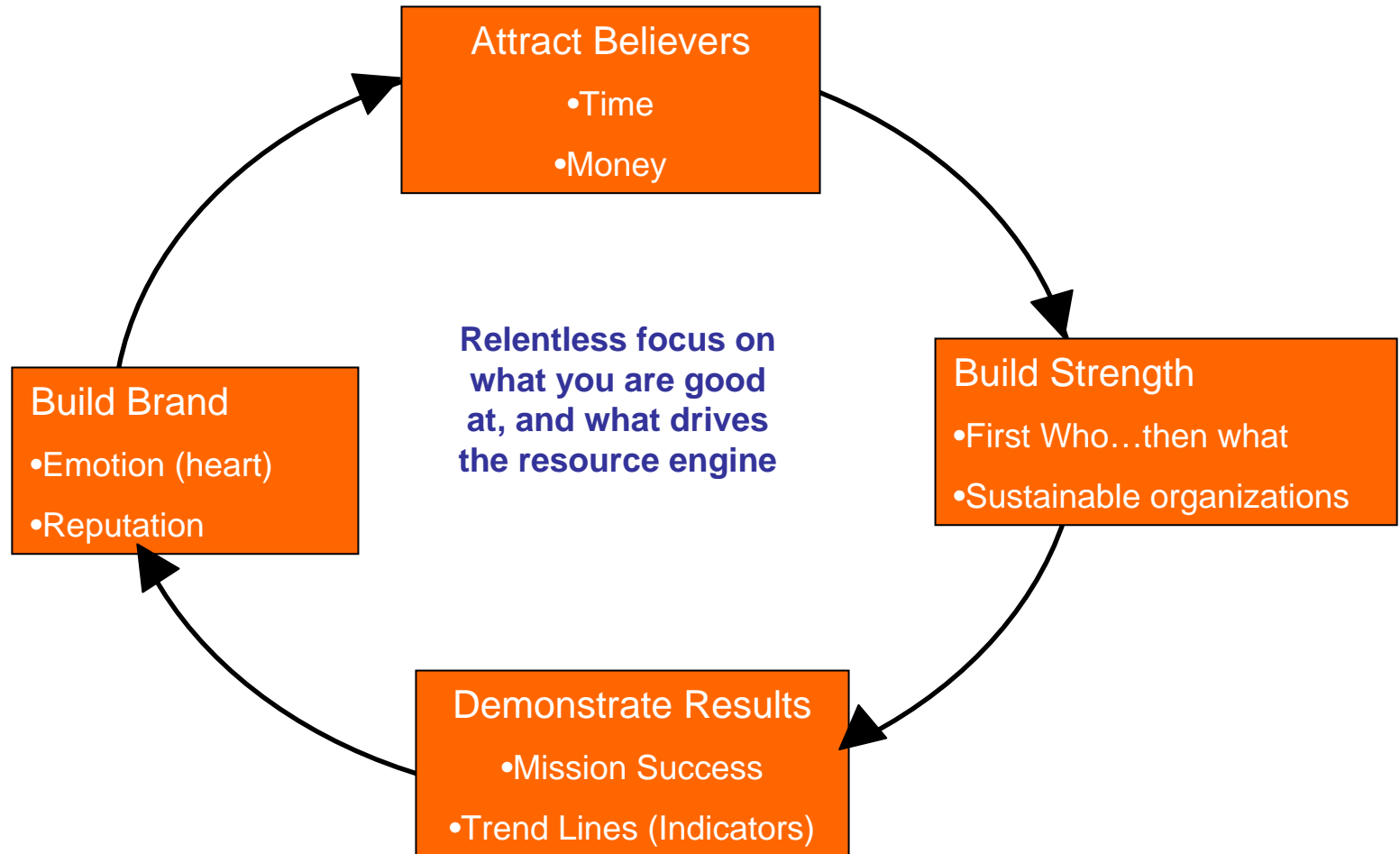
We are either in the early and most difficult stages of a long, slow transition to a food system driven by a desire for healthful, safe, high quality foods and for connections to knowledge about source/production method of that food.

Or.... (as some skeptics claim) we are playing around with permanent small niche markets that will never grow into something significant enough to support tens of thousands of small AND medium-sized farms in the U.S.

From "Feeding Ourselves: Strategies for a New Illinois Food System"

Red Tomato ([www.redtomato.org](http://www.redtomato.org)) 2004

# Turning the Flywheel in the Social Sectors: Implications for building vibrant and sustainable regional food systems AND businesses



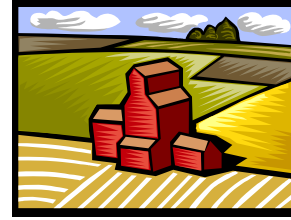
# RFSWG – new objectives

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- Identify key elements that create vibrant and sustainable food systems (networks)
- Work with leaders and businesses to support key elements not yet developed
- Identify and measure key indicators
- Implement a process for continuous learning across the state and beyond
- **“help the flywheel turn (faster)”**

# Vision For a Vibrant and Sustainable Regional Food System

(Draft vision statements for each heading are found on pages 3-4)



## Economic and social development

- Regional networks build health and wealth
- Increases capacity and connection for local residents
- Based on local vision framed by diverse community members

## Farm-based business growth and development

- Sustainable to profit and environment
- Connected to history, place, and community
- Collaboration, communication and commerce lead to growth and development

## Landscape

- Maximum diversity of crops and livestock
- Perennial crops and polycultures are commonplace
- Soil, water and air quality are improved
- Riparian areas are heavily vegetated

## The workforce

- Diverse workforce is respected, paid fairly, healthy and well-trained
- Contributes to overall community

