

Participatory Action Research to Build Local Government Capacity to Strengthen Food Systems

Growing Food Connections Team Present at EFSNE

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Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast with Regional Food Systems Conference

Greenbelt, Maryland

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American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US





Broad Goal

Enhance food security while ensuring sustainable and economically viable agriculture and food production through local and regional government **policy and planning**

General **research** question

How can local government planning and policy improve community food systems to benefit small and mid-sized farmers and low-income community residents?

Approach

Scope | National (four census regions)

Scale of analysis | Multi-scalar at national and county-scale

Research Design |

National-scale | Quantitative/spatial

County-scale | Sequential research design and participatory action research



EDUCATION



RESEARCH



POLICY AND PRACTICE



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INNOVATION**



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OPPORTUNITY**

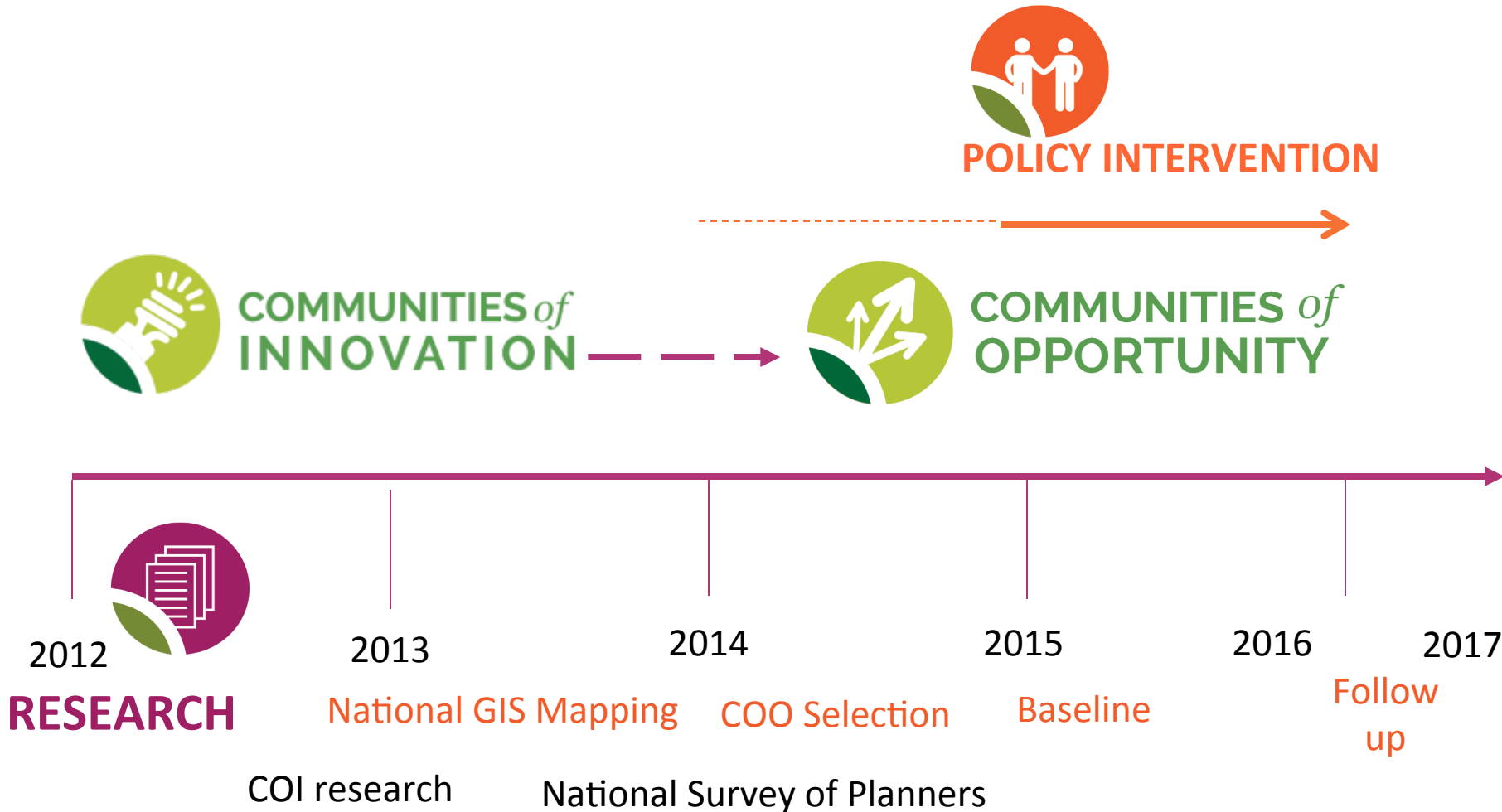
**Learn and
share**

Seek Partnerships

Build Relationships

Build Capacity

**Learn and
share**

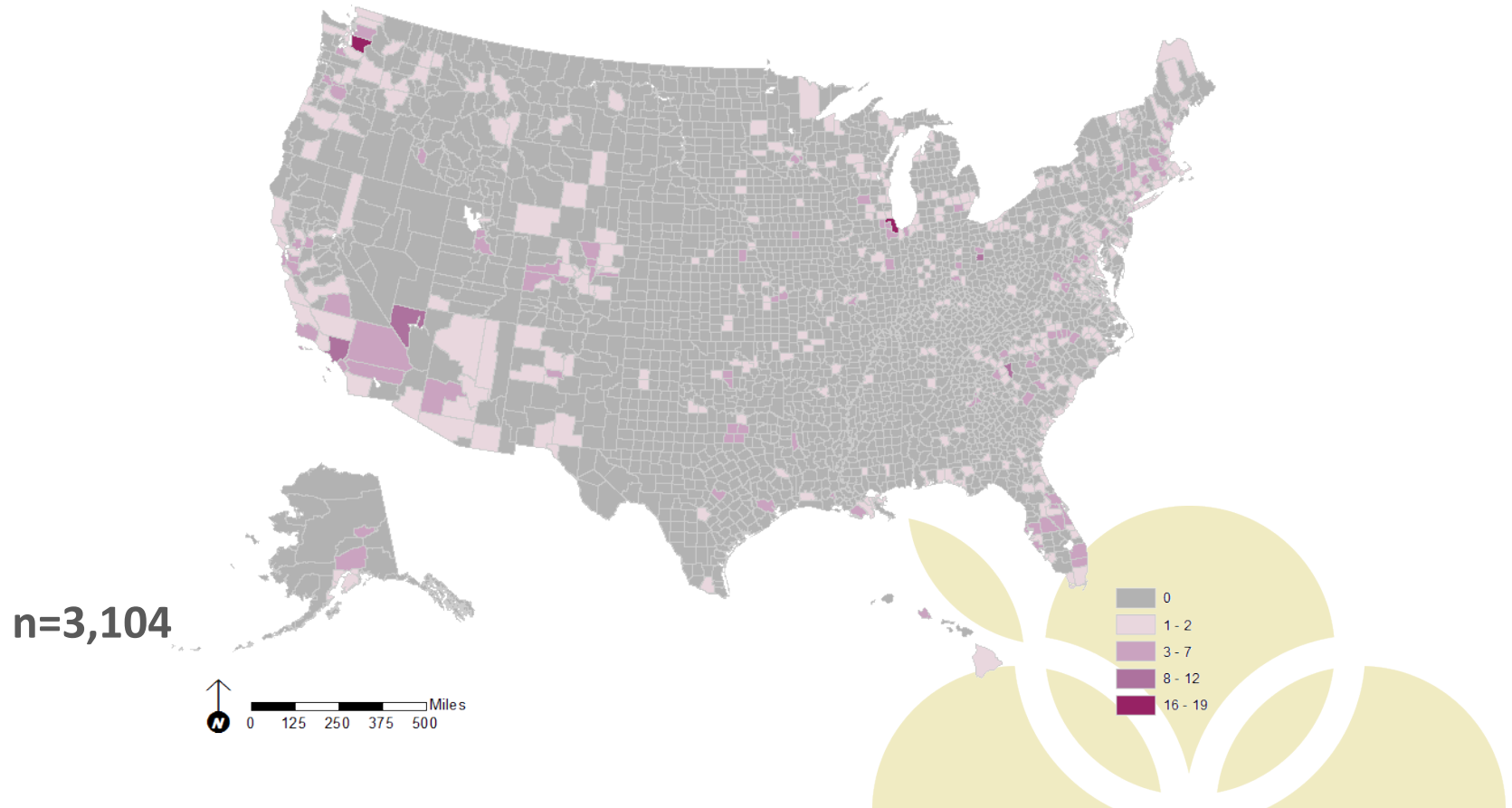




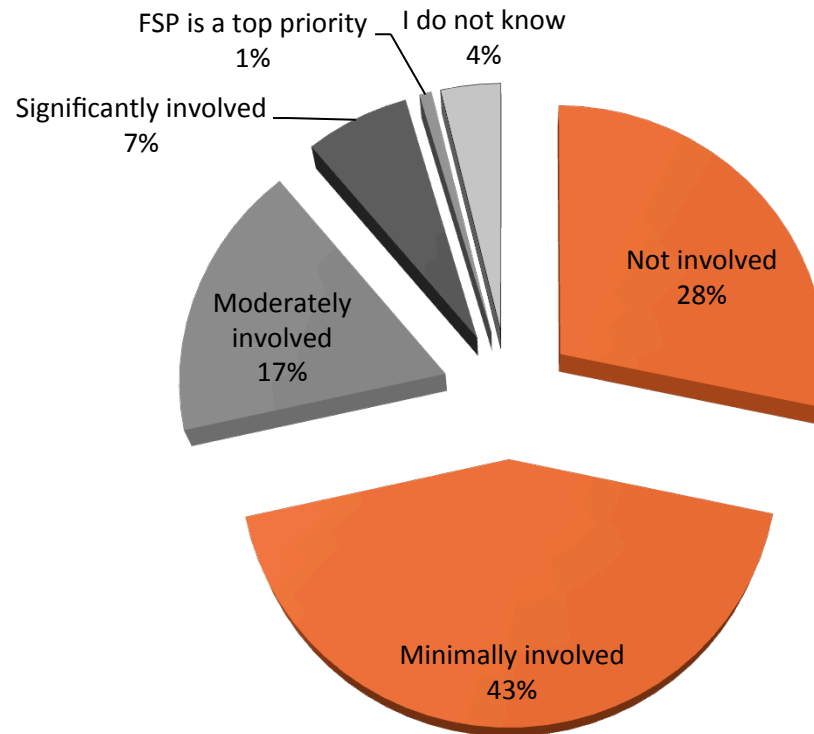
Question: How are local, regional, and metropolitan governments and planners engaged in developing *and* implementing policy to strengthen food systems?

- **Across the food system | production, consumption, distribution, acquisition, and food waste management**
- **Planning and policy tools**
 - Official plans
 - Implementation tools
 - *Physical infrastructure*
 - *Regulations*
 - *Public finance*
 - *Programs*

