

MLFCN Leadership and Membership Webinar 2016 Transcript

Liz Gensler: Go ahead and get started. Again, thanks to those of you who have joined us on this lovely snowy day that reminds us it is still winter. Welcome to the Michigan Local Food Council Network's Webinar on Leadership and Engagement. We'll have Andrea Brown from the Michigan Association of Planning doing the majority of the presenting. And Megan Masson-Minock, our coordinator for that work, will be presenting a bit as well. And I am, for those of you who don't me, Liz Gensler. I'm with the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems which sponsors this network. So just wanted to go through a few of the basics about the network. The Michigan Association of Planning [inaudible], which is Megan's organization and [inaudible] coordinate the network together. The network has, as you guys know because you're all on it, the Michigan Local Food Council Network [inaudible] where we put out regular information in the eNewsletter, trying to keep you posted on the things that are coming across our desks that seem relevant. Do these training webinars three times a year, and then do three in-person meetings to help people get together, network, and exchange ideas. And again, a reminder, the mission of the Local Food Council Network is to bring together councils to build their individual and their collective capacities to work on food and food policy, operate effectively and engage in their communities with peer-to-peer learning.

Megan Masson-Minock: Hi, I'm Megan, and welcome to everybody. One of the things that we also wanted to hit on was the role of the Council and we provide a space for local councils to network together, connect you to statewide information and policy, assist in capacity building, provide hands-on training, and local policy information, as well as connecting you to other parts of the state as well as what's going on, on a national level. The -- we've started the network officially in May of last year, and so midway through, about six months into it, we sent out a survey to folks through the listserv asking people what they wanted to see in the next six months. And these were -- 11 councils responded. And especially for webinars that were online like this one, folks asked for the role of -- training on the role of local councils in the community, council and board membership training, and organizing and engaging community members. Today's webinar is going to address all three of those issues. Fundraising is something that other -- four councils were interested in. We know that a number of you are, and we're going to save that for another time. But today we're going to do a webinar with these objectives. And I'm going to turn this over to Andrea Brown for her to go through it. Just for those of you who haven't met Andrea, she's the Executive Director of Michigan Association of Planning, and has been since -- the past twelve years. It's almost a 4000-member organization from people across Michigan who are either professional planners, planning consultants, or locally your appointed officials. And I know that she has a great amount of expertise in



leadership development and membership development for a nonprofit organization that's working in policy and change. So I'm going to turn it over to Andrea.

Andrea Brown: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Oops, sorry. Quickly, we'll go over the webinar objectives. Some of the things that we hope to cover today, or the objectives are to help the network members organize local efforts and better engage community members to provide tips and techniques to support leadership development within and outside of your local network. And to help with tactics and strategies to market and promote your network, and increase awareness of the initiative within the community and across the region. First we'd like to do some introductions. And a little bit of a background. We want to know who's on the call: your name, which council you're with, and to answer one of these questions. Question of your choice. Liz is going to open up the microphones now. Nobody wants to --?

Liz Gensler: Microphones should be open now, so people can chime in as they see fit.

Andrea Brown: Okay, Scott. Liz, Scott's microphone.

Liz Gensler: I can't control the muting, so if Scott, if I could get you to unmute. It should be, I think, I'm not sure if it's the lower left-hand or upper left-hand corner of the screen, and there should be an icon that looks like an old-timey microphone.

Andrea Brown: If you take your arrow to the top, it should open up a bar with options, or your bar might be at the bottom. Okay, well --

Liz Gensler: There we go.

Scott: Oh okay, alright. So I'm part of a group called the Local Food Alliance of Northern Michigan. It's in Petoskey. And we're not really a local food council, per se. We haven't quite evolved to that level of sophistication yet. But we're just basically a group of citizens and people who work in the area to get together to raise awareness and to try to catalyze actions to move ahead on local food and farming issues here. So policy is one of the areas that kind of is in the scope of what we do. And of course, depending on how broadly you define policy, that could include a number of things. So we're not really at the point of development as some of the other groups around the state. Mostly I just wanted to listen and learn about what's going on elsewhere and get some ideas as we evolve here. We might be able to address more actively sort of engagements with the governments and the business community and others on policy issues.

Andrea Brown: Great. Anyone else?



Sharon Sheldon: Hi, this is Sharon Sheldon, can you hear me?

Andrea Brown: We can.

Sharon Sheldon: Okay, good. So I don't have a little picture coming up, but that's okay. I'm from the Washtenaw Food Policy Council. And I guess one of our big, top priority for last year and going into this year is to continue to try to engage a broad cross-section of the community in the work of the Food Policy Council, so continuing to build awareness of the Food Policy Council, and to get volunteers from different municipalities across the county to participate in some of our policy action teams and/or just start to explore a little bit more, like our website, sign up for the listserv. So I think we're continuing to just try to spread the word, build awareness, communicate our policy agenda. And so I guess maybe communications and awareness and building membership are our sort of trifecta of one broad goal that we're really trying to continue to work toward.

Andrea Brown: Well great, because that's exactly what we're talking about today. So, fantastic! Is there anyone else on the line?

Laura Goddeeris: Can you all hear me? This is Laura.

Andrea Brown: We can! Hi, Laura.

Laura Goddeeris: Hi! So I'm Laura Goddeeris. I'm also with the Center for Regional Food Systems, not directly working with any local council. But as many of you know, I do research and outreach related to food systems planning and policy, particularly in the area of building local government capacity. So I'm interested in staying connected to this network and kind of thinking about how some of our partners in that more nationally focused outreach and research might be kind of brought in to build capacity here within our state. So that could be groups, you know, one in particular that keeps coming up is - I'm on the advisory committee for the Food Policy Networks Project out of the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins. So there may be some opportunities there to partner on training or other activities, so I'm mainly here to listen.

