Food for Tomorrow, Food for All:

Community Food Systems Work at Oregon Food Bank

National Food Hub Conference

Raleigh, N.C.

March 26, 2014
Statewide Network

37 Counties
21 Regional Warehouses
900 + Agencies
1 Million + Food Boxes
Unique Situation

- 30 year old Statewide Network organized as a community of practice
- Central warehouse & trucking > 21 RFBs
- Strategic plan & Advocacy Team that supports community food systems work
- Integrated Education programs
- Community Food Systems program with the goal of restoring local food economies
VISION: We envision communities across Oregon and SW Washington where citizens are empowered and actively engaged across sectors to attain personal and community food security.

Three approaches:

- Community FEAST
- RARE Community Food Assessment Partnership
- Food Systems Networking
Why does the Food Bank do this work?

- Helps to accomplish our mission: **To end hunger and its root causes, because no one should be hungry**
- Opportunity to **engage community** in a new and different way
- Finished assessment provides community a road map for **action**
- Make sure **voices of food insecure people are heard** in the community food systems movement
- Upstream/**long-term solutions** are needed to end hunger!
About the FEAST model

- FEAST was developed as a response to the need to help communities move to action around community food systems work.
- These events are organized by a local leadership team and feature local organizations.
- A FEAST convenes a conversation that leads to a self-determined organizing plan for food systems work in the community.
- Currently, OFB staff serve as facilitators, provide suggestions, feedback and support, but do not direct the outcomes.
IMPACT

- 60+ events to date engaging over 1500 people
- Replicable model - being implemented in 6 states beyond Oregon
- Shown to increase community connections among participants
- 30+% of participants are food producers
- Program nationally recognized by Feeding America’s 2013 Innovation Awards

FEAST engages a broad spectrum of the community to create self-determined organizing plans.
OFB-RARE Community Food Assessment Partnership

• **14** Community Food Assessments (CFA) covering **21** counties (*to date*)

• Coordination and facilitation of **21** FEAST events

• **80+** Rural grocery store surveys

• **7** Local food resource guides
WHY WE DO COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT?

CFAs have identified:

• Improvements to local food systems that can be made by current community groups, with existing resources

• Ways to strengthen emergency food services in Oregon’s rural communities

• Policy solutions and other actions that can improve local food systems and reduce food insecurity

Our qualitative approach:

• Builds community in the process

• Reflects local food system realities through the lens of the local community

• Informs grassroots actions in communities, acting as a guide for local organizations
CFA RECOMMENDATIONS
COMMON ACROSS REGIONS:

- Increase Healthy Food Access
- Promote small & medium size growers
- Build Food Literacy
- Community Food Organizing

Complete • Planned 13-14
SUSTAINING RURAL COMMUNITIES

RURAL GROCERY STORES

WHY?

• Rural Economic Development
• Access to Food
• Social Hub

CHALLENGES?

• Minimum purchasing requirements
• Product delivery
• Stocking fresh produce
• High operations costs
• Slim profit margins
• Availability of satisfactory labor
NETWORKING & LEADING THE MOVEMENT

• Food for Oregon/ Social Media
• Supporting CFS Organizations
• Convening Partners & Players
• Playing a leading role in local, regional & national food movements
• FEAST Leadership Network, Quarterly webinars
• Advising funders & policymakers
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Connect With Us on Social Media!

http://www.facebook.com/oregonfoodbankcfs
https://twitter.com/#!/OFB_SharonT
Food Banks as Food Hubs

Leona Davis
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www.communityfoodbank.org
The Movement in Food Banking

Interfaith Food Shuttle
Raleigh, NC
Our goals
95% of food GROWN in AZ is EXPORTED

97% of food CONSUMED in AZ is IMPORTED
Creating Economic Opportunity

Community Food Bank Clients (monthly)

- 1997: 150,000
- 2011: 250,000
Creating Economic Opportunity
Shifting Our Model: Food Bank to Food Hub
Foodlink as a Food Bank