Survey of American Planning Association Members, 2014

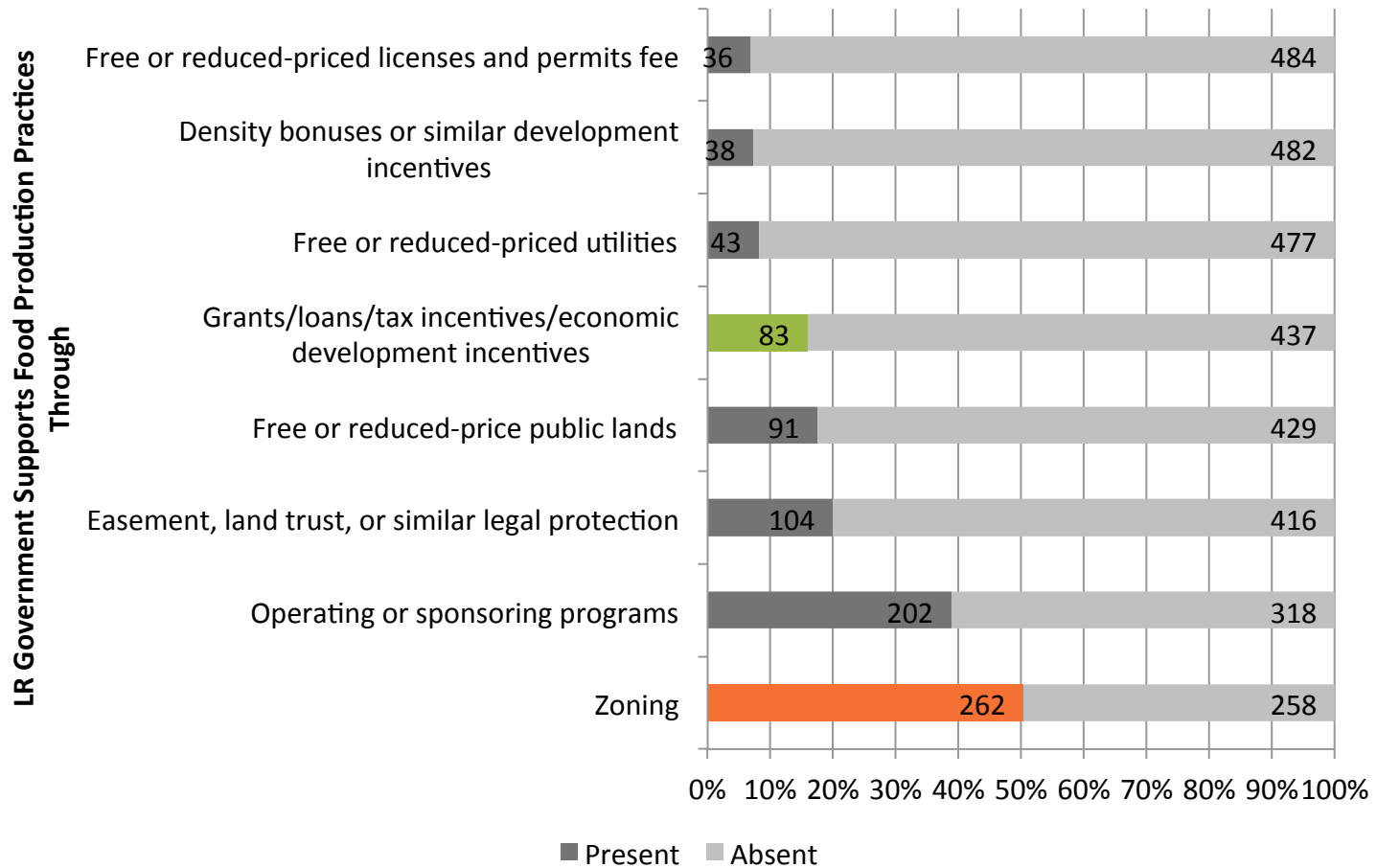


LRM Engagement in Food Systems Planning