Andrea Brown: Great! Nice to see you, Laura. Anyone else on the line? Okay, a small but mighty group today.

Andrea Brown: Alright. We have a number of questions that we'll be pausing to ask throughout the webinar. These are those questions. There will be an icon that alerts you to these questions coming up, and you may be asked to respond to a quick online survey that will pop up on the screen. Or alternatively, we may open up the microphones for a conversation so that



we can all, so that we all can learn together. So Michigan local food councils are locally focused. They are usually focused on a city or on a village, a county, or a region with some issues reaching up to the state. And to a lesser degree to the federal level. But what this means is that the primary audience for your council activities is local. And so we're going to be focusing a lot of our information today on how to, how to connect with those local audiences, and then how to create local leaders. A food council's greatest value is as a source of information for the policy-makers in government, and we're going to be talking quite a bit about this as well in terms of government really being one of your strongest allies in terms of advancing policies, rules, regulations, and programs that can have community-wide impact.

A council can help government agencies see how their actions affect the food system. Food, in many ways, is a fairly new topic for local governments, and some are more advanced and sophisticated than others in their understanding about their role as policymakers around food. But it is an area where there is a lot of opportunity for councils to influence those policies. The council can be a bridge between the public and private sectors on food issues. You can be a primary source of food education for residents and business owners. And possibly most importantly, you can foster communication and civic action at the grassroots level. So I did a little bit of reconnaissance before putting this program together, looking sort of across all of the local food policy councils in the state to see how many had strategic plans or work plans and what those look like. And many councils do have strategic plans or work plans. Some of the common elements in these plans include a vision statement which is a great opportunity to outreach to a large, deep, and wide cross-section of stakeholders, interested citizens and businesses across your community to help develop that vision.

A mission statement, what you exist for, goals and objectives, and strategies and actions -- a really important aspect of the work plan or strategic plan that really specifies exactly how you want to get to what your vision, what your vision says. The strategies and actions include things like how are you building and strengthening your local council? Are you grooming your leaders? What do you want to do? What projects and initiatives? How are you making it meaningful to the stakeholders and participants that you hope to engage with? And how do you give these interested entities something to do? So we'll pause here and do a quick survey of our members. Does your council or your group, in Scott's case, have a work plan or a strategic plan? If not, are you working on one? DO you wish to work on one? Should this be popping up?

Liz Gensler: It should be popping up.

Andrea Brown: Is something popping up?

Scott: It popped up on my screen, but there was a thing that said hosts and panelists can't



vote. So I think you've made us panelists, so we may not be able to vote on here.

Liz Gensler: Yes that is true. I could demute you all.

Andrea Brown: Well, Scott, since we have you on microphone, you talked a little about this in your introduction.

Scott: We have, a couple of years ago, identified a number of priorities to work on. It's certainly well short of a strategic plan. It may not even be a work plan. We've had from time to time various working groups on different topics, and we've talked again last year about maybe revisiting the mission and some of our objectives and the role of the organization. As I mentioned, it's really not a formal entity, as such. We have not incorporated. It's not a 501c3 or anything like that. So we've talked about maybe revisiting that. One of the things we're trying to do right now probably the sort of key priority is to raise funding to recruit a paid staff person because it is an all-volunteer army at the moment. And so we've been working with the groundwork center in Traverse City on a project that's hopefully will result in us having a full time coordinator or facilitator for our activities here later this year. And if that happens, then I think we can begin to move ahead with a lot of these other sort of planning and -- a more strategic focus to the work that we're doing.

Andrea Brown: Great, thank you. And I know Washtenaw does because I excerpted some of the goals and objectives that you'll see later in the presentation.

Sharon Sheldon: Yes, we do. We have -- well, we have a work plan. We have a policy agenda, but we also have [inaudible] the policy action teams have taken their policy priorities and developed what we call the "workbooks" for each of them. So like, how to go about globalizing one or more policy priorities.

Andrea Brown: Anyone else? Alright, thank you. So the purpose of a work plan or a strategic plan is to provide that common vision, to give direction to new and existing leaders. Really important for that because we do have quite a bit of turnover in our councils and the boards and the individuals that are leading the local efforts. It helps with best using limited resources, providing a strategic focus, being ready for emerging opportunities, capacity building, providing that groundwork for seeking grants or sponsorships, or even pro bono or in kind contributions and supports that may come from within your council. So some of the elements of a work or strategic plan are the inventory and local scans, stakeholder engagement, this visioning, and goals, objectives, and strategies. So the inventory and local scan, this is something really common to community master plans, and there are a lot of parallels between the work that the food councils are doing and the work the local government do when they're putting together master plans. The first thing you want to do is identify what your geographic boundaries are,



although you don't want to necessarily limit your vision to just within those geographic boundaries. I'll talk about that in just a second. An inventory or asset mapping of all of the food-related entities that are in your region so that you can know how those connections are made from the farms to the markets to the processors to the consumers to the distributors. Your geographic area may or may not include all of these. You might not have food processors or food distribution centers in your geographic boundaries, which is why you want to look a little bit further out and identify them just to make a sort of the broadest level of connection that you can. Developing, maintaining and building that comprehensive stakeholder list. That should be starting at the inventory stage and continuing throughout any of the work you do. You can use student interns to conduct that inventory or assessment. And then doing a community food assessment which really describes your local food system. Here's a graphic that we've all seen -- similar graphics. This was a good one because it went into a little bit more detail than others. But those of you who are working in food systems, you know we're looking at how and where the food is grown, where it's processed, how it's distributed, food consumption, and what happens to the waste when it's created by the other four processes. So asking the question now: Have you inventoried your local food system? Liz, are we able to poll, or should we just open the microphones? What do you think?

