

Winona Bynum, RDN, PMP, CSM: Public Policy Dietitian

Question: What is your job title?

Answer: Executive Director

Where do you work (setting and/or company)?

Detroit Food Policy Council, a Community Nonprofit Organization

How long have you been at this job?

Just short of 5 years



Please describe your job (including typical role, population served and anything else you feel is important in understanding the job):

I lead the day to day operations and work to ensure our organization accomplishes its mission “To influence policy which ensures the development and maintenance of a sustainable and equitable food system, resulting in a food-secure City of Detroit in which all of its residents are hunger-free, healthy, and benefiting from a robust food system.”

My role also calls for me to educate lawmakers, participate in coalitions and collaborations around food, and facilitate meetings/education sessions and other convenings all through a nutrition lens.

Does your job require any additional schooling or education?

Not necessarily additional education but additional experience; it requires leadership experience, familiarity with the food system and experience working in community.

What are possible places of employment for your position?

There are food policy directors in non-profit organizations, governmental institutions (local, county and state levels) and health departments.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

I have the opportunity to work towards long-term positive change in the food system (which can lead to greater food access, increased economic opportunities and better health for my community.) I also enjoy that I get to work with a variety of people on many different issues – my job is rarely boring.

What is your least favorite thing about your job?

Policy changes can often take a long time to enact this takes patience. Also, running a non-profit requires fundraising, fundraising is probably my least favorite thing about the job (lol!)

Why/how did you choose your field and how did you get into it?

My dietetics career has been spent in community nutrition and food system policy work. I'd initially set out to have a more traditional dietetics career but one thing that really helped me to change my trajectory was taking a class offered at Wayne State University – Food and Cities offered by Dr. Kami Pothukuchi. The class required students to do a community project – mine was to survey grocery stores across Detroit which was eye opening although I'd lived in the city my entire life. The class also had a jobs board which allowed me to land a job with Fair Food Network during my final year of the dietetics program. At Fair Food Network I worked with community organizations, activist, advocates and academics on increasing access to healthy food. It changed my focus from telling people how to eat healthily to helping them have access to the foods they need to follow healthy eating recommendations.

What is your educational background?

Dietetics and public health.

What is your job/work background?

My former career was in information technology (IT) and project management. For most of my IT career I lead software development projects with local and global teams and then later mentored other project managers and worked on the program level (many projects working toward a common program goal – example Global Supply Chain)

Do you do any volunteer work?

Yes, I serve on a couple of food/nutrition boards, volunteer with other community organizations and lead nutrition workshops when I get the opportunity.

Why did you decide to become an RD?

Changing my diet improved my health, I wanted to learn the science behind why eating a healthy diet is so powerful so when I had the opportunity to study dietetics, I did.

Why/how did you decide to pursue other credentials beyond the RD?

I wanted to expand my knowledge, be able to make more impact with my work and have more opportunities.

What do you like and what do you not like about the field in general?

I wish the importance of the field was more respected by the general public and more widely integrated in health care. Food has the power to heal, and dietitians have the keys to unlocking the power of food.

What do you think are the most important things for students and/or new RDs to know?

Stay connected with what's going on in your community.

What areas in dietetics do you think will become more important/growing in the future?

I think food policy and nutrition informatics are both fields that will grow.

Tell us more about yourself/anything interesting you'd like to share!

I started my education as a journalism major, which was quickly abandoned.