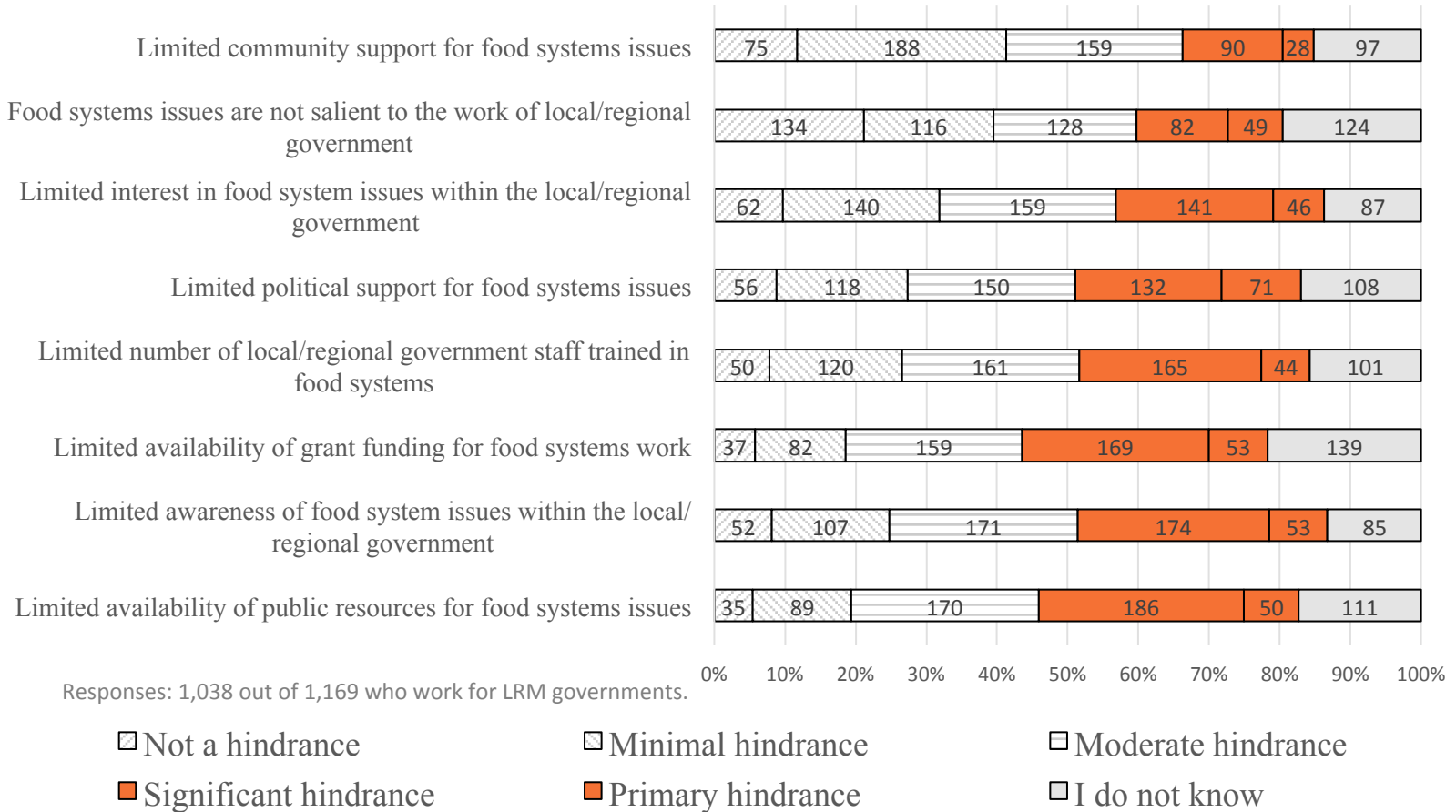


Responses: 1,038 out of 1,169 who work for LRM governments.

