



News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 10, 2013

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Northwest Michigan Council of Governments Receives National Award for Food Innovation District Guidebook

TRAVERSE CITY, MI—A guidebook created to help communities recognize and support farm and food businesses is receiving a national award for the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG). *Food Innovation Districts: an Economic Gardening Tool Guidebook* earned NWMCOG a 2013 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO).

“This award is an honor for NWMCOG and the project partners who helped us create the guidebook,” said NMMCOG Regional Planner Sarah Lucas. “We hope communities will use the guide to identify food innovation assets in their communities, and that new ideas or projects that can leverage those assets will grow out of these discussions around food innovation districts.”

A food innovation district is a geographic concentration of food-oriented businesses, services, and community activities. Districts like these, when supported through local planning and economic development initiatives, can promote positive business environments, spur regional food system development, and increase access to local food.

The guidebook identifies a process for developing food innovation districts that support economic gardening concepts through the co-location and collaboration of food businesses of different types. The guide focuses on the roles that planners, economic developers, elected officials, and community champions have in food innovation district development and the steps they can take. Resources, including a how-to worksheet and zoning guidance, are included in the guide to help communities take the first steps towards food innovation district planning.

(MORE)

Food Innovation Districts: An Economic Gardening Tool Guidebook was developed with funding from USDA-Rural Development, and was prepared by NWMCOG and project partners; the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, and Regional Food Solutions, LLC. The guidebook is available online at nwm.org/food-innovation-districts. Hard copies can also be obtained by contacting NWMCOG at 231-929-5000.

The Innovation Award will be formally presented to NWMCOG in August at NADO's annual training conference.

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NOTE to Media: Images are oftentimes available upon request by e-mailing Tom White at tomwhite@nwm.cog.mi.us and stating preferences for resolution (300 dpi?), file format (.tif? .jpg?) and file size (1MB or less?). Or, phone (231) 929-5044. Check our online Media Room at: nwm.org/media

Founded in 1974, the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments (NWMCOG) facilitates and manages various programs and services for the 10 county region. These programs include Northwest Michigan Works, YouthBuild, Small Business & Technology Development Center, Procurement Technical Assistance Center, various business services, and many different regional planning initiatives in response to our communities' requests and needs. You will see the broad spectrum of workforce, business and community services NWMCOG offers if you visit our web site, nwm.org

NWMCOG's member counties are: Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, and Wexford.