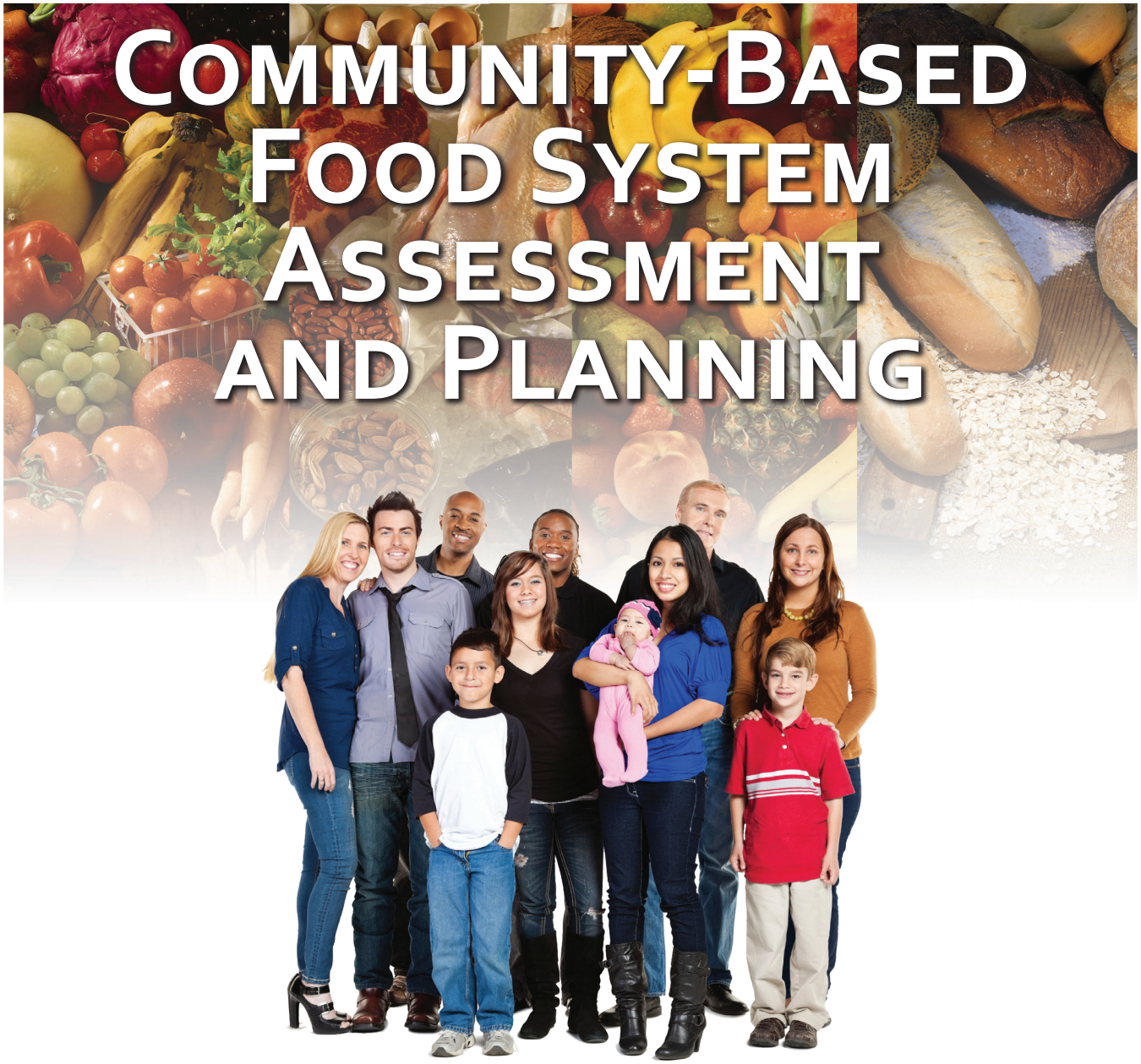
FACILITATOR'S GUIDEBOOK - 2018

Community-Based Food System Assessment and Planning



A guide to working with your community

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Facilitator's Guidebook - 2018

Community-Based Food System Assessment and Planning

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Introduction

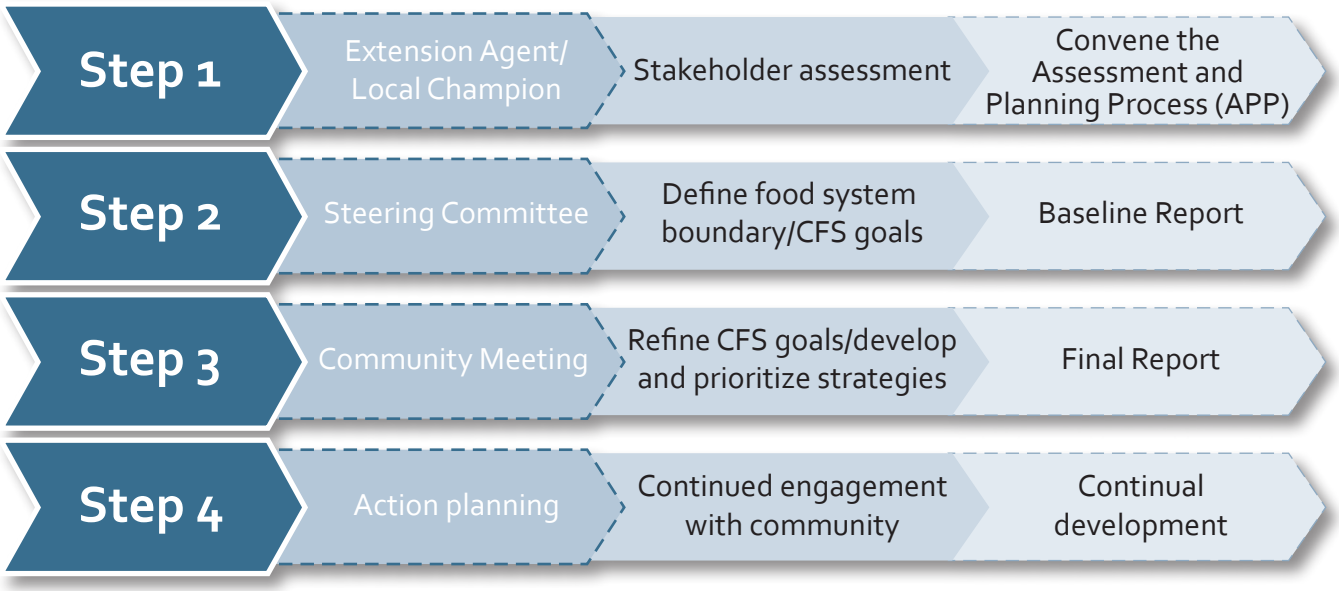
Just as a long journey is made easier and clearer by using a road map, a community food coalition or policy council's work is greatly enhanced through the guidance of a community food assessment. Food assessments don't have to be complex; they can be as simple as a group of stakeholders gathering to discuss and list community food system (CFS) assets and weaknesses. Or, they can be more detailed studies that are conducted over many months, using surveys and other formal information-gathering instruments to compile specific data.

This community-based food system assessment and planning process is one component of a larger societal goal to ensure a sustainable food system. A sustainable CFS is a collaborative network of people "that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular place. Farmers, consumers, and communities partner to create a more locally based, self-reliant food economy" (University of California, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program).

Extension agents and local "champions" are encouraged to use this guidebook to help others in their communities work toward those goals. In this guidebook, you will learn to:

- Assemble and work with a CFS Steering Committee to:
  - Define your community food system.
  - Define your CFS goals and take stock of CFS assets.
  - Create a Baseline Report and broaden the stakeholder base.
- Host a community work session to develop, evaluate, and prioritize strategies for enhancing your community's food system.
- Develop an action plan to engage the community in accomplishing priority strategies.

This is a developmental process, meaning that each step builds on the previous one. The four-step process is also iterative, meaning that it should be repeated as necessary to ensure the community is continually moving toward its self-defined goals.



The food system assessment and planning process prioritizes community engagement. Much of the ability to get buy-in and integrate the food system into the fabric of the community is determined by having the right stakeholders at the table. As such, many of the activities provided here were designed to maximize participation and interaction among community interests. Feel free to amend or supplement the process outlined here, to suit your community's needs and preferences.

This guide will provide a process for gathering stakeholders using the "Community Capitals Framework" (Flora, Flora, and Fey 2003). The Community Capitals represent seven diverse areas in which a community has assets and can make investments for future growth. The capitals served as a framework for the research behind this guide and will be used throughout as a framework for stakeholder identification and asset mapping. The seven capitals are:

1. Natural capital
2. Built capital
3. Financial capital
4. Social capital
5. Human capital
6. Cultural capital
7. Political capital

According to Flora, and Fey (2003), there are seven areas in which a community can have assets. Moreover, these assets can be invested to increase community resources or capital. Because of this investment piece, they are called the Community Capitals.

The following diagram depicts the areas in which communities have rich resources. Often, when people think of community resources, they think of financial or built capital; this model helps expand our thinking to areas in which a community might be rich in cultural or natural capital, for example. For this work, the outcome in the center of the figure would be a vibrant community food system.

The Community Capital Framework

Source: Emery and Flora 2006; revised graphic: C. Cox

The second part of the Community Capital Model is to understand how capital is invested. We will use the investment portion of this model more in the third meeting, but it's worth explaining now as a reference. The idea of capital investment is that if we invest in capital, it will provide a return of some sort. In CFS work, if we invest in infrastructure, such as building a processing plant (built capital), we will get some CFS return. Following is a list of the seven capitals and how they might be invested in for the betterment of the CFS.

How Investment in the Seven Capitals May Impact Community Food Systems

Natural capital investments – Preserving, restoring, enhancing, and conserving environmental features in the community food system effort.

Cultural capital investments – Sharing cultural identities (heritage, history, ethnicity, etc.) to drive CFS effort.

Human capital investments – Work expertise, education, or physical ability contributed to CFS effort.

Social capital investments – Risks taken to express differences of opinion, organizations involved, involving youth, public participation/input, organizational link with nonlocal involvement, actions linking community to the outside, local and nonlocal organizations involved, organizational representative on decision-making board, number of different groups on board.

Political capital investments – Political support, relationship presence, and nature of relationship between CFS board and local, county, state, federal, tribal, and regional governments.

Financial capital investments – Type of materials contributed to CFS effort, presence and sources of both local and external financial support, mechanisms used for leveraging financial support.

Built capital investments – Infrastructure used for CFS efforts.

