

Engaging and Supporting Members

From the CFSC Membership Meeting, Monday Nov. 12, 2007. See <http://www.foodsecurity.org> for more information about the meeting.

Members were asked to discuss three questions:

- What support would you like CFSC to provide in the future for your work or your community?
- How would you like to be involved in CFSC?
- What information would you like to receive from CFSC?

After they had heard from everyone in their group, the small groups were asked to identify two top ideas that could make an important difference in the next year or two.

These notes are from what was reported from the small groups to the larger group.

1. How CFSC can help support our work:

- (Anita Poole:) **To shed light on the work that's being done.** For example if CFSC were to spotlight us in a publication that goes out Nationally, then it would help people to identify the Kerr Center with sustainable agriculture.
- (Vicky Karhu of the Oklahoma Food Sovereignty Initiative:) CFSC can **develop a database of resources available** to people doing this work. It helps enable us to develop relationships more easily. I work with Native Americans, and one of the requirements to work with them is that they need to know you –it's difficult for them to seek out people who can help them. It would be helpful to have a sort of "hotline" to find out what's going on.
- (Tera Couchman, Janus Youth Programs, CFSC Board member:) I have been a member for many years but never felt like a member. It's very important to make it clear to members how the committees work, how to reach other members, perhaps **provide a new member orientation**. Some way to connect with each other. CFSC could also **highlight best practices somehow**, perhaps giving awards at the Annual Meeting.
- (Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council, CFSC Board member:) Perhaps we could **facilitate cross-education** – matching services with similar sets of experiences, instead of doing all the education ourselves. We also need a **large-scale analysis** of the problems with the food system in order to address the challenges – we need a big-picture view of our work.
- (Steph Larsen, Acting Policy Director:) Provide information regarding **how to engage with other groups in your region. CFSC also needs a better way to communicate with its members**, to convey what decisions are made and how to engage in process.
- (unknown:) If the Coalition is really a coalition, then the website should serve as a **clearinghouse for members**, with a list of experts that people can refer to when looking for someone to assist them. There needs to be **more clarity of roles of CFSC staff**.
- (Denise O'Brien, Women, Food & Agriculture Network, CFSC Board member:) **a workbook/map of how to get involved**, with a more **regional approach**. Important to examine what is the responsibility of 2-way relationship? Connecting linkups at regional meetings to a national approach – followup is very important.
- (unknown:) More 2-way communication and regional approaches -- what can CFSC do to help with local/regional efforts? There is also a need for more transparency regarding what is happening fiscally; who are we involved with in terms of partners; what are different projects doing?
- (Cynthia Price, Greater Grand Rapids Food Systems Council:) Regional functions needs to also address **leadership development**. CFSC has a **think-tank/analysis function** at the National level, this also needs to happen **at regional level**.

Notes from Small Group discussions

Note: These were transcribed from handwritten notes: please forgive us if they are unclear or incorrect.

Group 3 (Kathy O's notes)

How the CFSC can help support your work?

Vicky - Low income mixed community needs financial assistance in getting off the ground; tribal work/// mobile home delivery of services; near Tulsa; very helpful website about CFP grants; TA with SSAWG; 2 things; database/network system of programs – funding opportunities to do the work; how to fund work – working with people who know nothing

CFP Planning Grant: wrote a request; didn't get funding due to technical assistance; insight into Review panel – inside information – one on one – here's how – program design would fit –

Thinking through the whole approach?

Grant writing/training – it takes time to establish relationships with funders???

Oklahoma: doing a story profiling what work you're doing?? – Was the technical assistance Oklahoma Sustainable Network:

Need to develop the relationships in the state and within the region?? –

PR/Marketing Strategy – shed light on what you're doing?/ how to approach media? Getting your message – for a minority grassroots organization – sharing with other tribal groups;

Tribal government folks; non-profits networking and tribal govts'

State policy work; tribal policy work – elderly nutrition work; tribal purchasing

SSAWG: received technical assistance works – bring teachers to the program; How to I talk to RMA?? – opening doors;

Individual support/voice to help you work with the system – not waste the time; develop a relationship;

Orrin: more aware of the economic development angle/ TA – projections/ capacity to review work; -- ISSUE OF POVERTY AND HOW IT'S RELATED TO FOOD SYSTEM WORK –connection between food system and low income

Understand the complexity of the community; what does low income mean??? – question of capacity/? – look at communities holistically – within the same block

Local and regional food assessments?? –

Having a training – farmer's market –

Constituency connections

Resource base – help with travel, time, information base – what are folks doing on the ground?
What are barriers? What could be done?