Liz Gensler: Maybe we can just open the mics.

Andrea Brown: Yep! Agreed.

Scott: So we've done a few surveys, and they've certainly been well shy of inventorying the local food system. We've done a couple of things. There was a, kind of a portrait of farming and farmers within Emmett County, which is one of the sort of two counties of the center of our [inaudible]. We've done an analysis using some of the data from that [inaudible]. [Inaudible] friends over the last 30 years. We have talked about [inaudible] and how well it's utilized and other opportunities to use it more efficiently and effectively. But that is still something that we haven't been able to do. So I guess the short answer to the question is no, although we've begun to pull together bits and pieces of a few into the local food system. We've also had several presentations by Wendy Wieland [assumed spelling] from MSU Extension, and others looking at the overall food system and giving some presentations to different audiences on food systems and how they all relate to each other. But we don't yet [inaudible] detailed information on what our, the system in our sort of food shed area looks like.

Sharon Sheldon: Excuse me. That was [inaudible]. Having a coughing jag. We haven't actually done a full inventory on the local food system in any way, shape, or form because we're sort of organized by these topics related to our policy action teams. Each of those groups have served an inventory of that section. So for example, the healthy food access group has a really good handle where organizations are serving low-income individuals and where there are gaps



in the community. So I'd say it's been done not as a full council level, but more at the policy action team level.

Andrea Brown: Yeah, and this is an area where you can often go -- I know Washtenaw County is countywide, and you don't technically have a planning department there, but you do have a lot of great planners who are working for the county. Understand planning. And I'll talk about this a little bit more later, too, but local government planners really can be one of your greatest assets in helping you put together some of these inventories as you're looking at advocating to those local governments to include food in the local masterplans or the county plan in your case.

Sharon Sheldon: Right.

Laura Goddeeris: So Andrea, I'm looking at the virtual raise the hand, but if I can just jump in here really quickly, it came to me that I'm not sure how many of you are aware of this. But so one of the projects that I've been involved with for several years is a national survey of local governments related to the presence of -- their awareness of the presence of food-related policies and plans and programs. And we just last year completed a second round of the survey. So it's distributed to local government and county managers, so it's just typically one person completing the survey, so they're -- it's why I threw in the word "awareness" because they may not fully appreciate all the things that their staffs are engaged in. But I shared some very preliminary results with our staff here a few weeks ago, and we're very much in the thick of analyzing them. But I realized that it might be interesting to pull out a couple of nuggets about what we found with our Michigan results. I know there's not a large audience on this webinar, but maybe it can go in the notes and we can revisit in a future conversation.

But Michigan actually had the most responses out of any state this year. About 200 communities responded, so even more than, like, California. But I was very excited to see that number, but then as you drill down to the individual responses to the questions, Michigan seems to be kind of, at least from the perspective of these local government managers, kind of lagging behind in what they're actually doing. So on this specific question about food assessment or inventories, that was basically a question that we asked on the survey, and I'm just reading across here. So out of about close to 200 managers who responded, only one indicated that their local government staff had been, had been on a -- had conducted such an assessment. And then just only an additional six communities had worked with external partners or consultants on that. So this does seem like, just to your point about working with a county, an area where maybe we need to raise some awareness about the capacity that's there, and the interest at the community or council level.

Andrea Brown: Yeah, exactly. What I would think a primary role of the councils would be is to



educate local government about the need to up their game, including food systems in their planning process. And it wouldn't be that difficult for them to do, particularly if they're already doing the land use analysis. They might be already identifying the arable land. They might be saying, "We need to protect these lands because they're best for agriculture. Don't put another mire on them, right?" But it really, it takes advocates like those that are involved with this council to really be the conduits for that message to local government, if it's something that local government doesn't see the value in yet. That's where that advocacy becomes very important, I think.

Laura Goddeeris: Yeah, and also the regional planning commissions as well seem to be under tapped, let's say.

Andrea Brown: Yeah, and regional planning commissions have -- well and we can also make the economic, the economic argument, I think, for food at the regional level as we're looking at the governor's Regional Prosperity Initiative, and things like that. So there's a lot of ways to get the message to various types of government. Thanks for bringing that up, Laura.

Laura Goddeeris: Sure!

Andrea Brown: Okay, so inventory and investigation. We're looking at what we have on the ground and doing that, that asset mapping and making those connections. Stakeholder engagement and outreach is another area that is just ripe for the food councils to integrate into the work that they are doing. Some of the initial questions that I think are important for you to ask yourselves are who do you serve? Who is it that's going to benefit from the policies that are coming out of your council, and your vision, and your work plans? And how do you serve them? What do you want from them, not just what can you provide to these stakeholders and constituents? But what can they provide to you? How do they add fullness to your council and its policies? What strengths and gifts do they bring to your initiative that are often hidden? It takes a little bit of work sometimes to discover how these, how certain, not natural allies might become really good allies. And how do you include them in meaningful ways that add value to the council and provide a personal, professional satisfaction to the volunteer or the stakeholder or the contributor?