Choosing a Steering Committee

As a process that highly values community engagement, the first step will be assembling an inclusive and diverse Steering Committee. A broad Steering Committee will help attain the greatest diversity of ideas and perspectives. In this first section, we are going to go through an exercise that will help to select members for a Steering Committee that represent many aspects of the community. Hopefully, this will take you past the "usual suspects" to tap into important parts of the CFS that might not regularly be brought to the table.

If you already have a community food policy council or food coalition, it is an excellent starting point for this group; however, you may want to add to the group for this phase of the assessment and planning process. The people recruited may have never thought about community food systems (by that terminology) or realized they have a stake in this work.

It is important to communicate the significance of divergent perspectives. Everyone has an investment in food, but that investment may vary in its priority. This is an excellent opportunity to bring new people into the mix who may become advocates for continued CFS work. If you do not have a local food policy council and later wish to form one, it may include some people from this group.

Purpose and Outcomes

The Steering Committee will work together to do the initial assessment work and bring in the broader community for the Community Meeting phase of this work. This committee — selected to represent all areas of the community — will assess the current CFS and to set initial goals and priorities for enhancing the CFS. It will then identify the larger groups to invite to the Community Meeting. At the conclusion of the Community Meeting, a beginning action plan will have been developed; it will be refined and carried out.

Choosing a Representative Steering Committee

NOTE: Only do this section if you are forming a Steering Committee with an existing group.

1. **Why have a representative committee?** (10 minutes)

   Successful committee work is **critical** to the success of the program. How is having a committee of dedicated stakeholders critical to the success of your program?

   On flip chart paper, make a list with ideas from the audience. Process the list, discussing how committees and the diversity of ideas from these committees help to expand the reach, innovativeness, and potential outcomes of your program.

Who Should Choose the Committee?

The best Steering Committee will be chosen by more than one person. There are three methods that might work, depending on the structure and makeup of your county office and community.

1. If you have a collaborative county Extension office, you could ask them to complete the Stakeholder Identification Worksheet during a staff meeting. Using several agents representing children, youth, families, natural resources, agriculture, and/or community development, they would likely know a wide segment of the community that would be a good starting point for Steering Committee selection.

2. If you have an existing food policy council or food coalition, it could be an excellent group to use for the stakeholder identification process.

3. If you do not have an existing group to work with and are starting from scratch, you may want to use a "snowballing" technique. This technique could also be used with the other methods to get names beyond those originally identified. In a snowballing technique, you would identify the first couple of people to invite, talk to them about the types of people you are looking for, and have them identify the next contacts. You then talk to their contacts until you have completed all of the Steering Committee slots on the Stakeholder Identification Worksheet.

2. **Who might we include from our community?** (15 minutes)

   In a community, the Community Capitals are represented by groups of people. One strategy for comprehensively forming a group that can address strategies for community development is to intentionally form one based on the seven Community Capitals. The capitals are categories that can help you identify groups in your community that could serve as stakeholders for your Local Foods Committee.

   Look at the following worksheets labeled Community Capital Stakeholder Identification Tool and Stakeholder Identification Worksheet. Think about what people in your community might be good representatives for each of the capitals. The first, completed worksheet has ideas for the titles, jobs, and characteristics of people who might represent that capital. The second worksheet has the same circles representing the capitals, but they are left blank for you to brainstorm people who might serve.

   Brainstorm a list of potential committee members to fill all seven capitals using the blank Stakeholder Identification Worksheet.

3. **Create a contact list.** (15 minutes)

   If doing this with a group, list all ideas for stakeholders under each capital. Note places where you were challenged to think of anyone and the surprises or insights you may have had. Collect the contact information for each named person if available. This information can then be put on the Stakeholder Contact Form, with a point person assigned as the contact for each person listed. If this is completed individually, the organizer will be the point person for making all contacts.

Community Capital Stakeholder Identification Tool

Financial Capital
Potential committee members:
Representatives of infrastructure development groups, banks, endowments, and funding agencies.

Natural Capital
Potential committee members:
Representatives of parks and rec, watershed, nature groups, and those who use the resources; farmers, ranchers, and others who make a living off the land and their customers and suppliers.

Built Capital
Potential committee members:
Representatives from telecommunications systems, utilities, industrial parks, main street, business locations, etc.

Developing a Planning Committee using the Community Capitals

Cultural Capital
Potential committee members:
Representatives of cultural and religious groups, representatives of museums and historical associations and their support base.

Political Capital
Potential committee members:
Elected and appointed officials and those with whom they work, congressional staff, representatives of political groups.

Human Capital
Potential committee members:
Facilitators, educators (K-12), trainers, representatives of service agencies and their customers, economic developer and partners.

Social Capital
Potential committee members:
Representatives of clubs and organizations, people with links to outside resources, people who know many in the community.

Stakeholder Identification Worksheet

Financial Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Natural Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Built Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Cultural Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Political Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Human Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Social Capital
Potential committee members:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Stakeholder Contact Form

Stakeholder	Organization	Email	Phone	Capital Represented	Point Person

Steering Committee Meeting 1: Defining "Community" and Your Community Food System

Purpose: The purpose of this meeting is to better understand the term "community" and the concept of a community food system. The outcome of the meeting is a consensus perspective among Steering Committee members regarding a practical boundary for their food system. The first exercise helps Steering Committee members define their community. The second exercise helps them specify a CFS boundary. Be aware that a community's food system is likely to be larger than the community itself. Issues of rural and urban interaction, definitions of "local," and political power may arise.

Time: 2 hours

Materials: Colored pens/markers, blank sheets of paper, maps of the region at different scales (or Web-based map such **www.cfse.ext.vt.edu**).

Background Information: Defining Community Boundaries

(Adapted from *Preparing For the Future: A Guide to Community-Based Planning*, 2009, by Gene Theodori.)

You may be already involved in community-led efforts to increase food access and build a stronger local food system within your community. Place is often central to these efforts because it links people, culture, and resources. Taking a moment to define the boundaries of your community before you move along in this process will be an important step in the assessment process, especially if you are trying to build consensus about what community means for those who are spearheading this effort.

Today, community means different things. Sometimes, community is used to refer to a geographic area where people live, or it is associated with a town/neighborhood's geo-political boundaries. It may be associated with where people work, shop, or go to school.

For example, growing up in a rural community, it was uncommon for families to purchase groceries in one town, work in another town, and attend church and school in yet another town. In light of these complexities, each of these examples can result in drawing the community's boundary lines differently.

Take a moment to reflect on how you would define your community boundaries. Is there a cohesive community sense within certain boundaries? "Community" should be local enough that its residents come to know each other and have opportunities to interact with one another.

We understand that community can be defined by geography, culture, population, or setting. As a starting point, it is important to understand how individuals spatially define their communities. One technique, cognitive mapping, is a fairly simple way for individuals to define or examine the size of their physical environments. In the following exercise, you will have an opportunity to develop a shared definition of what constitutes the boundaries of your community.

Working With Your CFS Steering Committee

Here are some tips to consider that can help the Steering Committee be successful.

High-Performance Teams

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) offered six basics for developing a high-performance team. The basics included:

- Small group **size** (less than 12).
- Complementary **skills**.
- Common **purpose.**
- Common set of specific performance **goals**.
- Commonly agreed-upon working **approach** with a clear set of rules and commitments where individual roles and responsibilities are defined.
- Members held **accountable** for performance.

Also, every good team requires a good leader, so be sure to **LEAD** (Rees 2001):

- **L**ead with a clear purpose.
- **E**mpower to participate.
- **A**im for consensus.
- **D**irect the process.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. **Draw group maps.** (15 minutes)

   - Distribute colored pens/markers and a blank sheet of paper to each individual and divide the participants into small groups of three to five people. Print out an area map(s) of your neighborhood or town from the websites **www.mapquest.com**, **http://maps.yahoo.com**, or **www.thomas.com** and make enough copies so that each group has one to share. Be sure to make it large enough to show different elements of town.

   - Ask each individual to draw a map of the area that they think of as their community (i.e., the area of physical space where residents live and more or less interact on a daily basis). The boundaries of a community can often be delineated by physical barriers, land-use patterns, a school district or geo-political area (e.g., police precincts), selected demographic characteristics, and resident perceptions. A good starting place for defining communities would be already defined neighborhoods or areas that are typically recognized by name and/or tradition.

   - Ask each group to delineate area boundaries on its map (e.g., streets, landmarks, etc.) and approximately how far (in miles) they perceive their community to extend.

   - Ask individuals to indicate and label on their group's map any element of the natural or built environment that they consider an important component in defining their community. Such components might include businesses, residential neighborhoods, schools, parks, rivers, community centers, service establishments, and other landmarks.

   - Finally, ask individuals to identify the neighboring places that are fundamental to the social, political, and economic organization of their community. This information can be recorded on the map or on a separate sheet of paper.

2. **Share group maps.** (15 minutes)

   - Ask each group to present their map. Each group should explain how they determined the community boundaries and the elements within the community.

3. **Construct a "working community map."** (15 minutes)

   - If participants come from the same geographic location, it would be useful to create one picture or a "working community map" that represents a collective view for what their community represents. As you work toward a working community map, the area map should be specific enough to clearly show the defined community boundaries.

Defining Your Community's Food System (1 hour)

Now that you have considered the idea of how we define our communities, we will work together to define your community's food system. As some researchers have said, "a sustainable community food system is a collaborative network that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular place" (University of California, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program). Community food systems aren't just about food; they are also about people and their relationships.

You can't necessarily draw a line on a map that defines the boundary of your community's food system. Community food systems can be big, like a region; small, like a neighborhood; or any size in between.

The use of the word "community" is different from "local." Putting the emphasis on community is important because one of the most important aspects of sustainable community food system projects is that they increase resident participation to improve the quality of life for local citizens. Only in the sense that local residents are involved in the development of their community's food system is a food system considered local. So how big is your community's food system?

Several criteria can be considered in defining the boundary of your community's food system. Some things to consider include:

- Where are the farmers located who bring food to your food system?
- Where are the supporting businesses that farmers use to bring food to market (farmers markets, meat slaughterhouses, etc.)?
- Do people identify themselves with your community or somewhere else?
- Where are the people who are willing to commit their time and resources toward building a community food system?
- Where are the people who need your support located?

What are some other criteria for defining a community's food system? List them here:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Mapping Your Food System

Sometimes we know something better than anyone else because we have personal experience. Because you live in the community and are involved in the local food scene, you probably know how big or small your community's food system is.

We will now use the criteria listed above to define your community food system. Work with your fellow Steering Committee members to discuss each criterion listed, one-by-one.

