

Notes from Strategy Session 3: Developing Food Hubs

Selected Strategy

Food Hub Statewide Initiative

Strategy Context (Description, existing and potential contributors, potential questions/concerns)

- MDARD- RFP out soon on value/added Ag and Regional
- Technical Assistance (2 new hires)
- Center for Regional Food Systems: Launching statewide food hub learning network
- National Food Hub Collaboration: will provide technical support to the Statewide Initiative

Key good Food Charter Goals and Priority Actions served by this Strategy

Goal 4) 80% of Michigan residents will have easy access to affordable, fresh, healthy food, 20% of which is from Michigan

Other Important Notes

Who owns/operate a Food Hub?

Key Charter Goal Indicators, types of data, ways to measure:

Goal 4:

- 1) Increase # of underserved residents purchasing good food
- 2) Increase number of food hubs selling to underserved markets
- 3) Map of where retailers, producers, markets are in MI-> define "easy access"

Goal 1:

- 1) Increase # institutions purchasing local food
- 2) Increase # of growers selling thru food hubs

Goal 4) Data/Measurements

- Risk assessments; system to ID MI products;
- Retailer measures; HMIS; food thru food banks, EBI purchases market assessments

Goal 1) Data/Measurements

- Reporting from institutions; existing data collections; state database; clear definition of local
- Dollar value or pounds of food sold; track baseline and change in shipments to institutions
increase in acreage of specialty crops; survey of schools participating in farm to school;
accountability of self-assessments by institutions.

Key Priority Action Steps

Food Business Districts

- Food hubs can be anchors of districts
- locate business districts where they will be most useful to producers and consumers
- Land use/zoning are there barriers to creating these districts?
- Infrastructure Analysis (roads, water, etc.)

- Tax incentives for Business Districts
- Zoning/ordinance language template
- Repurpose existing infrastructure
- Develop templates based on rural and urban areas

Collective Purchasing Power

- Make compelling argument for engagement w/ FH's
- Overall marketing strategy for Food Hubs
- Create networks of growers/grower collectives
- More contract templates around purchasing

Expand and Increase Methods to bring healthy foods to underserved areas

- Develop entrepreneurship skills
- Offer culturally appropriate foods
- Engage and build upon existing community orgs (churches, neighborhood associations, etc.)
- Create cultural, youth-sensitive packaging
- Ensure that individuals in underserved areas have the resources to take advantage of good food (classes, workshops, seminars)
- Ask people in these areas how they want to access good food
- Pay attention to include Michigan tribal communities

Next Steps

- Launch Statewide Food Hub Network
- June 18th-Lansing
- Release RFP
- Add Participants to Network
- Start Food Hub list serve

Timeline

2012-2014

Contact Person (s) and Communication Channel

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Strategy Session Recap

Overall Goal of the Day

The overall goal today is to address how we can move forward with the statewide initiative and to come up with steps we can take in terms of priority actions.

Who is in the room?

- Farmers/food processors/distributors: about 6-8
- Food educators or food advocates: about ¾ of the room

- Funders or financiers: about 4
- Government agency: about 6
- Also: institutions, food banks, food retailers, public health, land trusts

In front of you, you should have a NGFN Food Hub Collaboration Handout for reference during the conference and beyond includes:

- Regional food hub definition
- Regional food hub characteristics
- What is the NGFN Food Hub Collaboration?

Opening the floor: what is happening in your community around food hubs?

- Executive Director, Food Bank Council of Michigan:
 - o Has been talking to food hub planners to ensure that each writes into their plan a designated source for all leftover food. Would be more than willing to come to any community to help with this planning process
- Gordon Muller from Grand Rapids:
 - o Grand Action is creating a market similar to Eastern Market. Hub, business incubators,
- The Silver Spork:
 - o Order online and distribute from various locations
- The Conservation Fund:
 - o Just hosted Great Lakes Food Hub Network in Southwestern Michigan
- Terry McLean, MSU Extension educator:
 - o In the process of doing a feasibility study for an incubator kitchen
- Ken:
 - o Reminder: let's not forget about food webs that have been formed over the past 10 years (the informal networks in communities). Let's not let them get lost in the process
- Joan (Allen Neighborhood Center, Lansing):
 - o Currently operating a 10-yr-old pantry, 9-yr-old farmers market and 6-yr-old garden house. About 1/3 of the way through construction on a food hub that will house incubator kitchen, cold storage, and a site for aggregation and distribution of food
- Traverse City:
 - o Redeveloping the state mental institution for aggregation, distribution, and possibly aquaponics

Food Hubs at the State Level

- Michigan legislature has put \$2 million in budget for value-added agriculture.
- Handouts are available that include information about technical and financial support available through MDARD.
- The grant is for value-added food processing and for regional food systems. This will be housed at www.michigan.gov/mdard
- Nancy (MDARD): The money is for both value-added agriculture and regional food system development. It is broad, and hopefully it's as inclusive as possible
- Question: Why is this catching on now? Where does this come from? Why are food hubs so relevant at this moment?

Marty: with the KYF2, the USDA has identified aggregation and distribution as a key limiter to getting good food to people. Kathleen Merrigan established a food hub sub-committee that identified what food hubs exist and what needs to happen to establish more of them. This is an opportunity to get more local food into the marketplace.