But these are all questions that the food council should be asking themselves before they really begin or as they are doing their, doing their, doing their outreach. So who are the stakeholders? So your plan is going to identify key stakeholders, and you should brainstorm your list of who these folks are that need to be at the table. Those that are natural, and those that aren't normally at the table that would benefit from the policies that you're looking to advance. You want to include people in the community who represent a diverse range of groups or organization. Again, both food advocates and others who can make change and



make a difference in your processes. And identify and include hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations. I know our organization, Michigan Association of Planning, has really been stressing social equity, and I know there have been a lot of conversations in the food industry, all levels of the food industry about food equity, food access, things like that. So how do we reach some of these hard-to-reach populations? It's something that planners struggle with all of the time. And these can include cultural barriers, racial barriers, and socioeconomic constraints. It often means we need to -- we can't just put out an invite and expect folks to come to our event or to participate in our policy meetings. We usually have to work pretty hard to get these, to get these folks at the table. Often it means going to them. Often it means messaging things a little bit differently than we might message to people who already do understand what the issues are, and how to, how to engage. So there's a lot of folks out there that we can outreach and engage with that are -- we know these folks. Farmers, market vendors, grocery stores, convenience stores, health departments, financial institutions, major employers, local government. And these are kind of the low-hanging fruit that we're already reaching out to, that are already probably part of our local, our local food council. But local government, again, getting back to that because I think that community planners, of course I run this professional association for community planners, but I also recognize the value that a community planner really can bring to these local food efforts. But there are others, there are other governmental entities, too, that can be engaged and that can really add strength to your local advocacy and policy efforts. But the local governments and the departments in them are the ones that make the policies. They write the codes. The master plan is a policy. If we're not including a vision for food in our master plan, it really may not be perceived as being important by the local leaders.

So how do you get to city council or county commissions and let them know that you have a food council, and that these policies are important, and that here are things that they can do? Planning commissions, zoning boards, school districts. Again, looking at more and more school districts that are buying their food and sourcing it locally. How can you help advocate for that? Planning and transportation departments. Again, you know, make friends with your local planner. Because they -- the light bulb may not have gone off for them yet, and you may be able to influence the work that a community planner does and its master planning. Or zoning regulations, you know? As we're looking at coop houses or chicken coops. A lot of communities have barriers and restrictions on the types of things that would allow a community garden to thrive. And a lot of communities aren't allowing them. So advocating on that level. Parks and recs, farmers market managers, and market governing boards, just a lot of ways to get into local government. So another question: Have you developed a relationship with your local county or regional government?

Sharon Sheldon: Well, I can start out on that. This is Sharon from Washtenaw County. We're



actually a volunteer commission, or volunteer council of our board of commissioners. So we have a formal relationship. We have a board of commissioners' member as one of our 15-member seat council. So there's regular reports, maybe a couple times a year that go up to the board of commissioners. And yes, so there's a really nice dialogue and engagement there. And we, you know, if we wanted, we could have a working session with the board of commissioners around some specific policy agenda item. But yeah, so we're very connected.

Andrea Brown: Great!

Scott: So it probably goes without saying that we do not yet. We kind of are thinking we're developing a pretty good relationship with the business community largely centered around the regional chamber of commerce here and have cosponsored a number of events with them and have participated in -- you know, they do an annual State of the Community event. And so we have gotten agriculture and food and farming into that discussion as well. But we haven't really developed a relationship with local governments in our area yet.

Andrea Brown: Yeah, the region up there, Networks Northwest, are yeah, just very -- a very responsive regional, regional organization

Scott: Right.

Andrea Brown: Anyone else?

Andrea Brown: So there are endless stakeholder possibilities. Most of the entities listed here you've probably already reached out to, but if not, there may be some additional partners that you can engage in your local efforts that are listed here. And so ensuring that all levels of food experts and stakeholders are engaged at every turn and in lots of different ways, if you have the capacity to do that. So another question: What agency or organization is your most unexpected ally? Is there somebody unusual that you didn't really expect to step up to the plate and have these conversations with you, or who are you involved with who is possibly missing from the last couple of lists that showed on the screen?

Sharon Sheldon: Well, I can say I don't think we have -- it's been challenging getting faith-based organizations connected in. We actually have a specific seat for faith-based organizations, and we had a representative for a couple of years: Inter-faith Council for Peace and Justice, which was a great fit because again, it represented a lot of faith-based organizations. But the person changed -- they were moving to a different community, so they had to step away. So we've had more of a challenge on finding faith-based organization. That's one. And we don't have any, any business leaders. We're trying right now very hard to get someone from labor to join because we feel like that would be a real asset to us, to



understand. And some are more the rural, rural farming community. So that's -- keeping these seats filled is sort of a part-time job. That can be challenging because I think people are -- we like the idea of being connected to the organization, but you know, things change, you know? They're, they're -- Maybe it isn't as high of a priority for them as we would like it to be when they first start. We do ask people for a two-year commitment if they actually have a seat on the Food Policy Council. Sometimes people have to step away before that time is over, so.

Andrea Brown: Any unexpected alliances?

Sharon Sheldon: I'm trying to think, unexpected.

Andrea Brown: Pipe in later if it comes to you.

Sharon Sheldon: Yeah, no. I think we've been really mindful of the people that we've tried to recruit. And like you've mentioned before, Andrea, we don't have a planning department in Washtenaw County anymore. So you know, we'd like to have one. I know that Megan's stayed connected to one of our policy action teams. But we'd like to have more specific connections to various planners around the county. So I know that that's always a goal. So it would be nice to have a planner at the table all the time, and on the Food Policy Council.

Andrea Brown: Alright, great. Thank you. So part of your work plan or strategic plan should include a stakeholder engagement plan that identifies who those key stakeholders are. Including those not at the table. And the plan should describe the public outreach methods you plan to use, and the appropriate venues for each of those, for each of those methods. And we're going to talk a little about methods right now. This is a great little handout that we discovered from the P-3 guide, Public Participation Policy, yeah. I forget the name of the organization. And I took out their icon, I realized, as I placed this here. But what we use this and some of our other -- Megan Minock actually was hired by MAP a couple of years ago to develop a community engagement workshop for us that we run pretty regularly. And you may have actually sourced this for me. Thank you, Megan.