Implementation of Public Policies to Support Food Production



Factors Hindering LRM Engagement in Food Systems Planning



In short...

- Strong interest among LRM representatives in food systems planning
- Limited number of local governments engaged in food systems planning
- Regulation is the predominant way in which local governments are *implementing* support for food systems planning
- Limited awareness (and lack of public funding) are significant barriers

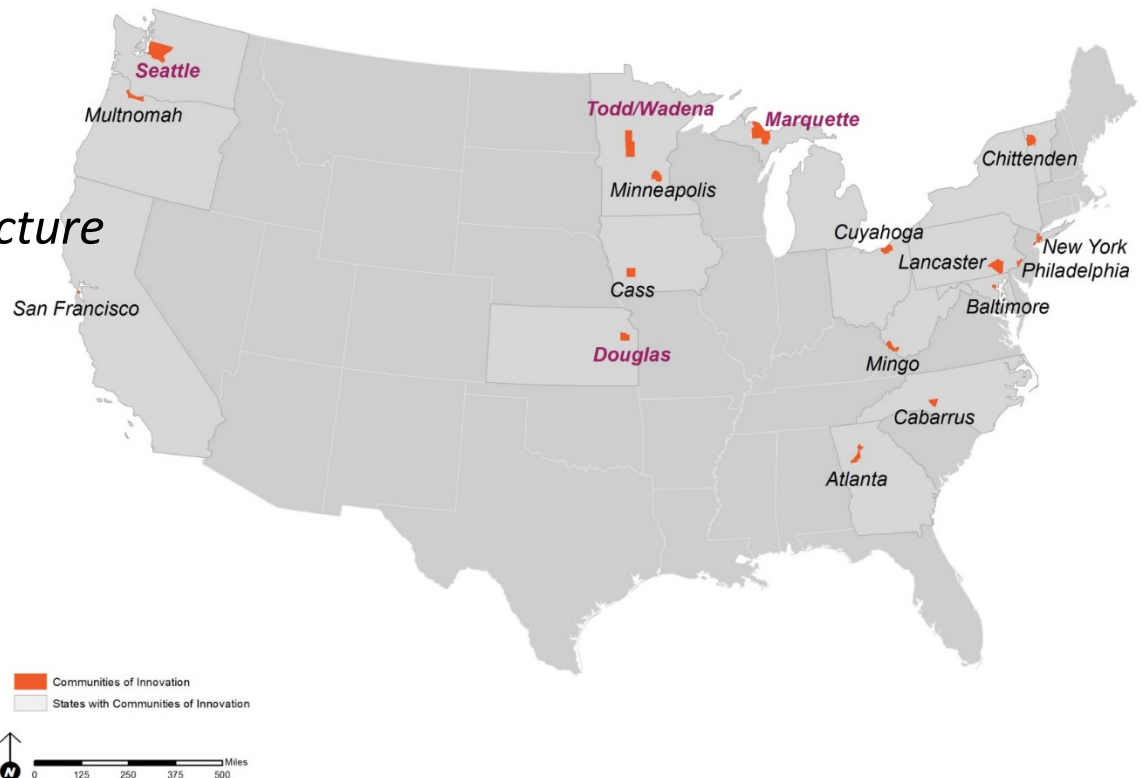