Can you draw a line on a map to show where your community extends? Use the Community Food System Explorer (**www.cfse.ext.vt.edu**) to help you with this exercise.

The boundary of your community's food system may be different for each criterion. Is there agreement among your Steering Committee members about what counties, cities, and towns would be included in your community's food system? If you find it difficult to get consensus on the boundary of your community's food system, keep talking about what is practical, feasible, acceptable, and necessary to include in your boundary — reaching a consensus is important. Once you've defined your community's food system, you'll be able to develop the participation of people from those areas who want to be involved in developing a community food system.

Using the Community Food System Explorer

It doesn't matter if you are a farmer, city planner, nonprofit leader, or just a consumer interested in knowing more about your community, the Community Food System Explorer (CFSE) has something for you. The CFSE is home to information gathered from a variety of publicly available resources and compiled into one place to help you develop your community's food system.

As you navigate around the site, you will discover educational resources, exploratory food system reports for your community, and a map service designed to deliver the best available knowledge directly to your desktop. The map service presently includes more than 70 individual layers of information for each state, grouped into six themes:

1. **Assets –** Infrastructure and marketing information used by producers to identify consumers, processors, distributors, waste handlers, etc.
2. **Land use and conservation** – Information used to better understand the role of land-use policies in CFS development.
3. **Consumption patterns** – Information used to better understand how food consumption affects health conditions and consumer satisfaction.
4. **Demographics** – Information used by producers to identify possible markets for their goods; also used by community advocates to identify inequity in access or affordability of nutritious foods.
5. **Health indicators** – Information used to identify the possible effects of inequity in food access or affordability.
6. **Agribusiness** – Information used to better understand the state of farming in the study region and changes over time to the economic sustainability of agribusinesses.

To get started using the CFSE maps, go to **www.cfse.ext.vt.edu** and click the button labeled "Maps." From there, the application will load and you're on your way to exploring the community food systems of Virginia and North Carolina.

Steering Committee Meeting 2: Defining Your CFS Goals

Purpose: A community food system may be organized around one or more goals. This exercise will help the Steering Committee utilize the strengths of its community and opportunities for growth and change to better define and articulate the goals that its community food system can strive to meet. By clearly defining the group's goals, the Steering Committee can lay the groundwork for developing strategies and activities to achieve its goals and evaluate its progress.

Materials: Goal-Setting Worksheets, flip chart paper, markers.

Time: 2 hours

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Explain the purpose of the session to participants.

2. Inform them that they will work in pairs for the first half of the session and report back to the entire group in the second half. They will use the Goal-Setting Worksheets to guide their paired discussion as well as their whole-group discussion.

3. The paired discussion will take approximately **45 minutes** for them to get through all of the questions. Help them keep track of their time.

4. After the paired discussions, the group will come together to synthesize the discussions. The synthesis discussion will take approximately **1 hour** to complete.

5. During the synthesis discussion, the group will take on roles of discussion leader, timekeeper, and recorder. Help them assign these roles at that time.

6. The final product from the synthesis discussion will be a list of CFS goals. These goals will form the basis for the larger group of participants in the Community Meeting to develop strategies and action plans.

7. Inform the group that goals should contain action verbs, for example, "create," "increase," "sustain," etc.

8. Inform the group that goal statements should be specific. Goals statement should provide enough information to answer questions like "who," "what," and "where." For example, a goal to "increase economic development" might be reworded to read, "Create local businesses that are based on local foods."

9. Inform the group that the goals they develop in today's exercise will be presented at the Community Meeting. Based on the discussion at that meeting, new goals may be added to the list they develop today, but no goals generated today will be removed at that meeting.

10. Collect the worksheets and notes from the goal-setting exercise. These may help you generate your Baseline Report and Final Report.

Goal-Setting Worksheet: Identifying the Positive Core of Your Community Food System

Exercise 1: Opening Conversation in Pairs (45 minutes)

Interview your partner using follow-up questions and cues, such as "Tell me more about that …" or "What do mean by …?"

In pairs, discuss questions 1-4 presented on the following pages. Listen to what your partner has to say, ask questions, and probe to get more information as you discuss each question. Take brief notes and be prepared to share the outcomes of your conversation with the entire group.

1. Food is essential, but beyond basic nourishment, food plays an important role in our community. As we contemplate what our CFS can accomplish, think about your experiences related to food and community. How has food been important in how you experience your community socially, economically, or even politically? Ideas that stand out might be working in a community garden, going to the farmers market, or eating at restaurants that feature local foods. Think of a time that most stands out as a high point for you.

   - Share the story. What happened? Who was involved? What were key elements that made it stand out to you? What new insights did you gain?

     _____

     _____

     _____

     _____

     _____

   - What was it about you and others around you that made it a high-point experience?

     _____

     _____

     _____

     _____

     _____

Thinking today about the larger context of change and purpose of food and community, there are many trends, events, and developments that indicate that your community food system will likewise change and develop and play a more significant role in the future.

In your view, what are the most important events, trends, and developments — in what you do, in the community, within your community food system — and what do these trends suggest for the future of your community food system?

- What are the most important trends, events, or developments? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- What do these trends, events, or developments imply for the future of your community food system and the larger purposes or future opportunities to grow, change, aim higher?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Increasingly, any kind of achievement requires the crossing of boundaries — often bringing improbable partners together across disciplines and cultures from the worlds of business, nonprofits, and government for a free exchange of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

- Describe a time when you were inspired by working with a person or a group in a collaboration that utilized everyone's strengths.

  - What did you learn about connecting across boundaries? What did you learn about yourself?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- What were the outcomes?

- Now, let's build on that story. Imagine a time in the future when your community food system has achieved a reputation as a perfect collection of inspired people with a shared vision of integrated solutions to achieve great things.
  - What would be happening?
  - How might people be behaving or thinking differently?
  - What kinds of organizational systems, norms, or practices do you see making it possible?

3. Images of the future: Your community food system in 2016-2020.

   If you were to complete the following sentence with your highest aspiration and hope for your community food system, what would you say?

   "I will be most proud of our community food system in the future when _____."

Goal-Setting Worksheet: Identifying the Positive Core of Your Community Food System

Exercise 2: Synthesizing Individual Experiences Into Patterns and Themes (1 hour)

This exercise — to be completed by the entire group — will help the group synthesize the key points that came out of the paired discussions. The group should manage its own discussion, data, time, and reports. There are useful roles for self-managing this work. **Leadership roles can be rotated**, so divide up the work as you wish.

Discussion leader – Assures that each person who wants to speak is heard within the time available. Keeps group on track to finish on time.

Timekeeper – Keeps group aware of time left, monitors group reports, and signals time remaining to the person talking.

Recorder – Writes group's output on flip charts, using speaker's words. Asks participants to restate long ideas briefly.

Go around the room; one person from each pair reports. Introduce your interview partner and report the highlights from your "high-point" stories (question 1) and the key trends, events, and opportunities affecting the future of your community food system (question 2). Then, as a group, work through questions 4 and 5. Try to synthesize **five** key themes from each and record them.

4. High-points analysis: Patterns and themes.

   From the presentations of the conversations about the high points of people's experiences related to food and community, answer the question below and identify **five** common or key elements that make people want to engage in their community food systems.

   - When are people most passionate and engaged in their community food systems?

     List five common or key elements:

     A. _____

     B. _____

     C. _____

     D. _____

     E. _____

5. Events, trends, and developments.

   From the perspective of building a better community food system, what are the key trends, events, or developments affecting our future, and how can we translate these into opportunities or challenges to aim higher and do better?

   - What are the **five** greatest opportunities for innovation, change, or leadership, based on the trends, events, or developments discussed so far?

     A. _____

     B. _____

     C. _____

     D. _____

     E. _____

Again, go around the room; one person from each pair reports. Report the highlights from your "collaboration" stories (question 2 of Exercise 1). Then, as a group, work through question 7 to define the individual, organizational, and community factors that make excellence possible. Try to synthesize **five** key themes from each and record them.

6. What we know about success.

   Reflect on the stories about working and collaborating with others to achieve a common goal. We learned something from those stories that can help us better define the causes of success.

   - What are the factors that make a culture of excellence possible — things at the individual, organizational, and community levels?

     Individual factors:

     A. _____

     B. _____

     C. _____

     D. _____

     E. _____

     Organizational factors:

     A. _____

     B. _____

     C. _____

     D. _____

     E. _____

     Community factors:

     A. _____

     B. _____

     C. _____

     D. _____

     E. _____

Again, go around the room, this time **each person** reports. Report your responses to question 4: **"I will be most proud of our community food system in the future when … "**

The recorder will list each response on a flip chart. This list contains your group's aspirations for your community food system. Use these aspirations to define your goals. Discuss these and develop a list of goals that you want your community food system to achieve. When writing your goal statements, it is helpful to use action verbs, such as create, attain, conserve, etc. Create goal statements that help to answer the questions "what," "who," and "where."

This list of goals that other community food systems have identified might help you consider what your community food system can achieve.

Secure healthy food sources in the east-side neighborhoods. The provision of a locally produced, sustainable food base that often contains fewer additives, pesticides, antibiotics, etc.

Protect the environment. Production practices that involve natural crop rotation and grazing principles and avoid features of highly mechanized and industrialized farms.

Conserve farmland in our county. Farmland within the community remains in production, and conserved open space becomes an asset for the area overall.

Create local food-based business. The focus on the production and distribution of local products creates business for small farms, and linkages developed between farms, consumers, and other businesses support economic development.

Increase production of locally grown foods. Generate new and expanded markets for local producers.

Localize distribution of locally grown produce. Direct marketing cuts down on shipping and packaging costs, as well as product waste.

Enhance community networks and collaboration. Improving networks already in place can lead to the development of new linkages, serving to support community development as a whole.

Improve working conditions for farmers and farm laborers. Improve working and living conditions for farm labor such that farmers and farm workers can be fully contributing members of the community.

7. Our goals for a community food system.

   What can our community food system accomplish if it successfully capitalizes on the best opportunities for change?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Steering Committee Meeting 3: Taking Stock of Your Community Food System Assets

Purpose: As we discussed in the stakeholder identification session, the seven Community Capitals provide a useful framework for thinking about your community holistically. From the research performed, we also learned that there are several factors that are powerful contributors to robust community food systems. These factors line up nicely with the Community Capitals.

In this section, we are going to:

- Remember our work on goals from the last meeting.
- Build on the Community Capital descriptions we gave in the introduction.