We use this all the time now because it really lays out in a beautiful way -- we'll make this available for you online with the resources after the webinar. But it really, it asks in five different categories what it is you want to get from the engagement that you are doing with your stakeholders. Do you just want to inform them, educate them about a certain topic? You are just pushing information out. In that case, you are making a promise to the public which is, "We will keep you informed," and then there's a handful of techniques that correspond with that. And then you go all the way to the other end of the spectrum here which is empower, which is we want to actually provide you with the opportunity to influence the policy that's happening. And everything in between. You might be just consulting them, involving them,



collaborating with them, and then there's a different, a different set of promises, and a different set of techniques that you're going to use for each of them. They're all appropriate, and they can all be applied in different, in different situations. Just again, depending on what it is, what your local food council wants to learn. Sometimes pushing the information out is exactly what you need. Sometimes really engaging those stakeholders and empowering them to message your message is the direction you want to go. I don't have my glasses on. Megan has looked this up for me. It's the International Association for Public Participation. And they have tons of great resources online, too. We can get that link for you, along with the rest of the resources that we'll provide after the webinar.

So community engagement, again you want to build a "friends of local food contact list," and you want that to be a big list. And there are a lot of ways to develop, to develop, to develop that list. Every time you have an event, you want to provide a sign-in sheet, and you want to ask for emails and phone numbers. Of course organizational information, too. But you want to build on that at every event. You want to put it out there every time, and then you want to go back and [inaudible] those lists so that you are just building and building and building that email contact list in particular. You might want to add fields to that sign-in sheet, a column for "I want to volunteer," for example. Or alternatively, you might want to create a very simple volunteer application form. One of the most valuable things about a local food council is again, as I said at the very beginning of the presentation, this is a local initiative, and you are really touching people at the local level, and people want to help. People really do want to become involved. Food is becoming more and more important.

But if you put that field in there, "Yes, I want to volunteer," or you create an application form, you must follow up. Never put something out there that you can't follow up on. And you need to find a place to plug anyone in who wants to be, who wants to be plugged in. So that might just be some brainstorming at the council level to say, "What do we need help with? What kinds of things can we task potential volunteers with?" Your food council webpage ought to have a Join button. I think Washtenaw's does when I was looking at yours. Provide regular emails. These can be short but regular, just sending out information about what your food council is doing. Getting your messaging in front of this always-growing audience on a regular basis is important so that they know who you are and what you're doing, and that they're reminded of that not too often, but regularly. Sharing Twitter feeds and Facebook comments with a broader audience. And counting participants at every meeting, at every meeting, particularly bigger community meetings that you have. It's important to quantify the number of people that are participating and the types of groups that they are representing as you grow your councils. This type of information will be really valuable if you look for foundation funding or sponsorships. You can say, "Here are the number of people we're reaching. Here are the number of people that we've engaged with." Funders, pro bono sponsors, all kinds of folks like that. If you can tell them how many people you're reaching, that's very, that's very helpful if



you're asking for a sponsor for your next event. "We're going to have 300 people here. We have 250 at our last meeting." Even a dozen high-level local leaders at a meeting is a quantifiable number. What types of intentional outreach have you all used? Have you done any intentional outreach?

Sharon Sheldon: I'll start. This is Sharon. So we, once a year there's a local Food Summit here which just happened a couple weeks ago, so we always try to make sure we have a table, a presentation at that. We've done, we've tabled at a number of events that happen throughout the year on a regular basis. There's an Environmental Excellence Awards Fair. There's the mayor's Green Fair in Ann Arbor. So there's probably five or six events that are sort of regular that happen throughout the year that we try to make sure that we have a presence there. But the one thing we tried to do last summer with little bit of success -- we're going to do it more this year, is to get out to all the different farmers markets that happen in Washtenaw County and have some kind of a table, and really engage just people who shop there in a conversation about, "Did you know about the Food Policy Council? What are your, you know, what are you most interested in? Or what are the things that really going well in your community, or where are the gaps?" So we're going to try to have a couple of [inaudible] this summer and do some of that for us. We feel like that's a really good way to be able to just really hear from people in different of the farther reaches of the county, and get some immediate feedback on, you know, the things they care about related to the food system.

Andrea Brown: Excellent, and then you'll take your sign-up sheet too, so you can get a whole bunch of new email addresses.

Sharon Shelton: Right, right. So unfortunately, I'm going to need to get off the webinar now so I can head over to U of M for a presentation, so I'm sorry. But I have to leave early, but this has been interesting, and I will look forward to seeing any notes or handouts that you send out, and thanks for putting it together.

Andrea Brown: Thanks, Sharon.

Sharon Shelton: Okay, bye-bye.

Andrea Brown: Okay, so some of the outreach methods that can be used to connect to constituents include individual mailings, maybe a postcard asking for sign-up. Charrettes, a charrette is a local design process. We've seen charrettes used in a number of different instances at farmers markets. The Michigan Municipal League and the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, MSHDA, launched over the last three years as part of their place-making initiative, a series of place-making grants to local governments. And ten out of the 15



proposals that came in for a place-making mini-grant were for farmers markets. Just very interesting that it was farmers markets that just kept coming in, but what a great way it is to engage this much broader community in looking at what the design elements are for a farmers market, for example. One-on-one interviews when you want to get detailed information. Sharon could do something like that at her booth at the farmers markets. Canvassing works is you're looking, for example, at starting a neighborhood, a community -- not a community farm, but a neighborhood -- What?

Liz Gensler: A neighborhood garden?