## Processing, retail, and other food-related industries

- Infrastructure meets diverse value-added needs
- Geographically accessible and supported by federal/state policies
- Assistance to connect food establishments with consumers, producers, and processors



## Storage and distribution infrastructure

- Readily available, efficient, economical, and geographically and culturally accessible
- Flexible in handling diverse products and quantities
- Ecologically sound and owned within the region

## Local government

- Promoted by cities, counties, and schools by using economic development tools
- Facilitate the expansion of local markets for local agricultural products

## Education and research assistance

- Encourages, supports and assists regional food value chains
- Simple dissemination of information
- State universities, community colleges, NGOs

## Rural and city quality of life

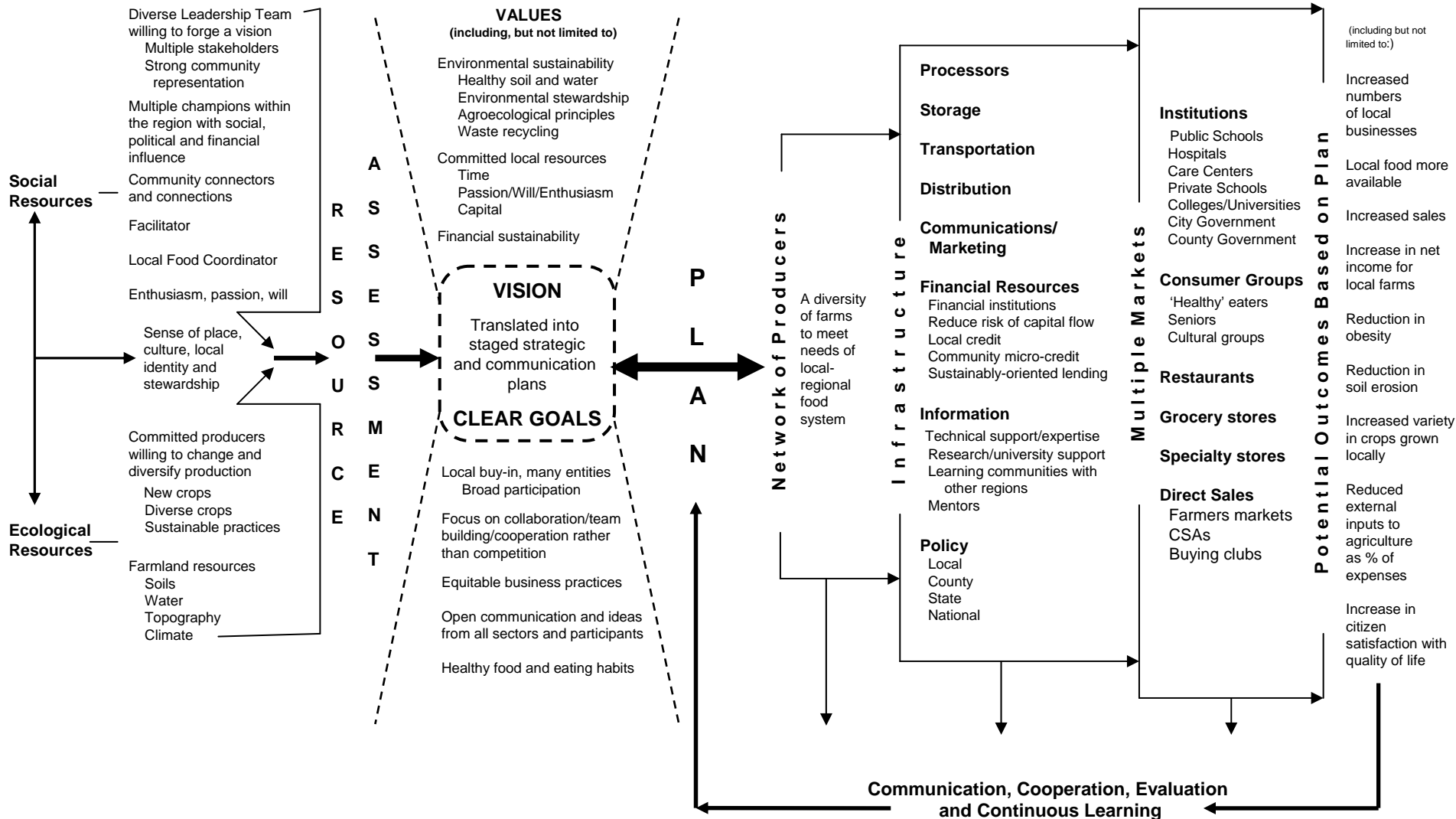
- Altered by increased choices and opportunities
- More options increase ownership, empowerment, and relationships throughout food system
- Connection of fresh, healthy, local food
- Rural and urban citizens benefit from shorter food chains

# Key Elements for a Vibrant and Sustainable Regional Food System



# Overview of Process for Developing Vibrant and Sustainable Local/Regional Food Systems

This diagram is meant to help stimulate ideas by laying out an overview of the variety of resources, key elements and processes to build vibrant and sustainable local food systems. The elements included are consistent and build on the preceding key elements, framework, and draft statements. The document is based on collective experience and research by the RFSWG subcommittee. We appreciate all feedback to further develop and improve this flow diagram.



# Indicators to measure and document progress

- Help document baseline data
  - Build a common understanding of what needs to be done
  - Document impact – fine-tune strategies and attract resources and “believers”
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## Examples

- Increases in local food sales
- Increase in number of food businesses
- Increase in consumption of fresh produce
- Increase in farmer profitability and market access

# Developing vibrant and sustainable regional food systems

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- Developed discussion document and call for applications – July 2006
- NE Iowa Food and Farm Coalition selected as initial pilot region – assistance plan
- Two additional regions under consideration for assistance plan (SE and SW Iowa)