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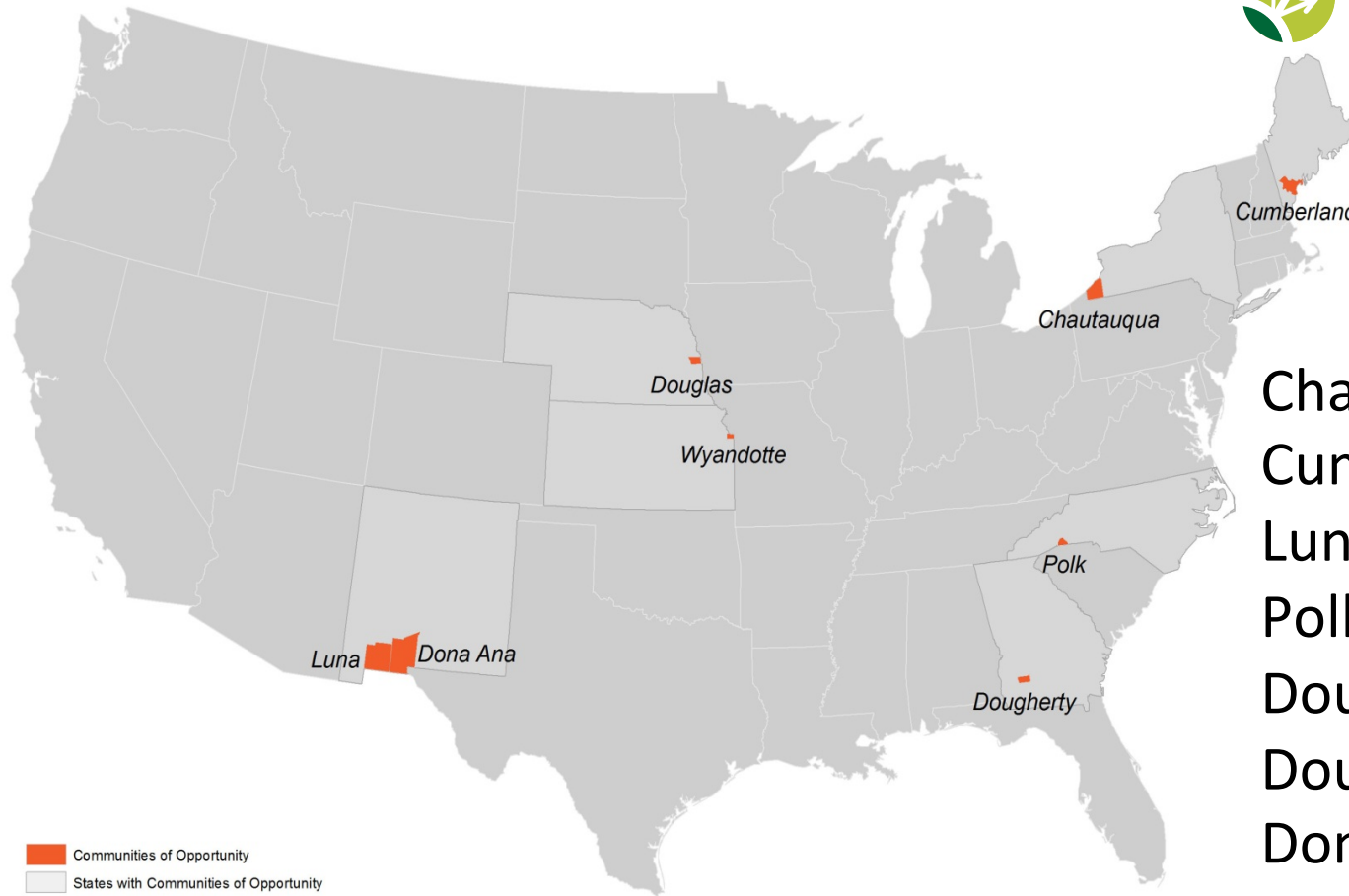
Question: How are COIs governments strengthening food systems through policy and planning?

- Plans
- Implementation tools
 - *Physical infrastructure*
 - *Regulations*
 - *Public finance*
 - *Programs*



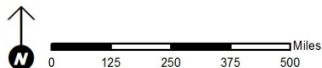


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Chautauqua, NY
Cumberland, ME
Luna, NM
Polk, NC
Dougherty, GA
Douglas, NE
Dona Ana, NM
Wyandotte, KS