We will explain how the results of our research line up with the seven Community Capitals and then give you time to explore with the other Steering Committee members how these capitals play out in your communities. This will give you an opportunity to see how what we found in the research corresponds to your community and to think about how working toward the identified goals can be enhanced with resources present in your community.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Review "research findings." (15 minutes)

2. Have committee members assemble into small groups of three to four people. (10 minutes)

3. Have small groups complete the Asset Mapping Worksheets. (45 minutes)

4. Facilitate a reflective discussion with the entire committee on lessons learned during the worksheet completion. (20 minutes)

    - Go "round robin" to gather insights gained by each group.
    - Summarize the conclusions of the workshop.

5. Collect worksheets from all groups to be assembled into the Baseline Report.

Time: 90 minutes total

Materials: Copies of Using Community Capitals to Inventory Community Assets for each person, copies of the research findings for each person, copies of the Asset Mapping Worksheets for each small group, flip chart paper and markers to record reflective discussion insights.

Using Community Capitals to Inventory Community Assets

The Community Capitals represent seven diverse areas in which a community has assets and can make investments for future growth. The capitals serve as a framework for the research behind this guide and will be used in this section as a framework for asset mapping. The seven capitals are as follows:

1. Natural capital.
2. Built capital.
3. Financial capital.
4. Social capital.
5. Human capital.
6. Cultural capital.
7. Political capital.

Investments can be made to each of these capitals — like one might add money to a savings account — to increase community resources or their ability to enhance the community.

Review the following graphic. It depicts the areas in which communities have rich resources. When people think of community resources, they may think of financial or built capital, but this model helps to expand our thinking to areas in which a community might be rich culturally or naturally, for example. For this work, the outcome in the center would be a vibrant community food system.

The Community Capital Framework

Source: Emery and Flora 2006; revised graphic: C. Cox

Examples of the Seven Capitals

Natural Capital

Central Virginia's **Shenandoah Valley** boasts natural amenities and a proximity to markets that makes it well situated to grow and ship food short distances for good prices. The wide valley bottoms contain the richest soil and the flattest land for crop and grazing livestock. Hillsides are highly suitable for more confined operations and non-timber forest products. Valley farmers have managed to remain profitable over time utilizing the landscape to create an efficient agricultural system and retaining large tracts of agricultural land. The regional urban centers of Washington, DC and Charlottesville are close by and provide ready markets for the vegetables and meat produced in the valleys and hilltops of "the Valley".

Cultural Capital

A fundamental factor that makes **Lincoln County, N.C.**, an ideal location for an expanding, sustainable local food system is the culture. Locally grown foods are a part of the history and tradition of the Upper Piedmont. Community members value the rich tradition of local foods and are self-sufficient and proactive in their local food production. They intentionally seek out new ways to grow and market local foods.

Human Capital

The CFS in **Abingdon, Va.**, benefits from disparately talented and skilled individuals. The farmers in Abingdon bring an entrepreneurial spirit as well as a wealth of experience and knowledge to Abingdon's food system. These producers diffuse pertinent knowledge when selling directly to consumers, sitting on various boards, writing in local media outlets, and sharing ideas amongst themselves. The 4-H presence in Abingdon continues to educate youth and promote agricultural lifestyles working toward the goal of a new generation of talented producers that will follow today's retiring farmers.

Social Capital

Durham, N.C.'s CFS is strongly supported by organizations, businesses, and individuals throughout the community. Local media and farmers market organizers continue to bring in business for local producers. Ties to the rich educational history within and surrounding Durham provide a constant influx of diverse, educated, local food consumers.

Political Capital

In the **Shenandoah Valley**, tax breaks for farmers and CFS-supportive local government, nonprofits, and political action groups strengthen the political capital for CFS sustainability. Beyond structural and individual support, the political system incorporates policies supportive of the local CFS, including support for the use of SNAP EBT cards (formerly food stamps) and senior vouchers to purchase community foods, as well as policies that support land conservation.

Financial Capital

In **Abingdon, Va.**, there has been a large investment in infrastructure and the non-profits that have helped to institutionalize the experience and knowledge to Abingdon's food system. Non-profits, backed by federal grant programs, have provided leadership and technical assistance to farmers. Appalachian Sustainable Development, a successful local non-profit, also receives support from other nonprofits, influential community leaders, and local business owners like chefs and artisans who are active in the preservation of traditions and skills associated with CFS sustainability. Towns have made investments to their public spaces (farmers markets, etc.) through the Department of Housing and Community Development's Main Street program.

Built Capital

In **Richmond, Va.**, a strong Internet or Web-based infrastructure, including local blogs and online cooperatives has been an asset in building the food system's influence. The Internet helps tie together a mosaic of other infrastructure such as community gardens, farmers markets, supportive faith-based organizations, universities, and local businesses. In southwest Virginia, there has been a large investment in infrastructure such as permanent farmers' market sites, community canneries, and produce sorting and packing facilities that have helped support the entrepreneurial spirit as well as a wealth of experience and knowledge to their food system.

How Investments in the Capitals May Impact CFS

No two communities are alike. Each community has a unique mix of existing Community Capitals, providing differing opportunities for food system development. Also, each community has different goals for what it sees as priority issues, so "one-size-fits-all" approach to CFS development isn't likely to be very helpful. For example, expecting a highly urbanized area to increase agricultural production in the same way as a rural area is not a practical approach to food system development.

By examining the factors that affect capitals present in a community, it is possible to understand how to make strategic investments in a community to increase the amount and quality of capitals.

Research Findings: Factors Contributing to a Community Food System

From the CFS research, we learned that there are several factors that are powerful contributors to robust community food systems. Following is a list with each type of capital and the research finding that falls under that capital. Many of the factors discussed below involve multiple capitals, but for simplicity, we placed them under a single capital.

Natural Capital

Proximity/access to markets – A CFS marketing outlet's location in relation to a concentrated source of consumers is important; consumers will only travel so far to find products. Proximity can be "virtual," too. Internet sales (i.e., e-commerce) also increase the proximity and access to potential customers.

Cultural Capital

Food culture – In some areas, consumers are used to gardening, canning, hunting, or producing and preserving their own foods. These customers place a high value on local food production and claim to have a taste for such products. Consumers can also identify with regional or ethnic food varieties, and these specialty products can often be found only at local markets.

Human Capital

Education awareness – Communication networks can provide education and awareness opportunities that serve to inform consumers of the presence of the CFS and enforce its role in the community. These can include field trips to a farmers market as well as 4-H and Future Farmers of America involvement.

Innovation – This includes being able to quickly identify problems impeding market growth and address them with an innovative solution.

Social Capital

Community and institutional drivers – Supportive nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental organizations; interest groups; food advocates; and informal communication networks can provide the impetus to create the food system and the interest to keep it going.

Political Capital

Political environment – Local governments can provide incentives to support local producers and the exchange of local products. They can provide facilities for the exchange of produce, taxation policies, and other fiscal incentives to promote the success of small businesses, and cost-sharing programs to offset the fiscal burden of startup capital.

Regulation and liability – The issue of regulation remains controversial because many food safety laws benefit large-scale production, but compliance is difficult for small producers. The complicated web of regulation can strain connections between local producers and larger distributors. Should food safety become an issue, the burden of liability can be a problem for producers.

Financial Capital

Financial ability – Economic conditions determine the frequency with which consumers choose to purchase more affordable products or pay the premium for local fare. Government financial support determines positions related to local food systems (cooperative Extension), grants, and capital provision.

Built Capital

Institutional drivers – Restaurants, school cafeterias, and hospitals can contract to purchase products from local producers, and businesses can coordinate events (markets, fairs, etc.) where local products are featured and provide event space or parking for these opportunities.

Infrastructure capability – This includes the numbers of producers, farms, and general interest in local foods and sustainable production. Infrastructure requirements such as market venues, refrigeration capabilities, or meat processing facilities ultimately determine the ability of a CFS to grow or thrive.

Now, using the Asset Mapping Worksheets, discuss and record the **degree** to which your community supports each capital, as well as **how** your community supports each capital. Then record whether there are additional factors in place beyond the research-identified factors.

When you have completed your work, you should report back to the group with any insights, and the worksheets will be collected and compiled into the Baseline Report.

Asset Mapping Worksheets

Natural Capital

Proximity/access to markets – A CFS marketing outlet's location in relation to a concentrated source of consumers is important; consumers will only travel so far to find products. Proximity can be "virtual," too. Internet sales (i.e., e-commerce) also increase the proximity and access to potential customers.

What are your community's proximity and access to production?

What are key elements of this access?

What other natural capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What natural capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Cultural Capital

Food culture – In some areas, consumers are used to gardening, canning, hunting, or producing and preserving their own foods. These customers place a high value on local food production and claim to have a taste for such products. Consumers can also identify with regional or ethnic food varieties, and these specialty products can often be found only at local markets.

To what degree does your community have a local food culture?

What are key elements of this culture?

What other cultural capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What cultural capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Human Capital

Education awareness – Communication networks can provide education and awareness opportunities that serve to inform consumers of the presence of the CFS and enforce its role in the community. These can include field trips to a farmers market as well as 4-H and Future Farmers of America involvement.

Innovation – This includes being able to quickly identify problems impeding market growth and address them with an innovative solution.

What is your community's level of knowledge, awareness, and interest in local food? What is its level of innovativeness?

What are key elements of these factors?

What other human capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What human capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Social Capital

Community and institutional drivers – Supportive nonprofit, for-profit, and governmental organizations; interest groups; food advocates; and informal communication networks can provide the impetus to create the food system and the interest to keep it going.

What are your community's grassroots, governmental, and nongovernmental local drivers?

What are key elements of this support?

What other social capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What social capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Political Capital

Political environment – Local governments can provide incentives to support local producers and the exchange of local products. They can provide favorable taxation policies, facilities for the exchange of produce and other fiscal incentives to promote the success of small businesses, and cost-sharing programs to offset the fiscal burden of startup capital.

Regulation and liability – The issue of regulation remains controversial because many food safety laws benefit large-scale production, but compliance is difficult for small producers. The complicated web of regulation can strain connections between local producers and larger distributors. Should food safety become an issue, the burden of liability can be a problem for producers.

What are your community's political support and leverage to support the CFS?

What are key elements of this power and support?

What other political capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What political capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Financial Capital

Financial ability – Economic conditions determine the frequency with which consumers choose to purchase more affordable products or pay the premium for local fare. Government financial support determines positions related to local food systems (cooperative Extension), grants, and capital provision.

What is your community's financial ability to support its CFS?

What are key elements of this ability?