- Founded in 1978
- 5,700 square miles and 10 counties in Central/Western NY
- 500 community partners
- Emergency and “Non”-Emergency
- 16.7 million pounds/year
- 30+ food-related programs
- 65 FTE staff
Catalyst for Change

1.) Recession → Increase in hunger
2.) Decrease in Donated Product → 30% decrease from top donor

Silver Lining: *Responding to the spike in need and the decrease in resources made us a stronger organization.*
- Expanded services and staff to meet demand
- Moved to new building (outgrew old space)
- Renewed commitment to use our assets and resources 24-7 to impact on the cause (poverty), rather than JUST 8-5 to work on the symptom (hunger)

- Evolution to Food Hub with innovative programs
Food Bank to Food Hub

Consumer Driven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Bank</th>
<th>Food Hub</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Charity</td>
<td>• Social enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Passive (receive donated food, redistribute)</td>
<td>• Proactive (purchasing, growing, processing)</td>
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<td>• Responding to symptoms, not causes</td>
<td>• Address root causes through innovative programs</td>
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Key Components of “Shifting Our Model”

1. Acknowledging that traditional food banking does not END hunger

2. Maximizing stewardship of our assets

3. Diversifying our customer base

4. Investing in the local economy

5. Embracing market-based solutions

6. Focusing on “Health” instead of “Hunger”
Stewardship of Assets

• 24/7 (cause) instead of 8/5 (symptom)

• Foodlink has accrued much infrastructure over 30 years of food banking
  ▪ 80,000 sq. foot warehouse
  ▪ 3,700 sq ft cooler
  ▪ 5,200 sq ft freezer
  ▪ 10,000 sq ft commercial kitchen
  ▪ Fleet of 13 trucks incl. refrigerated
  ▪ “Soft” infrastructure as well, like inventory system, workforce, and critical relationships
Diversified Customer Base

• **Growing “non-emergency” base** – (nonprofit organizations) can’t afford to continue to shop retail
  - e.g., daycares, group homes, senior centers, etc.

• **Increased purchased product** to help menu-plan and budget accordingly

• Food Hub programs allow us to work directly with individuals (Curbside Market) and select For-Profits (corner stores)
Investing in the Local Economy

• Expansion of purchased product; emphasis on locally produced items

• Over $250,000 spent on local farms

• Stretch the food dollars of our partner agencies

• Offer storage capacity at below market value

• Commercial kitchen: pilot VAP program
Market-Based Solutions

• Increase in purchased product required a change in distribution model

• Create a Value Chain

• Cooperative purchasing

• Farm To Institution (FINYS)

• Food Access Programs

•*We believe ALL food banks should be involved in economic development work!*
Health Over Hunger

• HEART (CDC) as impetus

• Proactively purchase healthy foods and make them available and affordable

• Emphasis on produce, but not exclusive

• Menu Planning for agencies

• 5 unique Nutrition Education programs aimed at building food literacy
Example: Food Access Programs

• Farm Stands: 12 Sites with community partners
  ▪ 30,000lbs, EBT, WIC, Fresh Connect

• Curbside Market: 30 Sites, mostly public housing
  ▪ Over 35,000 lbs, EBT, WIC, Fresh Connect

• Healthy Corner Stores: Pilot phase working with 3 stores
Future Steps

• Value Added Processing
  ▪ Process for distribution within our network
  ▪ Process for small/mid-sized farmers that lack infrastructure

• Expand our Farm to School and Farm to Institution capacity
Lessons for Food Banks/Hubs

- All Food Banks have millions of dollars of food-related infrastructure—they can leverage this infrastructure to be good partners in local food movements.

- Food Banks already work with low-income, underserved populations—can make good, local food available to their large networks.

- Charity alone will not end hunger; hunger prevention requires increasing food access via market-based solutions, fostering an equitable food system, and focusing on workforce and economic development.
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