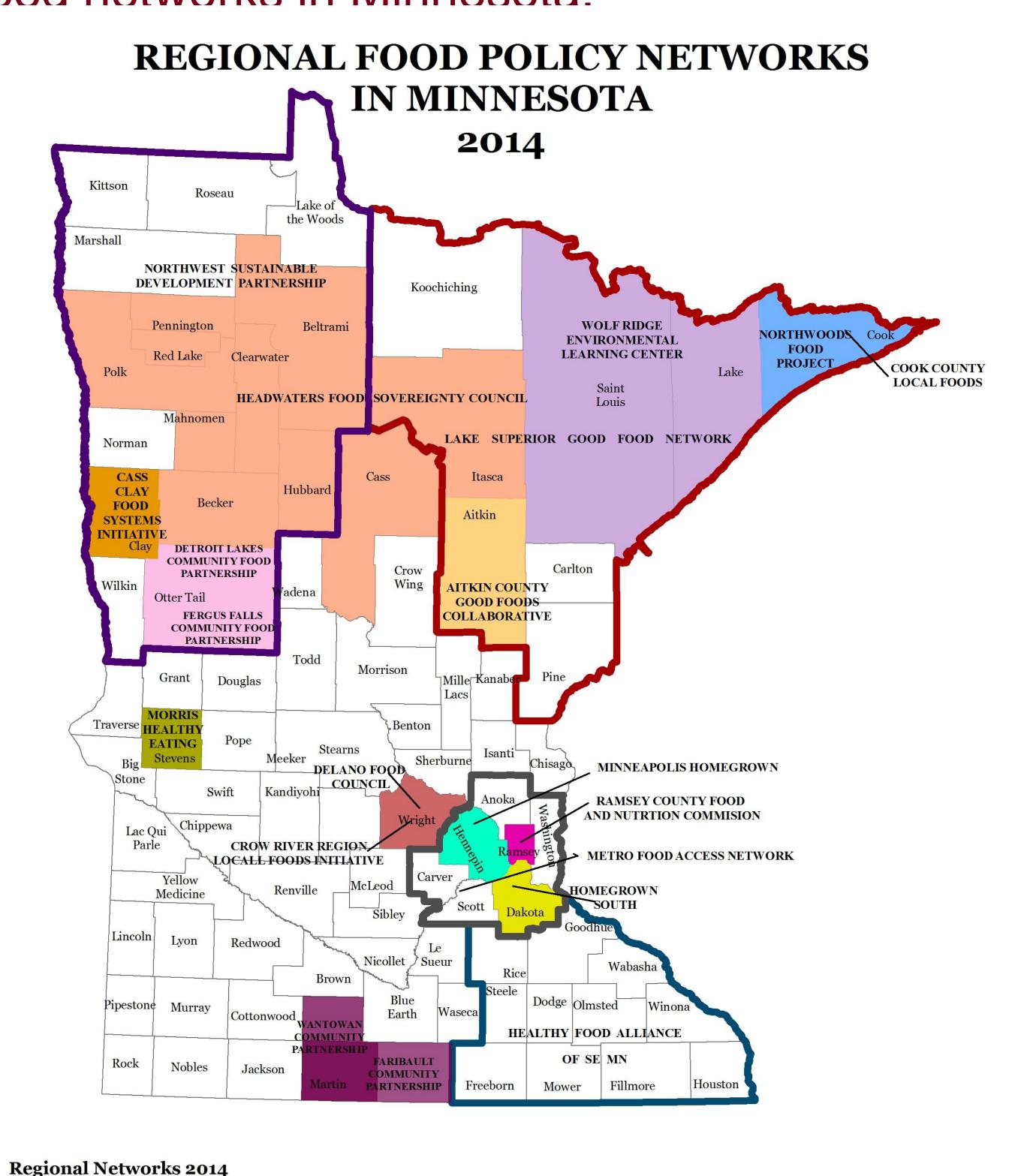
# Minnesota Food Network Landscape

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### FOOD NETWORKS

A food network is a collaborative body comprised of food advocates in a region who gather to learn from each other, build relationships, and generate collective impact around food systems programs and policies. There are at least twenty active food networks in Minnesota, with members who partner with Extension in various ways. We interviewed leaders of these networks during the summer of 2014 to learn about the structure, function, and challenges of food networks in Minnesota.



Northwoods Food Project

Cook County local foods

Wantowan Community Partnership

Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission

Healthy Food Alliance of SE MN

Northwest Sustainable Development Partnership

Delano Food Council

## STRUCTURE

Each food network in Minnesota has a different structure, though there are some similarities across the state:

- Affiliation can be governmental or independent
- Membership can be appointed, voluntary, or application based
- At least 5 networks have paid staff
- At least 9 networks are governed by a steering committee
- At least 7 networks use formal bi-laws to govern the work
- At least 6 networks have task forces or work groups, including marketing and outreach, food access, food infrastructure, education, urban agriculture, food literacy



Metro Food Access Network small group discussion around impact of MN Food Charter on food systems work in the metro.

Fergus Falls Community Food Partnership gathered to learn marketing tips for the regional farmers market.



#### FUNCTION

Each food network has a different way of operating and different goals, though there are similarities between the activities of their network:

- Most networks hold quarterly networking meetings to facilitate learning and cross-sectorial collaboration
- At least 5 food network's began their work with a community needs assessment
- At least 6 networks have provided policy recommendations to local jurisdictions
  - Update city ordinance and zoning related to food access
  - Incentivize local food distribution or procurement
- At least 4 food networks have established farmers markets
- At least 8 networks are interested in establishing a food hub, or have done so already.

## CHALLENGES

Common challenges faced by food networks include:

- Limited time and funding
- Having to understand and work within a number of different county and city legislative bodies on a regional level
- A lack of community engagement
- A lack of clarity around member expectations and levels of accountability