

LOCAL FOOD COUNCIL NETWORK

February 24, 2016 | WEBINAR on Leadership & Membership

SUMMARY

On February 24, three people representing two local food councils attended our first webinar in 2016. Andrea Brown, Executive Director of Michigan Association of Planning, led the session on membership outreach and leadership development. Below is an overview of each item and links to more information.

Introductions

Participants were asked to share their name, council and the biggest challenge or most successful activity in 2015 for their council.

- Scott Smith from Local Food Alliance of Northern Michigan: They are not working on policy yet, and beginning to engage with local government.
- Sharon Sheldon from Washtenaw Food Policy Council (WFPC): top priority is to continue to try to engage broad swath of communities. Challenges are to get municipalities across county to participate in planning action teams (PATs), communication and awareness

Membership Outreach

Andrea went over main factors and steps in outreach. The main points were:

- The primary audience for a food council is local
- Think about what a food council's greatest value is
- A strategic plan or work plan is needed as a basis for outreach
 - Poll: Does your council have a strategic plan?
 - Local Food Alliance: Raising funds for a part-time person to help with strategic planning
 - WFPC: Has a strategic plan. Working to determine how to mobilize on one or more policy priorities
- Review of elements of a work or strategic plan: inventory & local scan, stakeholder engagement, visioning, and goals, objectives and strategies
 - Poll: Has your council inventoried the local food system?
 - Local Food Alliance: Have done some surveying in Emmet Co; pulling together pieces
 - WFPC: Have not done full inventory, organized by PAT topics and each group has done their own inventory of that area
- Key questions for engagement and outreach:
 - Who do you serve?
 - How do you serve them?
 - What do you want from them?
 - How do they add fullness to YOUR Council and its policies?

- What strengths and gifts do they bring to your initiative?
- How do you include them in meaningful ways that add value to the council AND provide personal/professional satisfaction to the volunteer?
- Local government and planners can be natural ally
 - Poll: Have you developed a relationship with a local government?
 - Local Food Alliance: Good relationship with business community, mainly around local chamber of commerce – have gotten food and ag into that discussion
 - WFPC: Formally connected to Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners
 - Laura Goddeeris from CRFS: Survey from the International City/County Management Association suggests potential for expanded coordination/collaboration between food councils and local planners/governments in MI
- Discussion of types of stakeholders
 - Poll: Who is missing from your council? Who has been an unlikely ally?
 - WFPC: Faith-based orgs have been hard to engage; trying to get business leaders and/or labor to join; keeping seats filled is a part-time job. Members like idea of being connected but things change; the requested 2-year commitment doesn't always work out.
- Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that identifies key stakeholders and the public outreach tools you plan to use. Make sure that those not normally at the table are identified.
 - The International Association of Public Participation has a spectrum of public participation which is helpful to use as a first step (see http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.iap2.org/resource/resmgr/imported/IAP2%20Spectrum_vetical.pdf)
 - Build a friends of local food contact list, but you must follow up in order to make participation meaningful.
- Discussion of outreach methods
 - Poll: Have you done intentional outreach and what methods have you use?
 - WFPC: Have presence at annual local food summit; table at other local, related events; table at all farmers markets in summer
 - Proactive methods like individual mailings, community workshop and social networking
 - Poll: Do you use social media? Which type? Has it been effective?
 - Local Food Alliance: Has used Facebook some
 - Discussion: Can we link up local councils on Facebook or other social media? To see the list of local food councils in Michigan, go to http://www.michiganfood.org/get_involved/connect_with_a_local_group#localfoodcouncils
 - Basic methods such as newsletters, website postings, fliers, boosting Facebook posts or tweeting daily
 - Make friends with local media



- You need an elevator speech about the value of local food
- One page information sheets to distribute at events and customized to the audience
 - For example, the UP Food Exchange has Community Food Systems Guides for citizens (<http://upfoodexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Community-Food-Systems-Citizens-12.17.14.pdf>) and decision-makers (<http://upfoodexchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Community-Food-Systems-Decision-Makers-12.17.14.pdf>)
- Important to brand your council – logo, etc.
- How to create members
 - Show the value of the council to members
 - Consider “membership” – low dues or free, sponsorships, membership brochure
- Making membership meaningful
 - Share the council’s vision
 - Have goals and objectives and share how they are being reached

Leadership

Andrea discussed how to build leaders and teams. The key points were:

- The council should identify future leaders, engage them, teach them, empower them and then let them go do work.
- Review of the characteristics of a good leader including not afraid to make mistakes and gladly shares responsibility
- Overview of how to build leadership including creating a committee system and always having an “ask”.
- Team building needs strong empathetic leadership; consistent and open communication; mutual respect and a sense of equality, understanding of roles and strengths of members, willingness to take initiative and be creative; and flexibility
- Many different types of leadership styles, all can contribute and different types are needed
- Discussion of common reasons teams don’t win ranging from they don’t understand the vision to missing key players

To access the recording and slides used during the meeting, visit:

http://foodsystems.msu.edu/resources/mlfcn_membership_leadership_development_webinar

OUTCOMES:

- Three people from two Local Food Councils and other agencies had the chance to network and learn from each other.
- Increased network knowledge about membership outreach
- Increased network knowledge about leadership and team building



GOALS FOR NEXT MEETING:

- Hands-on training activities
- Sharing of knowledge between Food Councils

The Michigan Local Food Council Network is sponsored by the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, http://foodsystems.msu.edu/activity/info/local_food_council_network, made possible through a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Network coordinators are Megan Masson-Minock at ENP & Associates and Andrea Brown with Lauren Carlson at Michigan Association of Planning. All information is shared for educational purposes only.

