



# NETWORKS AS ECOSYSTEMS

## MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER NETWORK

Statewide food networks like the Minnesota Food Charter Network help generate resources, mutual learning, cross-sector collaboration, collective action across local and regional food networks, and state level policy influence. Statewide food networks resemble natural ecosystems in structure and function.

### 1 EMERGE

Networks are rooted in geographic, political and other contexts of a place. Early stages focus on information gathering. Tension exists between being highly intentional and process driven, while remaining nimble and adaptive to recruit and excite members.

### 2 INVEST

Resources like diversified funding, dedicated staff, and partners are needed to support and power the growth and activities of networks.

### 3 TRUST

Network leaders are deliberate about building trust and participation, using authentic engagement strategies and ongoing communication to ensure that trust moves fluidly through the network.

### 4 NAVIGATE

Network leaders must navigate the dynamic, ever-changing context of a state's food system and many players, representing diverse perspectives and geographies.

### 5 LEARN

Network leaders facilitate rapid collaboration and cross-pollination through coordinated group learning.

### 6 INTEGRATE

Networks overlap; greatest productivity occurs at the intersections. Members play multiple roles and span network boundaries.

### 7 EQUITY

Diversity is valued. Network leaders engage traditionally underrepresented voices.

### 8 POLICY

Diverse interests converge around a common policy agenda when the conditions are right.

### 9 EVALUATE

Identifying metrics for success and measuring progress can demonstrate impact to funders. Evaluation is infused across all phases and dimensions of network development and activities.

### 10 EVOLVE

Effective networks evolve and adapt to specific challenges and opportunities. Systems and processes that can grow and change reflect a generative network.

