



**Strategic Planning for Collective Action Projects within
Food & Agriculture Communities**

WHAT IS ACRE?

AgriCluster Resilience and Expansion—or **ACRE** for short—is a professionally facilitated strategic planning process that helps place-based groups (*clusters*) of farmers and their allied enterprises, such as fisheries, mariculture, agroforestry and timber production, food handlers, food processors and packagers, distributors, and retailers, as well as nonprofit and municipal organizations, work together and compete more effectively in an increasingly complex world.

The ACRE Program is hosted by the **North American Food Systems Network**.



HOW **ACRE** WORKS:

By identifying shared concerns, shared histories, shared values, and shared opportunities while developing a strategic workplan, **ACRE** helps these clusters become more resilient **AgriClusters**.



Photo credit/courtesy of Mandy Coriston

ACRE Shared History Exercise

WHY **ACRE** WORKS:

- The **ACRE Process** includes a set of exercises that a trained **ACRE Facilitator** uses to assist emergent or existing **AgriClusters** who are facing critical issues or are at a strategic crossroads.
- **ACRE** provides a systematic way to examine forward options by developing trust, transparency, and thoughtful deliberation.
- The final output of the **ACRE Process** is a simple but comprehensive strategic plan based on the shared personal, economic, social, and environmental values and vision of the group.

THE ACRE PROCESS:

The **ACRE Process** has three key sections,
which are guided by a trained **ACRE Facilitator**:

- **Formation of a Core Group:** leaders who plan the strategic planning process
- **The ACRE Workshop:** a series of inclusive strategic planning exercises
- **The ACRE Summit:** stakeholders adopt the strategic plan and join work teams



Photo credit/courtesy of Duncan Hickey

ACRE Shared Vision Exercise

The **Core Group** also conducts additional meetings after the **ACRE Workshop** and **ACRE Summit** to ensure a smooth transition into project implementation.

THE ACRE PROCESS:

The key exercises and activities of the **ACRE Process** and **ACRE Workshop** are:

-  Stakeholder Analysis of the Value Chain
-  Shared History Exercise
-  Shared Values Exercise
-  Shared Vision Exercise
-  Opportunity Generating Exercise
-  Initiative Build-Out Exercise
-  Prefeasibility Analysis
-  Drafting the Project Work Plan
-  Workshop Wrap-Up and Evaluation
-  Post-Workshop Core Group Meeting
-  The ACRE Project Summit
-  Project Implementation



Photo credit/courtesy of Jeanine Cava (NJFDC)

ACRE Initiative Build-Out

Each **ACRE Workshop** exercise builds upon the previous ones to result in a clear, actionable strategic workplan.

SOME **ACRE** FAQs:

Q: My group is interested in the **ACRE Process**. Is there a fee for working with an **ACRE Facilitator**?

A: Yes, **ACRE Facilitators** are trained food systems facilitation professionals who charge a consultant's fee for conducting the **ACRE Process**. Your group may choose to self-fund or seek grant funding or other options to compensate your **ACRE Facilitator** and cover the expenses of your **ACRE Workshop** and related activities.

Q: How long does the **ACRE Process** take?

A: From **Core Group** formation through the start of **Project Implementation**, the **ACRE Process** can take several dozen hours over the course of months, including the 2-day **ACRE Workshop**. However, your **ACRE Facilitator** can determine if the process can be modified or expedited based on the needs of your group and the scope of your intended collective action projects.

SOME ACRE FAQs:

Q: How can I learn more about the **ACRE Process** and find an **ACRE Facilitator**?

A: You can locate the active members of the **ACRE Community of Practice** in the **ACRE Section** of the **NAFSN** website. These members have completed the **ACRE Facilitator Course** and are qualified to facilitate your cluster's **ACRE Process**. **Community of Practice** members are located throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Q: How can I learn more about the **ACRE Process** and become an **ACRE Facilitator**?

A: You can find information in the **ACRE Section** of the **NAFSN** website. There are several pricing options for taking the course, either as an individual or as a member of a training cohort. The course is available at no cost to **NAFSN** members. **ACRE Facilitator Course Graduates** may facilitate **ACRE Workshops**, and may also choose to become **ACRE Certified Trainers**, allowing them to teach the **ACRE Process** to others.



The **North American Food Systems Network (NAFSN)** works at the forefront of the food systems profession itself, providing networking opportunities, resources, career guidance, leadership opportunities, training, webinars, podcasts, and a curated jobs board for people at all levels of this critical-change work.



The **ACRE Program** and **ACRE Process** assist farmers and their stakeholder allies in discovering and examining collaborative options and opportunities in a systematic, transparent way through a series of facilitated and scaffolded exercises, thoughtful deliberation, and consent-based decision-making to develop trust and shared ownership of the resulting strategic plan.

For more information about taking the **ACRE Facilitator Course** or to connect with an **ACRE Facilitator**, contact:

Kim Hines at kim@foodsystemsnetwork.org

To learn more about becoming an **ACRE Certified Trainer**, contact:

Duncan Hilchey at duncan@lysoncenter.org

ACRE & NAFSN LINKS:

North American Food Systems Network (NAFSN)

AgriCluster Resilience & Expansion (ACRE) Program

ACRE Community of Practice



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