What other financial capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What financial capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Built Capital

Institutional drivers – Restaurants, school cafeterias, and hospitals can contract to purchase products from local producers, and businesses can coordinate events (markets, fairs, etc.) where local products are featured and provide event space or parking for these opportunities.

Infrastructure capability – This includes the numbers of producers and farms, and the general interest in local foods and sustainable production. Infrastructure requirements such as market venues, refrigeration capabilities, or meat processing facilities ultimately determine the ability of a CFS to grow or thrive.

What is your community's infrastructure to support its CFS?

What are key elements of this?

What other built capital does your community have that currently supports its CFS?

What built capital enhancements/investments could be made in your community to better support the CFS?

Steering Committee Meeting 4: Creating the Baseline Report and Broadening the Stakeholder Base

In the fourth meeting, the Steering Committee returns to review its CFS Baseline Report and prepare for the Community Meeting. The Baseline Report will have been assembled by the Extension staff and will contain information gathered from the Community Food System Explorer (CFSE) database and the assets identified by the Steering Committee in the Taking Stock of Your Community Food System Assets exercise. The committee will review the report and refine it if necessary.

To prepare for the community meeting, the Steering Committee will review and discuss the meeting agenda and identify people and organizations that should be represented.

Prior to the Meeting: Creating the Baseline Report

The purpose of conducting a community assessment is to create an information foundation for further planning and action. Therefore, it is important to move from a generic concept of a "food system" to a community-specific profile of **your** food system. To do this, you'll need to revise and expand on the Exploratory Report for your community, provided by the Community Food System Explorer (click your locality on the "Explore!" page of the CFSE site). Following are the instructions you will need to follow to create a Baseline Report.

Prior to convening Meeting 4, you will need to gather information specified by Steering Committee members during the Taking Stock of Your Community Food System Assets task. To document assets identified by your Steering Committee, you will gather information from local secondary data (existing business listings, county maps, etc.) and/or primary data gathered directly from the community.

For example, if the Steering Committee determined during the Taking Stock exercise that church food pantries were an asset of their food system, your task would be to work with Steering Committee members to either discover an existing list or compile a list from scratch of all known church food pantries in your community. You'll then enter this information into the Community Food System Explorer for use in creating a Baseline Report.

There are two methods for entering data into the CFSE: using the Web-based map editor and via file upload. To enter data into the map editor, you will need to work with the CFSE site administrator to get access. Only qualified individuals who have been trained and approved by the CFSE site administrator will be allowed to use the map editor.

Gathering Information

Secondary Data

There is a large amount of information that is collected by nonprofits and local governments for purposes other than food system development. Many local governments have lists of information (such as food pantries) that can be repurposed for creating a CFS assessment. Try speaking with representatives from the following governmental departments to see if they already have the information you are looking for:

- Economic development.
- Department of Health.
- Land planning and zoning.
- School board and school nutrition.

Many nonprofits may also keep lists of information they may share with you. For example, food banks may have lists of stores that make donations to their facilities, or they may track volunteerism.

Primary Data

Sometimes it will be necessary to collect information that is not available elsewhere. In this case, you may want to work with Steering Committee members and other parties to generate lists of information that you are interested in including in your Baseline Report. Primary data can be collected by:

- Survey questionnaires.
- Focus groups.
- Interviews with key informants.
- Secondary data analysis.

Consider aiding nonprofits and local governments by working with them to update and validate their information lists. If you help them, they may offer you access to their information, provided certain terms and conditions (such as privacy considerations) are met.

After gaining access to the map editor, you will be able to edit existing points on the map, such as the location or hours of operation for a local farmers market, and add new points to the map, such as adding a new farmers market to the existing list. If no information exists for a type of data (for example, the CFSE does not currently have information on church food pantries), you can request that the CFSE site administrator create that data type.

You can also ask the CFSE site administrator to upload lists of information to the CFSE. For example, you may generate information from primary data collected locally. Simply contact the CFSE site administrator and work together to better understand how to get your information included on the site.

Take time to fully document the assets of interest to your Steering Committee. Any information generated locally and shown on the CFSE website will not only help your community develop its food system, it will likely help other localities better understand assets and resources in their communities.

Finally, once you have documented the assets specified by your Steering Committee, it will be time to generate your local Baseline Report. Begin by downloading the Exploratory Report for your locality (click your locality on the "Explore!" page of the CFSE site). Convert the pdf file to Microsoft Word (or some other text editor of your choosing). Adjust the text of the Exploratory Report, adding and subtracting paragraphs within each section as necessary to fully capture the specific details of your community's food system. Add a new section that details the boundary of the CFS, as outlined by the Steering Committee.

Next should come a revised section outlining all assets cataloged thus far. Finally, add a new section called "Community Goals" and summarize the goals outlined by your Steering Committee and any other critical information generated in the Defining Your CFS Goals activity in Meeting 2. Once a revised copy of the report has been created, it will be time to convene Meeting 4 to offer your draft Baseline Report to the Steering Committee for review and revision.

Purpose: The purpose of this session is to present the draft Baseline Report to the Steering Committee, gather feedback, and make necessary edits prior to presenting it at the Community Meeting.

Time: 1 hour

Materials: Copies of the Draft CFS Baseline Report for each Steering Committee member.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Introduce the session by describing its purpose and a brief agenda.

2. Introduce the report by providing a quick summary of what it contains and how it was developed.

3. Next, review the draft report in detail, being careful to fully explain the information contained within it.

4. After presenting the report, use a "progressive question" method for getting feedback. Inform the group that they will explore answers to three questions as a way of getting their feedback.

   Level 1: Clarification – "Is there anything you didn't understand or that needs further clarification?"

   Level 2: Reaction – "How do you feel about this report? Is it accurate? Comprehensive? Clear?"

   Level 3: Action – "What needs to be added, removed, or changed?"

5. Guide the group through each question in turn, spending the most time on the action question.

6. If you project the Baseline Report on a screen, you may be able to make edits directly to the document in real time. Otherwise, make notes in the text and or on a flip chart and make changes after the meeting.

7. Get agreement from the group on each change before moving on.

8. Inform the group when the final draft will be ready and provide them with completed copies prior to the Community Meeting.

Preparing for the Community Meeting

Purpose: The Steering Committee will discuss the Community Meeting agenda and identify people and organizations to invite.

Time: 1 hour

Materials needed: Flip chart, Stakeholder Contact Form, draft invitation letter.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Begin the discussion by stating the purpose of the Community Meeting: To generate and prioritize action strategies to meet the CFS goals.

2. Introduce the draft meeting agenda and get feedback. Discuss and make changes as necessary.

3. Invite active participation by the Steering Committee in the presentation and facilitation of the Community Meeting. For example, a Steering Committee member could present the CFS goals at the meeting and facilitate the discussion. Also, committee members could help facilitate the discussion of action strategies in the breakout groups.

4. Using the seven Community Capitals framework and the Stakeholder Contact Form, have the group generate a list of people and/or organizations to invite. Get contact information from the Steering Committee, if available.

5. Review the draft invitation letter with the Steering Committee. Make changes where necessary.

6. Make any final preparations for the meeting as necessary.

Example: Community Meeting Invitation Letter to Stakeholders

[Date]

Over the past several weeks, the Virginia Cooperative Extension **[location]** Office has worked with a small Steering Committee to discuss how we can a build a community-based food system in **[community/county]**. The goal of these discussions was to develop ideas for action that can be implemented in the community to promote a locally based, self-reliant food economy and ultimately create environmental, economic, and social health for our community.

Many good ideas have arisen from the discussions that have taken place so far, and a Community Action Forum is the next step to encourage broad citizen input and find common ground in the process.

We'd like to invite you to attend the Community Action Forum on **[day, date],** from **[time-time],** at **[location]**.

The forum will include:

- Highlighting themes that emerged from our initial discussions.
- Discussing factors that would shape our community-based food system (and interactions among those factors).
- Establishing what we want to achieve and identifying strategies that will help us enhance the community food system.
- Identifying opportunities for people to become engaged in this process.

It is critically important to have a balanced mix of community stakeholders represented at this meeting, including city and county planners, elected officials, restaurateurs, farmers, public health leaders, nonprofit leaders, and farmers market managers. We think your role in the community gives you a special interest in the topic, and we'd like for you to be involved as we move toward community action.

Please let us know if you are interested in this effort and can attend the forum. Feel free to contact me by phone at **[number]** or at **[email]** by **[deadline]**. We look forward to seeing you at the Community Action Forum on **[date]**.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

Stakeholder Contact Form

Use the following form to create a list of groups and individuals that should be at the Community Meeting. Be sure to consider each of the seven capitals in making your list. A long list that is representative of all the community food system's interests is better than a short list of power players and usual suspects.

Stakeholder	Organization	Email	Phone	Capital Represented	Point Person

The Community Meeting

Community Meeting Purpose and Outcomes

The purpose of the Community Meeting is to provide a forum for people interested and involved in their CFS to generate and prioritize strategies in order to meet the goals identified by the CFS Steering Committee and ratified by the participants at the Community Meeting. These strategies will form the basis for a set of action plans that will move the community toward its goals.

The meeting is intended to be interactive and will involve participants in defining their community food system, ratifying goals that were identified by the Steering Committee, and creating strategies to achieve the goals.

The Steering Committee has an active role in hosting the meeting, presenting information and facilitating sessions.

Community Meeting Draft Agenda

1. Welcome and purpose of the meeting (10 minutes)
2. Introduce Steering Committee (10 minutes)
   - Steering Committee members
   - Committee activities prior to this meeting
3. Understanding the community food system (CFS) (90 minutes)
   - Learn about your CFS from the Baseline Report
   - Describe your CFS through a concept-mapping exercise
4. Clarify CFS goals (1 hour)
   - Review and discuss CFS goals as defined by the Steering Committee
5. Develop strategies for enhancing your community food system (90 minutes)
   - Identify and prioritize strategies and actions to be undertaken to enhance your CFS
6. Closing and what's next (15 minutes)

Ground Rules

It can be a challenge to ensure that everyone's input is heard in an efficient manner when working with large groups. To have a good meeting, a strong facilitator is needed, as are respectful participants.

Consider setting ground rules to keep the group on task and to promote a respectful meeting environment. The rules should be reviewed, amended as necessary, and agreed to by participants before any facilitated activities are conducted.

Post the ground rules in a highly visible place to serve as a constant reminder of how the group has agreed to work during the meeting. If someone violates the ground rules, it is the role of the facilitator or other group members to draw attention to the behavior and remind the person of the rules. Ground rules are best if they are simple, direct, and enforceable. Following are some examples that can be used as a starting point for your meetings.