“Fruit and Vegetable Industry Cluster – California” handout

- -A food hub is about the processing and aggregation and distribution, but there are many other partners that come into play. Oftentimes, they are located in our immediate communities.
- -Metaphorically, if food hubs are seeds, we cannot simply spread seeds and hope that they grow. Food hubs must have fertile soil, so-to-speak, or the right environment to thrive. This is why we want to create a statewide network that includes food hub innovators and the organizations that work them. We want to create space for people to learn, build trust, and innovate together.

Afternoon Session

Recap of morning session:

Our top two GFC goals related to food hubs: Goal #4 and Goal #1. This afternoon, we will be identifying and prioritizing measures, indicators of success, and ways to make progress on our goals.

Goal #4: Eighty percent of Michigan residents will have easy access to affordable, fresh, healthy food, 20 percent of which is from Michigan sources.

Possible Indicators:

- Increased sales of good food through EBT
- Increased acceptance by farmers of EBT
- Increase in number of food hubs serving underserved populations
- More farmers markets accepting EBT
- Geographically speaking, does the majority of the population have easy access to good food? (must define easy access)
- Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Increase specialty crop production

Goal #1: Michigan institutions will source 20 percent of their food products from Michigan growers, producers or processors.

Possible Indicators:

- Increase total sales of good food (based on sales receipts)
- Increase in number of growers selling through food hubs
- Increase in the number of institutions purchasing local food
- Increase of Michigan food aggregators that are selling Michigan products to large supermarkets in Michigan
- Establish the baseline: does each institution need to achieve 20 percent, or is the 20 percent collective?

- Transparency in labeling “Michigan” products
- Increase in amount of Michigan-grown food processed in Michigan
- Make GAP and “safe” certification more available to small and mid-sized farmers
- Increase in seasonal extension production and therefore in amount of seasonal consumption
[point: this one seems to be the only one on this list that is purely *indicator* oriented, whereas the rest seem like implementation strategies]

Now we will chose priority actions related to each goal [Participants vote for their top two indicators for each goal]. We will brainstorm ideas about data collection and measuring success of the priority actions.

Goal #1: Number one priority action: increase in number of institutions purchasing local food

Data Collection:

- Work with existing data collections
- State system accumulating data
- Reporting from institutions

Measurements:

- Pounds of food or dollar value of food
- Institutions track from where their food was based
- Increase in acreage of non-commodity crops
- Survey of schools participating in farm-to-school
- Accountability of institutions

Goal #4: Number one priority: Increase in number of underserved residents purchasing good food

Data Collection:

- System to identify Michigan grown product
- Assessment of food assistance purchases (SNAP, Double Up Food Bucks)

Measurements:

- HMIS (Homeless Management Information Systems) database
- Collect data from wholesalers and grocers
- Collect data from farmers markets
- Rapid assessment of farmers markets

We have now voted on three priority actions. Our top three choices are:

1) Food Business district: a zoning districts or designated area of a municipality where food businesses could cluster together

What can we do to make this happen?

- Food hubs can be the anchors of food business districts
- Locate these business districts where they are most useful for producers and consumers
- Look at land use and zoning impediments to see if there are barriers to creating these districts
- Infrastructure analysis

- Work with local or county government to create tax incentives for these business districts
- Zoning and ordinance language template
- Utilize existing infrastructure: repurposing strategies for all food innovation districts
- Develop templates based on both rural and urban needs

2) Encourage institutions to use their collective purchasing power to influence the food supply chain to provide healthier food and more foods from Michigan

What can we do to make this happen?

- Make the business case for buying from food hubs: make a compelling argument for institutions to engage with food hubs
- Overall marketing strategy for food hubs
- Approach the growers (given the shortage in supply) to see if they can produce for the institutions and other end buyers interested in dealing with food hubs
- More contract templates around purchasing
- Build networks of growers who can approach food hubs/institutional buyers
- Provide opportunities for small farmers to form collectives
- Modify existing models of collective purchasing power to food

3) Expand and increase methods to bring healthy foods to underserved areas

What can we do to make this happen?

- Develop entrepreneurship skills
- Offer foods that are culturally appropriate to the populations you're serving
- Engage and build upon existing organizations that represent communities (churches, neighborhood organizations, etc.)
- Create culturally and youth sensitive packaging
- Ensure that families in underserved areas have the resources to take advantage of good food (classes, workshops, etc.)
- Ask people in underserved communities how they want to access good food
- Include tribal communities in Michigan

Overview of the day

We established that we want to develop a statewide network of food hubs. We identified two goals and three priority actions to accomplish these goals in the statewide food hub network.

Next steps:

Statewide food hub network's first official meeting is on Monday, June 18. There is a \$2 million grant program for value-added agriculture and regional food development. Official release should be soon.

For information from a nationwide survey of food hubs, visit www.foodhub.info (includes information about business structures)

Comments on the day:

- Next time, devote more time to 'what are food hubs?' to establish a baseline so everyone understands what a food hubs is
- We have to pay attention to who is *not* in the room today. This is about farmers, but there aren't very many of them represented here today
- Would have been helpful to hear some background information/some sort of a timeline to show what a successful food hub looks like and has been through.
- Very engaging day!
- As we return to our communities, it's important to remember the inclusivity of this kind of work, being sure to include groups of varying socioeconomic status, race, sexual orientation, etc.
- This inclusion pertains to the language we use as well. 'Food Hub' is a new term; we must be careful to include language that even those who don't strategize at conferences can understand.