Communities of Opportunity
States with Communities of Opportunity

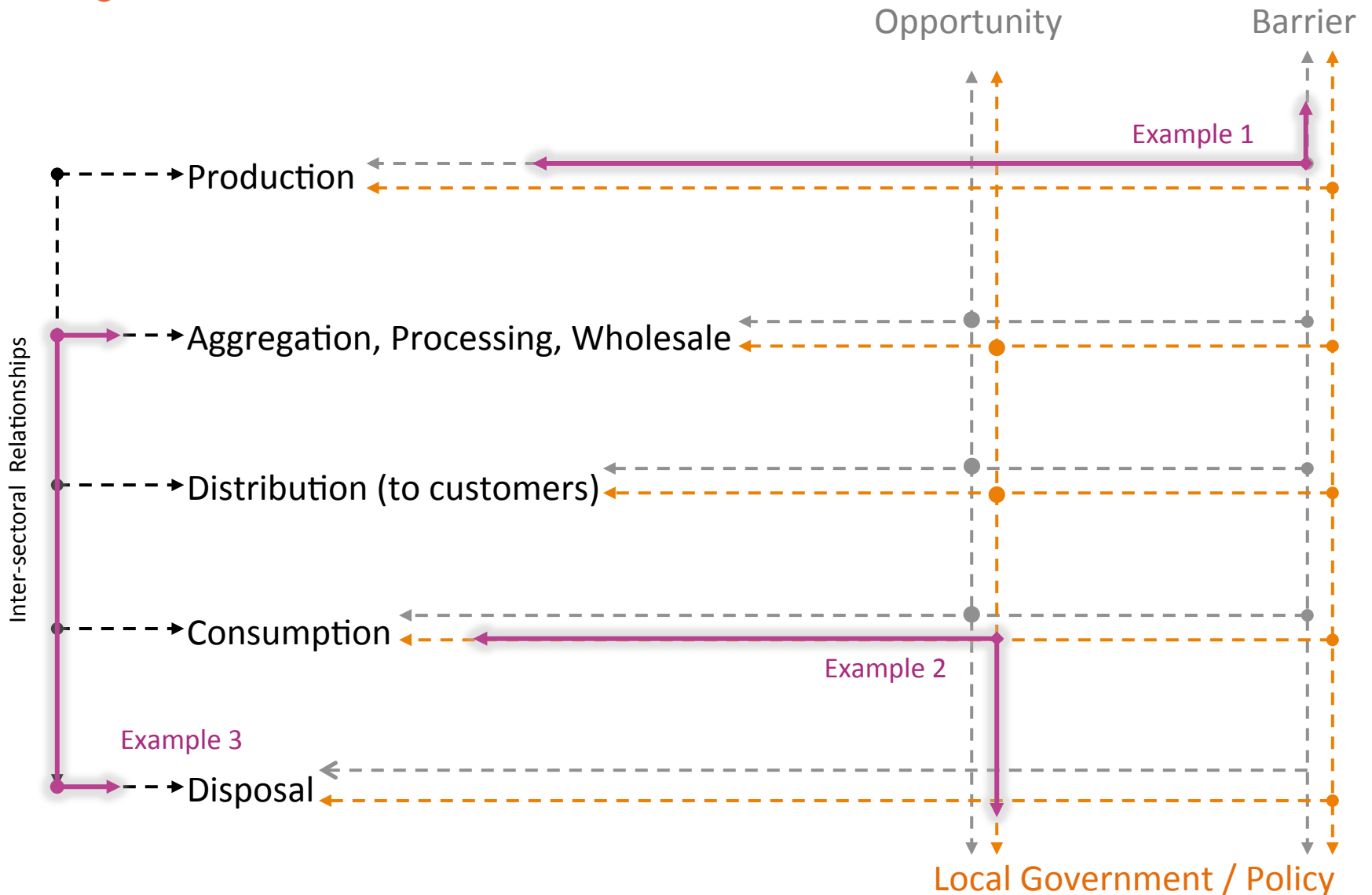


Question: How are policy barriers inhibiting connections between low income consumers and small and medium-sized farmers in COOs? How can increased policy capacity strengthen this linkage?



- Semi-structured interviews
- About 2 hours each; most conducted in person
- Transcribed; coding and analysis underway

Sector	Number of Interviewees	Percentage (%)
Food System Sectors	21	21
Local Government/Regional Government	44	44
Residents and/or Consumer Advocate	21	21
Philanthropic organizations/ Foundations	2	2
Extension	11	11
Total	99	