- One person speaks at a time.
- Do not speak over others.
- Questions may be asked to clarify ideas.
- No one may criticize another.
- Feelings may be expressed. They are not to be ignored or denied.
- Discussions are about positions, not personalities.
- Discussions are about understanding, not being right or swaying others to your position.
- Participate to the fullest of your ability. Every voice counts.

Understanding the Community Food System

Purpose: In this session, the Steering Committee or Extension educator describes the current status of the CFS. The basis of this presentation is the CFS Baseline Report. The purpose of the session is to provide an understanding of the food system as it is currently understood.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: PowerPoint presentation.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Describe the community food system using maps contained in the CFS Explorer and the Taking Stock exercise.

2. At the end of the presentation, ask for questions of clarification.

3. Inform the participants that the Baseline Report likely lacks some critical information that they will provide. They will engage in an exercise that will enable them to describe their CFS as they perceive it. Information for the mapping exercise will be entered into the Baseline Report.

"Mapping" Your Community Food System

Purpose: Concept mapping is tool to help participants think about and discuss complex ideas and concepts, such as a CFS. Through concept mapping, participants can represent a situation graphically and share their understanding of it. It is particularly useful in the early stages of defining a situation, especially when the situation is complex and involves many people, issues, and activities.

Through this exercise, participants will be able to think concretely about the largely conceptual idea of a CFS. They will be able to identify the elements of the system — the people and organizations that contribute to it and benefit from it — and the relationships among the elements that make the food system work. In addition, their contribution to the description of the food system will add additional information to the Baseline Report.

Materials: Large-format flip chart paper, two sheets for each group of five people (the second sheet is for "do-overs"); three or four water-based colored markers for each group.

Time: 1 hour

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Inform the group that they are going to create a "map" of their community food system. The purpose of the exercise is to identify the people, places, and things that make up their community food system **as they understand it.** The maps don't necessarily have to be a geographical representation of the food system. Instead, they merely have to show who and what are involved to make up the food system and how they are related to or affected by each other.

2. Inform the group that they will form mapping teams made up of five or six people who will construct a map together. Ask the group to self-select their teams.

3. Distribute two sheets of flip chart paper (an extra sheet in case they want to abandon their first try and start over) and three or four colored markers to each mapping team.

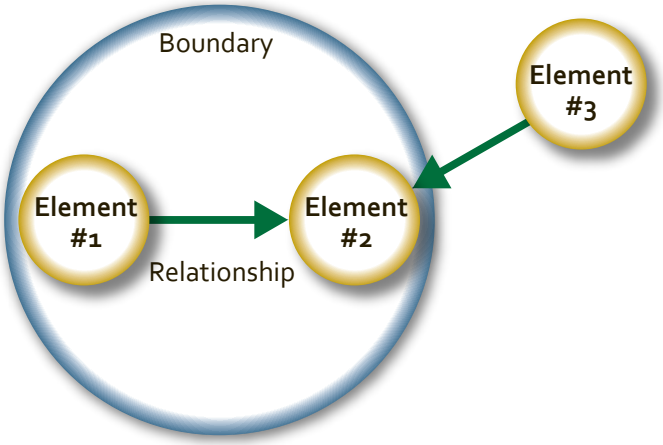
4. Ask each mapping team to select: a **map drafter** — the person who will do most of the drawing in response to suggestions from his or her teammates, and a **presenter** — who will report to the rest of the group at the completion of the mapping exercise.

5. Again, introduce the topic of concept mapping by describing its purpose — to help participants graphically represent a complex system such as a community food system and help them begin talking about it in concrete, tangible terms.

6. Illustrate and describe the four basic components of a concept map:

   - **Elements** – Parties, issues, and activities — nouns that are represented by circles.
   - **Relationships** – Verbs on lines that connect elements.
   - **Boundary** – The edge of the system being described.
   - **Environment** – Everything beyond the boundary.

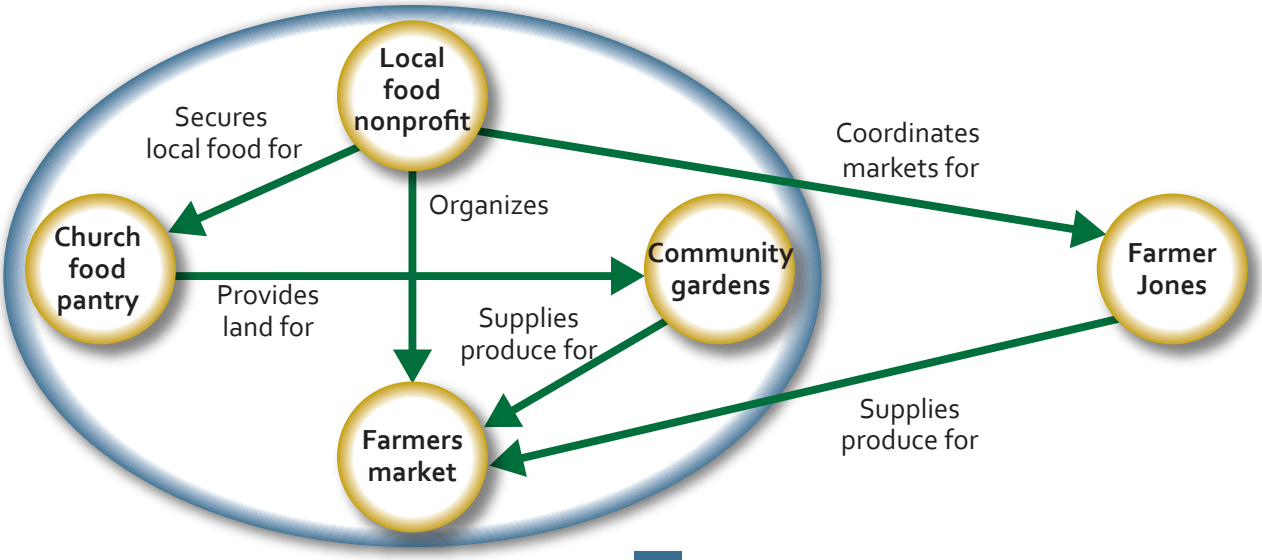
Concept Map Components



7. Begin by introducing a map "chassis" that illustrates a few of the elements and relationships that most of the meeting participants will be familiar with. Map elements such as parties, issues, and activities are drawn as circles and labeled with nouns (for example, "farmers market" and "Farmer Jones"). You can use colors and shapes to represent categories or types of elements.

   Relationships are represented by lines and have arrows that indicate the direction of the relationship. The lines are labeled with verbs (for example, "organizes" and "supplies produce for"). Lines can be solid or broken to represent relationships of differing strengths. The map chassis is a way to get the groups started. The objective is to revise the map so that it reflects the participants' views of the situation.

Map Chassis



8. Beginning with the map chassis, ask the mapping teams to create their own maps that reflect what they know about their CFS. Ask the participants some prompting questions to stimulate responses for editing and adding to the draft maps:

    - What are the central elements of your community food system?
    - Who are the key stakeholders? How do they interact?
    - What actions, behaviors, or practices should be included?
    - What connects with what? In which way or direction?

9. Remind the mapping teams that this is a brainstorming process. The rule of thumb is to generate ideas and get them on paper, then evaluate and refine those ideas. Also, remind them to focus on capturing the dynamics that give rise to the situation without worrying too much about capturing every detail.

10. Suggest that the map drafters ask for confirmation from the other team members before committing any new items to the drawing. **"When in doubt about how to represent an issue on the map, ask your team members to guide you."**

11. If controversial elements or linkages are proposed, denote them with a question mark. Record tangential or crosscutting remarks in the margins.

12. Tell the teams to continue to add and modify elements and relationships until no more additions or modifications are offered.

13. When most teams are finished or when time has expired, ask the teams to prepare to present their maps to the rest of the group. Ask them to describe their maps and report:

    - The elements that are most critical to the CFS.
    - The important relationships between the elements.
    - Any summary remarks that characterize the CFS as they see it.

14. Record and summarize:

    - Elements and relationships that are common to all or most all the concept maps.
    - Critical differences that, when taken together, may help people see the system in a more comprehensive context.
    - Key themes that emerge.

15. Get feedback from the group on your summary comments.

16. Conclude with a statement that they will use what they just learned about their community food system in the discussion coming up on setting food system goals.

Clarifying CFS Goals

Purpose: In this activity, the Steering Committee presents the draft set of CFS goals to the larger community for consideration and consent. Although the Steering Committee spent considerable thought and time identifying goals for the CFS, they need the cooperation and resources from other community members to achieve them. Once the Steering Committee presents the goals, participants will discuss them and, if desired, suggest additional goals for the group to consider.

Time: 1 hour

Materials: PowerPoint presentation, copy of goal statements for each participant, flip chart paper.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Prior to the Community Meeting, work with the Steering Committee to appoint a member to present the goals at the meeting. A PowerPoint presentation should be developed in advance that defines and explains the goals the committee selected. A handout of the goal statements should be provided to the participants.

2. Present the goals. (10 minutes)

3. After the presentation, place the following three questions on a flip chart or PowerPoint slide and instruct the group that you will cover each question in turn.

   - Are there any questions for clarification?
   - What are your reactions to the goals that were presented? Are they complete?
   - Are there additional goals you wish to pursue related to your community food system?

4. Facilitate an open discussion of the first two questions. Use a flip chart to record a summary of the discussion of the second question about reactions. This information will stimulate discussion of the third question. (10 minutes)

5. For the third question, ask participants to form groups of three or four by turning to the two or three people next to them. Ask them to take **15 minutes** to:

   - Review and discuss the goals as presented (they can refer to their handouts) and their reactions about the goals.
   - Identify new goals they think should be added to the list (if they think the list is incomplete).
   - Instruct them to use **action verbs**, such as "create," "attain," "conserve," etc., when writing goal statements. Create goal statements that help to answer the questions "what," "who," and "where."
   - Prepare to present any new goals they identify to the whole group.

6. Go around the room and ask groups to present their additional goal statements, ensuring that the statements contain action verbs. If one group's goal statement is similar to one previously presented, ask that group if the existing goal sufficiently captures the intent of their new goal. Add clarifying language if needed. (15 minutes)

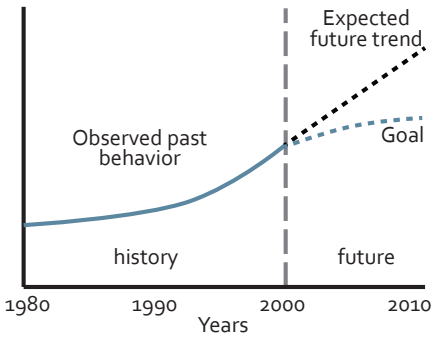
7. Close the session by summarizing the full list of goals.