Andrea Brown: A neighborhood garden. Thank you! You know, polling the neighbors in the surrounding blocks to get a sense for just letting them know it's coming, letting them know they can, you know, sign up to get a plot, that sort of thing. Just a great way to get local food initiatives out there in a smaller, discreet area. Community workshops and events, the likes of which most of the councils are running. Focus groups, bringing in experts in a certain specific area where you want to learn more. Social networking, Facebook, Twitter. MAP has been really elevating the use of our Facebook page to great success recently. And asking your partners, for example, to share the posts that you post on your Facebook page so that you can increase your, you can increase your reach. Crowd sourcing, if you're looking at raising money and surveys. You know, with Survey Monkey and even the surveying -- it's not working today, but Zoom Surveying application here is just a, you know, just another example of a really great way to get information. Basic methods include those newsletters, again, just always collecting those email address so that you can push that information out. Post things on your website. Flyers about upcoming events. Posting at farmers markets, grocery stores, food pantry. Again, post card mailings. Boosting the Facebook. We just learned because we went to a social media training program, one of the MAPS staff did. How little it costs to boost your posts on Facebook. So if your council doesn't have a Facebook page, they should. And it's about \$5 to boost any given post, so really looking at what you might want to boost, and investing in that. We've been boosting more. And then Tweeting daily. I don't really Tweet, but young people like it. Which brings us then to the blue box at the bottom, and these millennial and "gen-cen" which is this group after the millennials, the "centennial" generation born around 2000, at the turn of the century. What are the approaches they want? We know from a planning perspective when we're doing master planning processes, it's not that easy to get young people out.

"What's in it for me," they always ask. And so how do we, how do we learn what the best methods to reach these millennial's and gen-cens are? Pinterest, texting, gaming. The city of Grand Rapids has an amazing game that they use for master planning. And I started thinking about this. This might be something that we could maybe create as part of this initiative to deliver to the councils, to deliver to your constituents to play to help elevate the knowledge and understanding about, about the council and the work that they're doing. So another question:



Are you using social media? What type? Has it been effective?

Scott: So I may be the only one left here. The Food Alliance has a Facebook page and has used that moderately, nothing else really yet. There is, I mean there is an email list that has been developed over time. So going back to an earlier discussion about stakeholder outreach that now has, you know, several hundred names on it from people who have participated in various events that the Alliance has been associated with. Or have taken courses or participated in activities at the local community college related to local food and farming. So that is kind of a broadcast mechanism for a number of different things that are coming up. In terms of social media per se, pretty limited use of Facebook so far.

Andrea Brown: Yeah. We just found when we started using Facebook, we got so many more Likes on our Facebook page, and so many more organizations started pushing our information out to their whole organization. It's just been this really odd empowerment through Facebook. So media, media relations is another area that the councils can focus on. Making friends with your local media is really important, particularly in the smaller markets. But introducing yourself, your council, your priorities. Picking up the phone, calling the radio station, Michigan Public Radio, the newspaper if there is one. M-live, if they still have, if they still have an operation in your region. Phoning them up, letting them know who you are and what you do. Offering to write an article for the local paper. We've found that in some of the smaller markets, they're hungry for articles, and they will take what you write and edit it and run it. They don't have -- nobody has as many reporters as they used to, and they're grateful for contributions like that. How do we help the media understand the value of local food systems and enlist their empathy and help? And doing this on the front end, so really making friends with the media so that when you really do want them to promote your event, or there is a damaging bill in the state legislature, they're informed about food, they know about priorities. They understand the work of the councils. But it's building those relationships early and before you need them. And always sending out press releases and inviting the media, all the media. Find out who all the media are.

Develop a media list for your area and use it, and then create an elevator speech that you share with all of the members in your council so that everybody is hitting the same talking points and you're prioritizing the same issues. And it's a pretty short, a pretty short, a pretty short speech that covers the most important elements of the work that you're doing. It's said you should be able to cover your elevator speech in what? Six or eight floors, something like that. The time it takes an elevator to go from one to six or eight or ten. And general messaging and PR. These are some slick publications here, aren't they? On the screen. It isn't that tough to create publications like that. You can practically do this stuff in Word, if not, In Design, or Publisher or any other commonly-used software. If you have students in your area, often marketing students or even planning students, anybody who's young really is pretty adept at



putting together really nice, high-quality publications. But what are, what are your issues? Is it summarizing some of the priorities that are included in your work plan or in your strategic plan? Pretty them up and push them out there. Customize messages to audiences through this method as well. What do you want local government to know? What are the policy changes that the planning department or the parks and rec department can make to help you advance your food policies easier? Institutions like hospitals and schools can be informed about how they can buy and source local food. Residents, come to the farmers market. Buy local. Participate in a community garden. Buy into a CFA. These are all things we can do in a tear-sheet format. [Inaudible] card holders: let them know they can get double bucks at the farmers market. There are a lot of different messages we can package up in different ways.

And then branding your local food council is also important. Most of the food councils in Michigan already do seem to have a logo which is really important. And then it's important also that you use that logo in every piece of communications that you use so that people can really become familiar with what your look is. When you see that Ottawa County logo, which I'm imagining that must be the Ottawa County shape, you know that you're Ottawa County Food Policy Council, and you're beginning to know and internalize the things that they stand for and the policies and programs that they're helping to advance related to food. So in looking at the value of your council, I really, it really is analogous. The folks that you serve on your council analogous to a membership organization like MAPs, MAP: Michigan Association of Planning. And the types of, the types of products, services, and benefits. Those are the types of things that you really want to reinforce and highlight to the folks that you're engaging with. So asking yourselves, "What is our value to members?" And I put "members" in quotations because we can call that anything. I think most of you don't have official members, but you have constituents, you have stakeholders, you have participants. MAP has members, so I use that, I use that word. MAP also calls our members "owners." MAP operates under the policy governance model of organizational management which draws a clear line between our board and our staff functions. But most importantly, it identifies who we serve. So we have our dues-paying members. But we also have, we feel, MAP -- this is a stated policy of ours. We don't just serve our members.