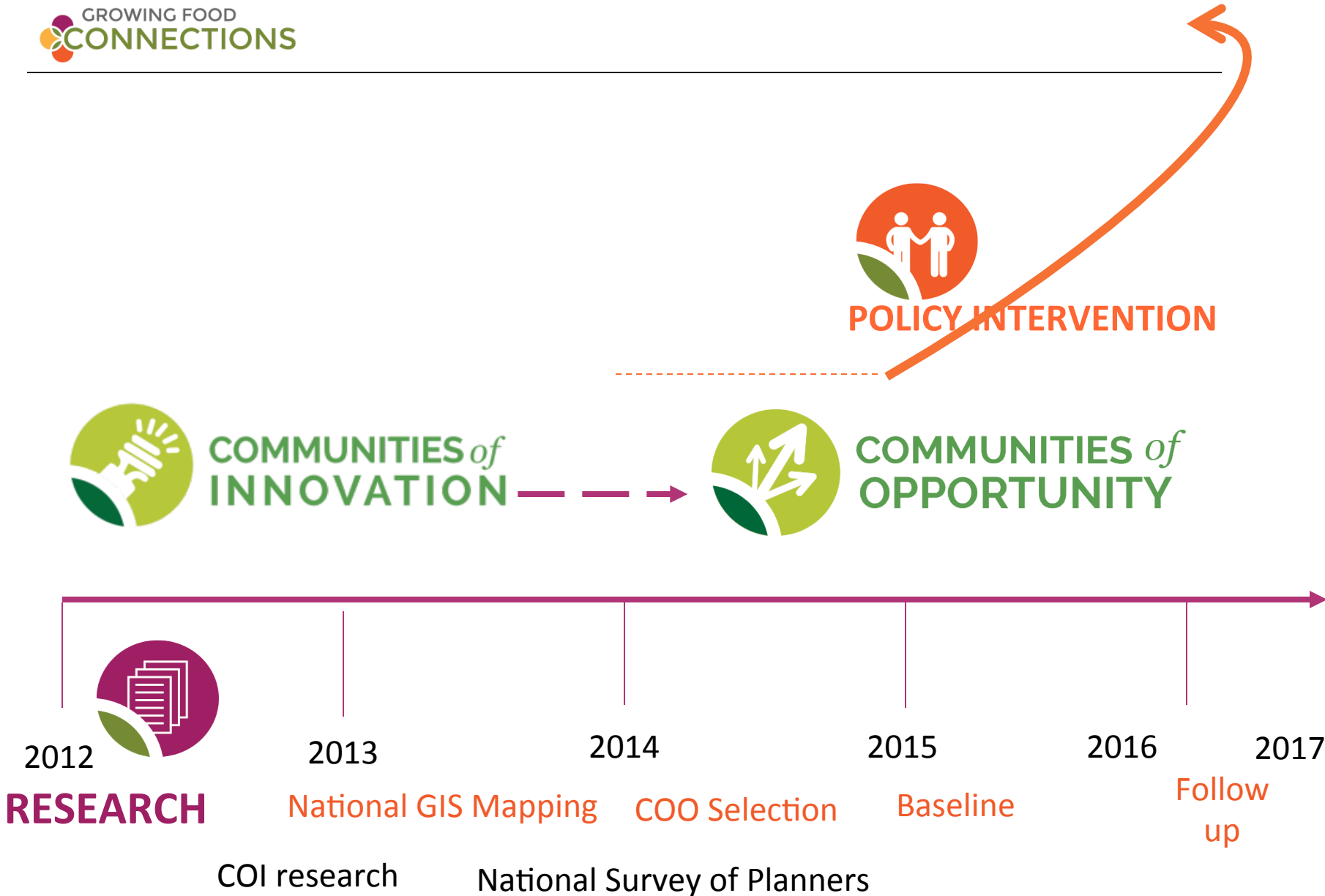


Preliminary observations in COOs

- Significant disconnect between food system stakeholders and policy makers in most COOs
 - FS stakeholders have limited understanding of and value for public policy
 - Policy makers have limited understanding of and value for food systems
- Economic development is a primary public policy concern – with little recognition of the role that FS could play in promoting economic development
- Natural resource constraints are pressing in some COOs
- Great deal of variation in terms of food policy readiness (e.g. policy leadership), food system disconnects (i.e. need), and policy opportunities (e.g. planning and legal framework)

General Project Observations

- Far greater policy capacity in urban areas than rural areas
- The US South is greatly underrepresented in food policy and planning efforts
- An urban policy/planning frame does not explain innovation in rural areas
- Food planning and policy is being replicated with little testing
- Very few places are addressing food using policy in a *systemic* way
 - Focusing either food access or agriculture
- Local government may not be the right scale for policies that address both food access and agriculture
- Invisible and forgotten people (black female farmers in the US South) and places (e.g. colonias along the US-Mexico border) in policy processes
 - Necessary to work on “inclusivity” and “healing” before building policy capacity



NEXT STEPS



PLANNING & POLICY



Practical Solutions for Community Action

Using public policy to generate knowledge and build community capacity to increase food security and economically viable food production.



Research, Education and Planning & Policy



These three major activities work hand-in-hand to address the concerns of struggling farmers and vulnerable consumers by building capacity of local governments and their partners to create, implement and sustain food system policies and plans that both promote food security and foster a healthy agricultural sector.





PLANNING
& POLICY



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Practical Solutions for Community Action

Using public policy to generate knowledge and build community capacity to increase food security and economically viable food production.



Thank you

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