8. Inform participants that they will spend the remainder of the meeting developing strategies to achieve their goals. They will break into goal groups — one group for each goal — so they should consider which goal they want to work on for the remainder of the meeting.

Strategies for Enhancing Your Community Food System: Behavior-Over-Time Graph Exercise

Background Information

A behavior-over-time graph (BOTG) is a simple line graph that shows a pattern of change over time. It shows how something increases and decreases as time passes. The purpose of drawing a BOTG is to reveal the overall pattern of behavior — how it is changing and why. When participants can identify how something is changing, they can begin to ask why it's changing and make predictions about what will happen next. BOTGs are used in group settings as a way to help participants discuss causes of problems and how to improve a situation into the future.



The horizontal axis on the graph always represents time. It can be in any units that fit the behavior: seconds, days, years, etc. The vertical axis represents the variable in question — a quantity that can increase or decrease with time. The vertical axis is also labeled in units that fit the behavior.

Units can be either "hard" or "soft." For example, hard variables might be degrees Celsius in a lab experiment, points scored in a game, dollars in the bank, fish in the sea, or miles traveled. For hard variables, the units are straightforward: degrees, number of points, number of dollars, etc.

Soft variables could be a person's happiness or courage, a team's morale, the cleanliness of a room, or the excitement of a story. For soft variables, units must be defined first.

"Cleanliness of a room" is a simple example. In discussion, everyone could envision a spotlessly clean room; they could also imagine an extremely messy room. The scale on the graph could use descriptive labels and range from "terribly messy" to "perfectly clean," with "medium clean" at the midpoint. Or, the scale could be numerical from zero to 10, with zero for filthy and 10 for immaculate. It's important to be clear about what is meant when labeling the axis.

Soft variables are just as valid to graph as hard variables. Indeed, often they are more interesting and even defining the scales can initiate a good discussion. Once participants understand how to use behavior-over-time graphs to analyze one behavior, they can easily transfer the use of this tool to examine change in many other areas.

Sample Behavior-Over-Time Graph

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to brainstorm a list of strategies participants can use to improve their food system. The facilitator will instruct groups of participants on how to create a behavior-over-time graph. The BOTG generated in each group aids the brainstorming process and builds a shared understanding of the problem among group members.

Materials: Flip chart paper and markers.

Time: 45 minutes

Instructions

In this exercise, small groups will be formed. Each group will need to select someone to be the recorder. The recorder will be responsible for drawing the group's behavior-over-time graph. This may require the recorder to also serve as a facilitator of the group's conversation.

The objective of the conversation will be to get consensus within the group on how the lines of the graph should be drawn to capture the history and future expectations of the group.

NOTE: Creating blank BOTGs before the Community Meeting will save time and simplify the work.

Preparing Participants for BOTG Exercise

1. Prepare blank BOT graphs for each goal before the Community Meeting (see example). The Y-axis (vertical line) should be left unmarked. Mark the X-axis (horizontal line) as follows:

    - Label it "years," extending from 1950 to 2030.
    - Mark every 10 years along the horizontal axis (i.e., 1950, 1960, 1970, etc.).
    - Mark the current year (i.e., 2011) with a vertical dotted line to show the separation between past and future years.

2. Explain the purpose of the BOTG exercise to the participants (i.e., to generate strategies).

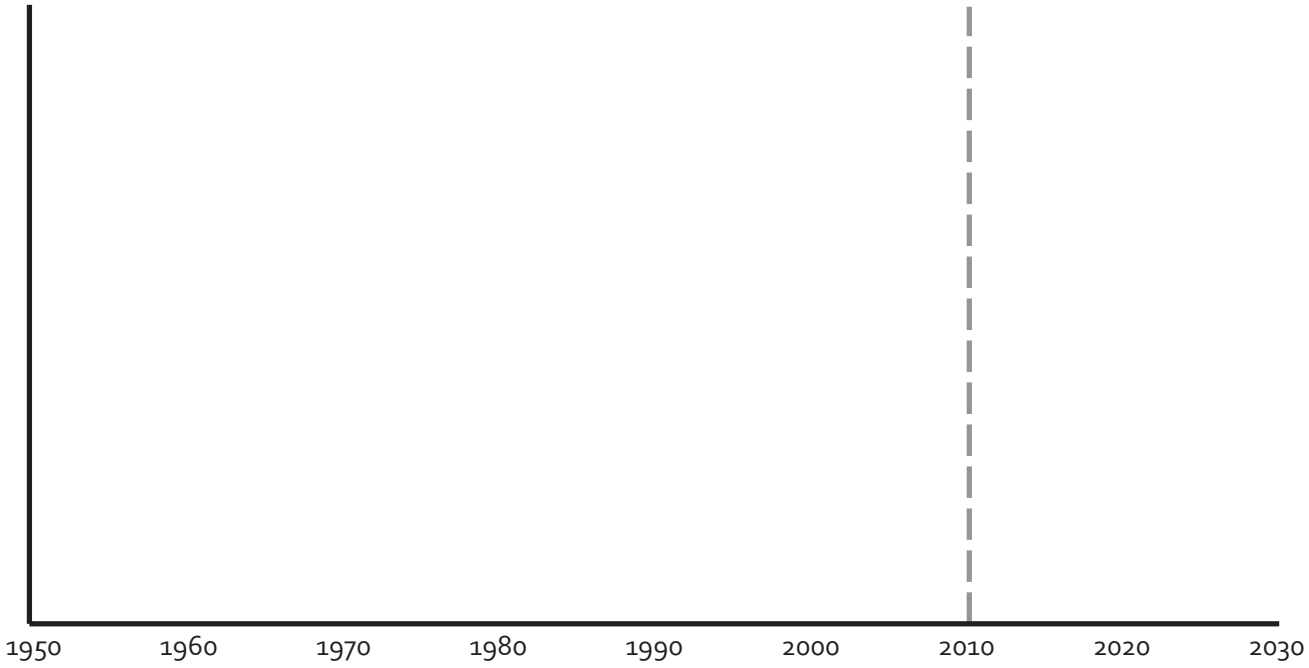
3. Demonstrate the BOTG exercise to the whole room using an example (e.g., number of farms).

4. Have participants self-select into one group per goal after the goals have been refined.

5. Have each group identify a person to serve as a recorder. Have the recorder draw each of these features:

    - Y-axis.
        - Have each group chose a unit of measure for their selected objective. For example, if a group wants to "improve food security," they may select "number of food insecure people" as a unit of measure.
        - Have each group mark unit increments along the Y-axis as appropriate to their unit of measure. For example, "number of food insecure people" might range from zero to 8 million (the number of people in Virginia). The actual unit chosen isn't important, but it should be understandable to others outside the group and cover an appropriate range (a minimum-to-maximum scale). Qualitative units such as "happiness" are fine, which might be said to range from "unhappy" to "heavenly," with increments of happiness in between.

Example: Blank BOT Graph



Draw the Behavior-Over-Time Graph

1. Have each group draw a line that depicts **the ups and downs of their variable, from 1950 to today**. To draw this line, the group will likely need to discuss the general trend over the years before arriving at a consensus. The line captures the group's consensus regarding changes that have occurred during that time period. The line is not meant to show great detail, just a general trend.

2. Next, have each group draw a line from today into the future that shows **what they expect to happen** from now until 2030. To draw this line, the group will likely need to discuss their expectations and arrive at a consensus about what will happen and why. The line is not meant to show great detail, just a general trend over the years.

3. Finally, have each group draw a line that depicts **what they would like to have happen** over the coming years. To draw this line, the group will likely need some discussion to arrive at a consensus about the general trend over the years. The line captures the group's consensus regarding a realistic and practical goal that is achievable if corrective actions are taken. The line is not meant to show great detail, just a general trend over the years.

Brainstorm and Clean Up Strategies

1. Ask each group to answer the following two questions and have the recorder write down their responses on a sheet of paper.

   - **Is there a difference between the "expected future" and the "desired future"? If so, why? If not, are you sure there is a problem that needs being solved?**
   - **What can you do, in your community, to close the gap between the desired future and what your group expects? ("Brainstorm as many strategies as you can!")**

2. Ask each group's recorder to review all of the ideas generated. Instruct them to work with group members to:

   - Reword strategies that are unclear.
   - Eliminate duplicate ideas.
   - Ensure that each idea is an action that can be taken by community members.

Evaluate and Prioritize Strategies

Purpose: The purpose of the following exercise is to further refine the list of strategies that each group generated in the Strategies for Enhancing Your Community Food System exercise and select strategies that are likely to be of high value to the development of the community's food system. In this exercise, each group will analyze its list of strategies based on several criteria and select seven high-value strategies to share with the other groups.

Materials: Markers, 4- x 6-inch index cards, Scotch tape, Criteria for Evaluating Strategies handouts for each person.

Time: 45 minutes

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Explain the purpose of the exercise to participants.
   - **NOTE:** To complete this exercise, participants need to understand that not all strategies are equally powerful in accomplishing community objectives. A set of criteria is needed to help sort strategies that are lower priority from those that may be critically important for the development of the community's food system.
   - Distribute the list of Criteria for Evaluating Strategies to each team's recorder.
2. Explain each criterion on the sheet, then ask each group to discuss if additional measures are needed for their objectives that aren't covered on the list. If so, add them to the list.
3. Have the group discuss each strategy they have listed and evaluate how well each strategy performs against each given criterion. Rank each strategy on a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being low priority and 3 being high priority.
4. Have the group select seven of their most highly prioritized strategies to be shared with all participants, across objectives.
5. Have the recorder write each of the seven strategies on a separate 4- x 6-inch index card (write in big font).
6. Have a member of each group tape their seven strategies to a wall (all groups side-by-side, preferably).
7. Have a member of each group present their strategies to all participants and answer any questions that help to clarify the strategies presented.
8. While groups are presenting, ask participants to **make note of any strategies that**:
   - Are similar between groups. (Place similar strategies next to one another.)
   - Offer opportunities for groups to work together. (Write the names of agencies or organizations that may work together on the back of the card and make a note for "future collaboration.")
   - Are currently under development or already completed. (Write the name of active agencies or organizations on the strategy and note the status of the project on the back of the card.)
9. Ask participants if any strategies need to be given a higher priority than others. (Record group discussion outcomes on flip chart paper.)
10. Ask participants to identify organizations and/or resources available to achieve **priority** strategies. (Record group discussion outcomes on flip chart paper.)
11. To ensure that action is taken on priority strategies, it will be important to have attendees identify themselves with strategies that they feel strongly about working on. Ask individuals to, one at a time, "pick up" a strategy that they expect to complete and hold it up for everyone to see. Have people who want to work on the same strategy stand together as a group. This is way to have people assign themselves into teams that will be responsible for the completion of a strategy. Continue this process until all participants have self-assigned into groups. If priority strategies go unassigned, ask the group if anything needs to be done about that — did they miss something in their evaluation? (NOTE: Be sure to document groups, their selected strategies, and all remaining strategies for the Final Report.)