The work, the best practices, the knowledge, all of those things, the education that we share is to make Michigan better. And we want to, we want to touch every single person in Michigan. And I imagine that you as a food council want to touch every single person in your, in the geographic area that your food council, that your food council serves. But looking at what is the value that you provide to those members? An opportunity to network and learn with like-minded local food advocates, a sense of belonging. Really important to make everybody who you touch in whatever way you touch them feel as if they belong to your council. They are an insider. They belong to your club. It gives people an opportunity to contribute to the local food movement which is gaining so much momentum. People want to make a difference, and if



they're allowed to, they really feel a part of. The value is to have their voice heard, an opportunity to serve as an ambassador or messenger about local food. To grow this talent as an emerging leader within, within your, within your council. Because as Sharon said before she left, you know, it is sort of an amorphous group. People come, people go. We do need to always be building leadership within our organization so that the next somebody is ready to step up when somebody else steps down and can't do it anymore. Contributing their expertise and knowledge to this local food initiative. And making meaningful connections in the community. It really is a great opportunity for the leadership or for the council to provide those opportunities to network and meet other people in the community. Community volunteer work just feels good.

Are there other values or benefits not noted here that you deliver to your constituents or would like to? So as I talk about membership, you know, it is an interesting way to pitch it to the folks that want to participate with your council. You could provide low dues or free membership. You would need to look, of course, at how you're -- as you said, Scott, you're not organized yet as a nonprofit. And there are different ways to organize nonprofits. And depending on how you're organized does determine how you can intake money. So you may or may not be able to actually collect dues, but you can mostly, most nonprofits, no matter how, no matter how the structure can collect donations. And most of our councils really are running on pretty low budgets. So any revenues that the councils can engender can certainly help you advance, advance your mission better. Sponsorships for private, corporate, or institutional entities. My counterparts at the Minnesota American Planning Association, Minnesota chapter of MAPA, they work really closely with their Blue Cross/Blue Shield there. Their Blue Cross/Blue Shield invests a lot of money in that chapter's health initiatives. I would think that local food councils would be just such a logical place for entities like Blue Cross/Blue Shield to invest some grant money to help grow capacity of these councils. You might want to create a simple membership brochure like that shown on the right side of the screen that just, you know, very briefly identifies what those membership benefits are.

And again, even if it's, even if it's free, this is a great way to collect contact information from people that you'll be pushing additional information out to. Highlighting the member benefits including that you provide regular updates through the listserv, email, or newsletter. Offer an opportunity to participate on a committee or as a volunteer. Again, this hearkens back to the remarks I made a little bit earlier about if you're going to offer opportunities for folks to volunteer and check that box, you need to find things for them to do. That could be sitting on a committee. Like Washtenaw County has all of their policy action teams. It could be manning the booth at that farmers market. It could be greeting people at your annual event. There are a lot of ways to put, to put people to work. Putting people to work really connects them more strongly to your organization and provides the potential to groom them as potential emerging and ultimately true leaders of that organization. Now working and learning, the opportunity to



get together with other like-minded people is a valuable asset of membership in an organization like this and connections to those other advocates and local leaders. Those introductions are really, really valuable. So we've talked about the inventory. We've talked about community engagement. Visioning is another aspect that's included in most of these, most of the work plans that the councils are putting together. So the vision statement defines the expectations and hopes and aspirations of the food council. And it should be based on community input and interaction, again, so that folks have ownership of what that vision is and of the council itself. It should describe what we hope and want for our food community. Where do we want it to be? This is just an example of Washtenaw's vision, and which is comprehensive. And this is an example of Ottawa Food Policy Council vision which is simpler. So there's a real range of ways that food councils can develop these. They can be long, they can be short. And then finally, the last aspect that ought to be or could be included in your work plan or strategic plan: those goals and objectives. These are examples of Washtenaw's. So there are -- and on the webpage for the Food Council Network -- do we have links, Liz, to all of the food councils? You're on mute.

Liz Gensler: Not on our webpage. I don't think they are. On the Michigan Good Food website.

Andrea Brown: Yeah, because there are just so many great -- so we can send -- we'll send that information out, too. We'll provide that on the Food Council Network webpage, a link to where you can find the other councils in whatever follow up we do to this where we're providing that additional information. There are a lot of work plans and strategic plans that the councils have completed. And, you know, I am all about borrowing and stealing from the work that other people do. So again we also need to develop leadership and our future leaders because again, there's a lot of moving off and on of these types of councils. So we need to have an ever-ready cadre of people who are participating in our efforts, and folks that we are grooming to lead. So we -- potential leaders, we identify them, we engage with them, we teach them, we empower them, and we let go so that they can take over for leadership. So characteristics of a good leader include inclusiveness, understanding that vision that was articulated and being able to clearly say it. You can tell the story of your council and what your council believes in what that vision is, what your goals are, what you're working on, how you plan to get there, who you want to engage with. A good leader creates a common bond. They're not afraid to make mistakes. You know, as I look at this, these food councils, I couldn't help but think that really this is social entrepreneurship, and that it is pretty new, and the councils are pretty new. And so we're all sort of learning as we go, and we're bringing sort of different gifts and areas of expertise to the table. But it's all good. But we also need to offer a lot of leeway to our leaders as we try new things, and not all of them are going to work. So also just sort of a spirit of forgiveness as we package it up and figure how to move forward. Empathetic. Prescient, really being intuitive about how to make those connections in our local food community and throughout our local food culture. Making those connections. Making the introductions. Helping



people get to know what other people are doing and how we can all build on each other's work. Flexibility and nimbleness, more good characteristics. Gladly sharing responsibility. Recognizing that it really is all for one, and one for all, and that there is more than enough work to go, to go around, and share in that work. And really being influential, you know, taking the lead, talking to those community leaders at the government level, the private-sector level, the anchor-institution level. Introducing your council and that food culture as such an important aspect of the work that's being done in your community and elevating that and lifting it up so that more people understand that, and more people grab hold and partner with you. So there's a lot of ways to build leadership. Again, I talked about creating a committee system. Washtenaw has a strong committee system through their policy task forces. Theirs is aligned directly with their strategic, with their strategic plan.

That's one way to go. If you're not quite as formal -- Scott, you mentioned that you've had quite a few committees too. That's one way to really rally people around themes and topics and just putting them to work, giving them something to do. So holding meetings. You don't want to form committees but not meet. So you really, you do need to meet. And the beauty of, you know, technology is that today we can, you know, we have meetings like this. We have webinars. MAP has probably ten or 12 active committees, and most of them hold at least some of their meetings by conference call. We have a lot of our meeting face-to-face too. Because guess what? People really like to get together. They like to get together. They like to meet. They like to connect with like-minded, like-minded advocates and professionals. So you want to have at least some of your meetings as face-to-face meetings. And then asking committee members, getting somebody to chair. That's a really great way to grow leadership for emerging and future leaders. And then stepping aside and letting the volunteers work. Trying their ideas. Supporting their energy. And then reaching out to stakeholders. And when you do that, always have an "ask." That "ask" can -- those huge range of "asks." Come to our event. Sponsor an activity. Donate fresh food to our event. Become a member. Sit on a committee. Write a short article for the newsletter. Share your expertise. Tell your story. That's more than enough asks for anyone, but reach out and ask the question, and get folks, get folks engaged. It's amazing, people really do want to contribute. And food, this whole food area has -- it is resonating in -- it is gaining resonance, just really elevated into a lot of different disciplines and sectors. It's not just the food advocates anymore. Just the tentacles are really long and touching so many different areas. And many leaders make light work.

The more people you can get involved with your initiative, the more that you can do. Bringing in new people can help identify new resources and uncover unknown issues and become advocates for your council's issues. Leaders can help determine how local food messages will be conveyed, to whom, and to get more stakeholders involved. And leaders can help create a local food culture through every level of the community, including those involved in decision making. And leaders also come in unexpected packages, so just be really open to the folks



that are coming to your events, that are stopping by your table at the farmers market. Getting their information, listening to their stories. Intuiting -- as I said a couple slides back, intuiting what those connections are, just always sort of looking at how you as a local council leader can help broker those connections, make those introductions. Which leads to coalitions, partnerships and networking. Who's on your team? How you can help connect them. And identifying what they can do. Team-building, another area that councils need to focus on. You need strong, empathetic leadership, consistent and open communications, mutual respect, and sense of equality, understanding the roles and strengths of each of your members, a willingness to take an initiative and be creative in flexibility.

These are all things that the leader and the team members who are part of any team need to be cognizant of. Then there's a lot of different leadership styles, too. Formal versus informal. And this can change, depending on the task, depending on the leader, depending on what's going on at any given moment. You might have a coach versus a manger, somebody who wants to just really sort of rally the troops versus a task master. There's not a right or a wrong way to lead. There are, there are different ways to lead, and each of them have their own pluses and minuses. And there's different types of leadership needed throughout the organization and throughout the initiatives. And leaders can be created and recruited throughout the community, and again, thinking about those unique gifts that any one individual might bring to your table. And how do you honor those and build those and make those connections? So team building can be challenging because you do get a lot of different people coming together with a whole lot of different expectations about what the team looks like, and what the team is going to do. Some reasons the teams don't win: they don't understand the vision, again really important to create that vision through a group process by engaging a lot of different stakeholders in your council so people really are onboard with that vision. They don't see their place in the scheme of things. Again, getting back to your role as a leader, or how you're grooming future leaders, really helping people. Hearing what they say, and then helping them understand what their place is. We may need to sometimes articulate that for people, or tell them to just keep coming back until it emerges.

Other reasons are the team members aren't properly equipped to execute their duties. Do they need more training? Webinars, webinars like this or even more detailed, detailed trainings that might get to aspects that your council needs particular help with. Don't follow up and are not accountable. You know, your manager or your leader or your director needs to help volunteers and participants know that they are accountable if there are deadlines, assignments, that article that needs to be presented to the local media. Don't play nice together. We can all get a little parochial and want to, want to not share our resources, but there's plenty to go along, and a good leader ought to be able to help sort of smooth over and broker those, those potential disagreements. And again, are there people that are missing from the table that simply, simply need to be invited to participate because those perspectives are absent? So this is -- we're



winding down. We've got some foundations of food councils here. Remembering that food councils reflect diverse interests and needs of people who might meet under their umbrellas. Again, we saw the lists of stakeholders, and then there are others that aren't even included there. It's just, it is, it is so broad and a council is representing a lot of different voices, perspectives, opinions that are probably mostly valid, but how do you organize and structure that? A food council reflects a food system comprised of many components with many different stakeholders, may at times face the challenging task of finding consensus on issues. But working together, council members and the public can pinpoint the most pressing food needs for their community and devise solutions, prioritize them, and take action. So that concludes our webinar. Are there any questions, comments, input?

Scott: No, thank you. This has been good. A lot of things to think about and kind of early in our game. But it's been very helpful, and good overview of some of the things we might be thinking about going forward here.

Andrea Brown: Great, thanks for calling in.

Liz Gensler: Thanks, Scott.

Andrea Brown: Okay. Well, thanks everyone.

Liz Gensler: Thank you, Andrea.

Andrea Brown: You're welcome.

Liz Gensler: Alright. We will be sending more information about the next meeting on the listserv, so stay tuned for that. Thanks for joining us today.

Andrea Brown: Bye now.