Hotline – connect us to the work?

Tool bank to be formed?

Try to establish work –

Ssawg – will make phone calls

Dana – priority, get people involved

- Need workbook for people who are just getting involved – regional
- Information is all over the place
- Helping newcomers get involved

How can CFSC help coalition members interact with the orgs that could be brought into?

Nicole – need to change perceptions - ground, policy, amongst each other about who, why, what

- Changes from individual perception to a system
- We are all working towards a particular goal – hunger, poverty, duplication of programs
- Speaks as one particular voice rather than duplicate
- Harness energy – rather than many voices, would be more effective

Come to conference – to ask questions – trying to find answers, problem solving work with members – regional

Local CFSC meetings held at the same time – discuss same topics

Bioneers model – National organizing with local organizing – what happens with follow up

Farm to school network could be a model for regional work of CFSC

Could one organization be a regional leader? Would org have to hire UPS grant used to start?

SSAWG is regional within the South

SAWG – training for, engagement for . . .

Local connection – how do we engage?

Engagement – process for technical assistance to figuring out what is the role of the organization wanting to “join”, NOT DUPLICATING

More than a directory

Working Group – helping new members

GROUP 8 –Wayne’s notes

Jim – appreciates T&TA in Colorado

Deb – wants movement building with vision

- 1) Would ideally love capacity building re: directors gp
 - As simple as phone calls
 - Wants network for EDS
 - Learning communities
- 2) Intentional movement building & power building
 - Strategic thinking on where we're going; who needs to be organized “is not equal to (?)” grows up willy nilly
 - Seems like a wasted opportunity
 - Driven by funding, but funding won't get you there – “will not project your way into new food system” – keeps us fluffy and soft
 - Not intentional enough re: big ideas

Corinna – need political strategy with vision, CFSC can facilitate

Tegan – We'd love T&TA, 52 employees at Food Trust

Corinna – Need support in publications

Craig – Worries that we repeat errors of old food systems, problem of duplicating old system re: apples stored for month, can CFSC help

Charles – Need common program for food service, nuts and bolts, big picture

No problem too big or small.

Engaging & Supporting Members

- WHY Team

- FSLC: needs - mechanisms for sharing info & for getting the word out

- General needs

- Provide member list – org's & contacts
- Clarity as to the role, responsibilities, and expectations of committees
- More knowledge of what different members are working on, e.g. who's focused on anti-hunger
- Information on committees (some don't even know they exist) and possibly encouraging or requiring participation in committees as part of membership
- Regional trainings/regional meetings
- More outreach to & inclusion of youth
- Importance of feeling like a member – more small-group opportunities
- Membership orientation
- Spotlighting of particularly effective grassroots initiatives
- Idea of awards to those demonstrating best practices
- Sharing stories/insights/updates
- Publicizing opportunities for exposure of good work
- Relationship building – encouraging interchanges
- Tackling issue of connecting sustainable agriculture w/needs of low income communities, e.g. highlighting best practices

- Tools

- COMFOOD
- Whole Measures
- Online learning communities

Needs:

- Info Sharing: new publications, spotlighting great grassroots groups (idea of awards)
- Experience of Membership: orientation, engaging w/members, sharing membership lists
- Fostering opportunities for networking & relationship-building – regional meetings
- Committees: Clarity of roles/responsibilities

How can CFSC help support your work?

- Need good info re: Farm Bill – wasn't sure what kind of assistance was available
- Very difficult to simplify policy info for broader dissemination
- Did not get regular policy updates
- Not on Comfood
- What is the mechanism for member info?
- Real “coalition” – members belonging to a coalition, “we”
- Use expertise at local/regional levels, what's minimum intervention from CFSC?
- Coalition serve as clearing house instead of an expert
- Need links to people who have done this
- List of experts made available on various issue areas
- Distilling expertise/best practices, value in having access to experts but using regional experts
- More info on what assistance is available – through Nat'l Network, F2S, RLA & other staff
- Clarity on role of CFSC staff in local areas – duplication/competition issues