Criteria for Evaluating Strategies

- How powerful is the strategy's impact likely to be for our objective? For others' objectives?
- Is the strategy practical?
- Is the strategy affordable (time, effort, and money)?
- Is the strategy politically feasible?
- Does the strategy help us to complete other strategies on our list?

Closing

Purpose: At the conclusion of the Community Meeting, the participants will have generated a list of strategies to advance them toward their desired goals. Having identified priority strategies, the community is now in a position to get to work. At the close of the Community Meeting, it is important to communicate two things:

1. They are in control of their food system's development.

2. All products of the Community Food System Assessment and Planning Process will be available in a Final Report.

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Copies of Next Steps: Create an Action Plan handout for each participant.

Facilitator's Instructions

1. Review the accomplishments of the day with participants. They:

    - Learned about their food system.
    - Clarified goals.
    - Identified practical strategies for each goal.
    - Identified priority strategies that affected more than one goal at the same time.

2. Review the impact that the CFS-APP process will bring to the community.

    - A shared understanding of the community's food system.
    - Surfacing opportunities for collaboration across interests.
    - A guide for future food system development.

3. Review outcomes that will be generated from the workshop.

    - A Final Report.
    - Continued support from Extension (or your organization).
    - An Action Planning Guide and an offer of support.

4. Hand out Next Steps: Create an Action Plan handout.

5. Express your appreciation for the community's involvement.

6. Dismiss the group.

Next Steps: Create an Action Plan

What Is an Action Plan?

Action planning is a sequence of steps that must be taken or activities that must be performed well for a strategy to succeed. The action planning process is a method for short-term planning (six to 12 months from now) of an event or project that has already been agreed on or about which there is already some consensus.

Each strategy that was identified in the community-based food system assessment and planning process will require its own action plan. Action plans should be available to the entire community so that: (1) people can join ongoing activities, (2) the community can easily identify strategies that need additional planning, and (3) no duplication of effort is undertaken.

An action plan has three major elements:

1. **Specific tasks** – What will be done and by whom.
2. **Time horizon** – When it will be done.
3. **Resource allocation** – What specific funds are available for specific activities.

How to Write an Action Plan

When writing an action plan to achieve a particular goal or outcome, first gather possible collaborators and representatives from other organizations and government agencies who might be able to work with you or facilitate the planning process. By working across organizations or in partnership with local and state governments, limited resources can be stretched further, and the skills and abilities of others can provide additional energy toward your goal. Once you've assembled your team, consider working through the following steps.

1. **Clarify your goal.** Can you get a visual picture of the expected outcome? How can you see if you have reached your destination? What has changed as a result of your activities? Can you summarize the success you seek in a goal statement? Write that statement down on the "goal" part of the Action Planning Worksheet. **Do not progress with the rest of the action planning process until you have consensus on the goal of your effort.** Without consensus, some team members will lack commitment to seeing the plan through to the end and may jeopardize the work of the entire group.

2. **Write a list of actions.** Once you know what success looks like (i.e., your goal), have each teammate brainstorm tasks that would need to be completed to get to that goal. Write down all actions you may need to take to achieve your goal. At this step, focus on generating and writing as many different options and ideas as possible. Don't worry about how, who, when, or what would be needed to get the tasks done. Try not to judge or analyze the ideas generated.

3. **Analyze, prioritize, and prune.** Look at your list of actions as a group. This is most easily done by writing each idea on a note card and spreading the note cards out on the ground for everyone to see. Group similar ideas together into clusters that go together (remove duplicate ideas). Name these clusters with a title that captures the main idea of the work to be done. Have team members assign themselves to one (or more) of the clusters. Self-selection ensures individual accountability and improves commitment to the plan.

4. **Organize your list into a plan.** Decide on the order of your action steps. Start by looking at your cluster titles. For each action, what other steps should be completed before that action? Rearrange your actions and ideas into a sequence of ordered action steps. Now, look at your plan again. Are there any ways to simplify it? If so, how would that be done? What if any barriers do you foresee preventing your action plan from being completed on time? What can be done to remedy these barriers? Add these details to your plan. Finally, apply calendar dates to the ordered action steps. Record these activities and dates on the provided worksheet.

5. **Refine and enact your plan.** At this point, each sub-group is set to start working somewhat independently. Be sure to have each member adopt one or more tasks that they will be responsible for completing. Before the action plan can get started, it will be important to ensure good communication between sub-groups and members. How will people talk to one another? Are regular meetings necessary? If so, schedule them. Can technology help? If so, what technology will be used? As sub-groups begin to work through their tasks, they will need to identify resources they already have and resources they will need to complete their work by the deadline they set earlier. Record this information on the provided worksheet.

6. **Monitor the execution of your plan and review the plan regularly.** Evaluation is a critical part of an action plan. Being able to communicate the progress you've made toward your ultimate goal will be important to getting grants and proving that your work has merit. You can also use this information to further adjust and optimize your plan. Think back to your goal-setting process. What do you envision the future to look and feel like once your action plan is successful? These are your "metrics" — the ways you can measure success. How much have you progressed toward your goal? How do you know? What new information have you acquired as a result of your community's work? Write down these metrics and document how you will measure them in the Evidence of Success and Evaluation Process sections of the worksheet, respectively.

7. **Celebrate!** Don't forget why you are doing this work. After your action plan has been outlined and tasks assigned, be sure to celebrate your work. Making it this far is a major accomplishment! Provide yourselves a chance to relish your plan and discuss its strengths and weaknesses, benefits, and challenges that may lie ahead for your team. Throw yourselves a party and get ready to move forward as a community for the betterment of your food system and all it can be.

Work Plan Template

Purpose:

To create a "script" for your improvement effort and support implementation. Be sure to share your work with others in your community.

Directions:

1. Using this form as a template, develop a work plan for each goal identified through the needs assessment process. Complete action-planning exercises as necessary to help you think through each part of the worksheet.
2. Distribute copies of each work plan to the members of the collaboration.
3. Keep copies handy to bring to meetings to review and update regularly. You may decide to develop new work plans for new phases of your reform effort.

Goal:

Results/accomplishments:

Action Steps *What will be done?*	**Responsibilities** *Who will do it?*	**Timeline** *By when? (day/month)*	**Resources** *A. Resources available* *B. Resources needed (financial, human, political, other)*	**Potential Barriers** *A. What individuals or organizations might resist?* *B. How?*	**Communications Plan** *Who is involved? What methods? How often?*
Step 1:		A.	A.		
		B.	B.		
Step 2:		A.	A.		
		B.	B.		
Step 3:		A.	A.		
		B.	B.		
Step …:		…	…		

Evidence of success: How will you know that you are making progress? What are your benchmarks?

Evaluation process: How will you determine that your goal has been reached? What are your measures?

Adapted from Collaborative Trails Project (CoTrails). http://cotrails.org.

The Final Report

The output from the work with the Steering Committee and the Community Meeting will be a Community Food Systems Report. Extension staff will lead the production of the report with feedback and guidance from the Steering Committee.

Timing: Create the report no later than 30 days after the Community Meeting. Community members will need to refer to the report to carry out their action plans.

Content

1. **Baseline data** – This section will consist of the Baseline Report generated earlier that includes information from the CFSE, the asset-mapping exercise, and CFS goals. Your Baseline Report serves as the basis for the Final Report but should be updated with new information discovered during the Community Meeting.

2. **Strategies** – Adding to the Baseline Report, a new section should describe a summary of the Community Meeting and the strategies that were developed by the community members. Be sure to convey the outcomes of the Evaluate and Prioritize activities from the Community Meeting (i.e., criteria used to prioritize strategies and major points of the group's discussion). This section will serve as the basis for community action.

3. **Outcomes** – This section should serve as a summary of outcomes that occurred as a result of the assessment and planning process. Try to convey any action plans developed as a result of the process. Be sure to also communicate how citizens can continue to engage in action planning and activities decided on in the document. Answer questions such as who to call to get involved, how to receive a copy of the report, how best to engage partners, etc. This is your opportunity to communicate with local officials about what impact this work has had and its expected impacts.

4. **Distribution** –The report should be made available — both electronically and in hard copy— to all those who participated in the Community Meeting. Also, the report should be provided to elected officials and local government staff who may participate in implementing the plan (planning and community development offices, for example). Work with partner organizations to sponsor reproduction costs and continue the work outlined in the document.

Stay in Touch

As a community works through the strategies identified through this process, it will be important to continue communicating about their progress and challenges. There will also be a need to discuss new strategies and objectives for the food system. Several Web-based services are available to help support this activity.

Investigate social networking and collaboration services to identify one that meets the needs of your community. Here are a few examples of technologies that can keep communities in touch and focused on outcomes.

- Google sites
- Facebook
- Google+
- Grou.ps
- Windows Live

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Workshop Evaluation

Instructions: Please indicate your response to each statement below by checking the appropriate column.

SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly agree

The workshop content:	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Was relevant to my needs.					
2. Was based on credible, up-to-date information.					
3. Was well-organized.					
4. Was at the appropriate level					
5. Overall, was excellent.					
The instructors:	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. Were well-prepared.					
7. Used teaching methods appropriate for the content/audience.					
8. Were knowledgeable about the subject matter.					
9. Managed the environment (schedule, technology, equipment, etc.) in a manner conducive to learning.					
10. Showed respect for all persons attending the program.					
11. Engaged the participants in learning.					
12. Related program content to practical situations.					
13. Answered questions clearly and accurately.					
14. Were excellent teachers overall					
Outcomes:	SD	D	N	A	SA
15. The workshop objectives were achieved.					
16. I gained knowledge/skills/attitudes about the topics presented.					
17. I will use what I learned to enhance my professional responsibilities.					
18. I can use the knowledge and skills gained to impact my Extension clientele.					
19. Overall, this workshop was excellent.					
20. I would recommend this workshop to others.					

Instructions: Please write your answer below each question.

Comments on the quality of instruction:

Comments on the usefulness of this workshop:

Comments on ways to improve the training:

Other comments: