**Food Security Coalition
Food Infrastructure Work Group meeting summary**December 13th, 2017OSU Extension Service, Hood River

**Participants:** Rachel Suits-OSU Master Gardeners, Sharon Thornberry- Columbia Gorge Food Bank, Abby Stelzer- CGCC’s Phi Theta Kappa, Michael -Tree Bird Organics, Darla Johnston- CEKC

***Facilitator*:** Liz Oberhausen- Gorge Grown

***Note-taker:*** Louisa Pavlik- Gorge Grown

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS:**

* Abby Stelzer can contact Sharon Thornberry regarding grant money for a possible campus food pantry at CGCC; also speak with David Stelzer regarding interest in a local feed milling project.
* Rachel, send Liz flyers for your upcoming events; email Bayoán Ware to makes sure he knows Rachel & Hannah from Gorge Grown are meeting with meat producers in February
* Sharon will send out some models for food hubs where businesses & food banks coexist—sometime mid-January.

**MEETING OBJECTIVES**

*Give updates on project progress*

*Work on some follow-up projects from the farm survey conducted earlier this year*

**MEETING SUMMARY**

**Review Food System Infrastructure diagram**

The group looked at the food system infrastructure diagram which was created at the last meeting. Each participant described what they’ve been working on in the past few months, noting which part of the food system ecosystem they have interacted with.

* Rachel’s job is changing; she will be in Wasco county more often to work with small farms, meaning less time in Hood River. She did a lot with community gardens this past summer. She also worked with beginning farmers and completed the Producer assessment .
* Abby Stelzer says need for food pantry at CGCC is high and is working on plans for on-campus greenhouse.
* Sharon Thornberry secured a $35,000 grant for childhood hunger and obesity. Food banks at schools will be covered under this, like Dufur and potentially CGCC.
* Michael Kelly, farmer of Tree Bird Organic, is looking to get costs down for butchering
* Darla reported that Bruce Jennerly is involved with CEKC; Darla is hoping to see if WA side can get more funding for food systems work.
* Liz connects people and keeps them informed as program manager of FSC.

**Review selected projects and report out on progress**

Liz reviewed the project selection process, and group members reported on progress, and upcoming projects and timelines. We also strategized new projects, or continuations of existing projects on a timeline drawn on the white board. The chart below captures upcoming events and projects. Events without dates are TBA.

Participants will send Liz more thorough descriptions of these events, to be publicized in the Coalition newsletter.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| January 2018 | March 2018 | June 2018 | September 2018  |

Feasibility Study in progress

Skill-sharing as part of Crop Talks by OSU April-Sept

CGFB Hunger Factors Assessment

Applied research for supporting Veggie Rx through Winter season with season extension

Project Progress:

Oregon Food Bank RARE- community input

Tractor education event- OSU

Childhood Hunger Summit

Feb. 26- Farm Succession event at Pine Grove Grange

Feb. 24- Corvallis “Meating”

Feb. 6 in Hood River, Feb. 13 in White Salmon, Feb 20in Hood River- Exploring the Small Farm Dream

* Land access/ farm succession event in February- planned because need surfaced in producer survey
	+ We should all help promote this event
* Regional food bank stakeholder convening/ survey/ input gathering/ informational meeting- need to continue to work on this.
* Feasibility study
	+ Bayoán Ware, RARE at POTD outlined some general needs
	+ He is meeting some meat producers mid-Jan and Rachel Suits wants to make sure Bayoán knows she & Hannah Ladwig of GG will meet with them mid-Feb
* Create farmer mentoring program connecting new or aspiring farmers to experienced farmers- not started yet.
* Skill sharing workshops for farmers- these will be incorporated into Crop Talks, which will continue in the spring.
* Columbia Gorge Food Bank education; Oregon Food Bank Hunger Factors assessment in March. Sharon says lots of movers and shakers don’t know about poverty and hunger. To change this, people need to know about housing- this poverty focus should be put forth next year.

**Look over compiled recommendations relating to food infrastructure from the Coalition’s recent study of existing surveys, reports, and data.**

Liz reviewed recommendations from existing surveys and reports, and discussed the potential of taking some on as part of this group. The group looked briefly together through the recommendation compilation made from all Gorge food surveys, reports and assessments by Kiara Kashuba, RARE AmeriCorps with OSU in The Dalles. This report is attached to the email in which these notes were sent.

**The Infrastructure work Group Action Guide**

This guide features a compiled and organized chart of recommendations related to food infrastructure for the region, as found in the surveys, reports and data reviewed above (also attached in the email these notes were sent in).

Select comments were as follows:

* Organically Grown is interested in having a food hub in the Gorge made of CGFB and business entities. Sharon has a few models in mind and will send them out some time in January.
* Participants discussed the feasibility of creating a distribution network for farmers locally and to Portland, but concluded that we may need to help farmers tap into the already-existing network.
	+ Logistics is always a challenge; Michael Kelly of Tree Bird conveyed that small farmers often prefer to sell their products directly to consumers, but the reality is that sometimes you must give up the face-to-face experience if a farm is growing in scale. Michael says there are a lot of distribution networks in place to tap into, like Azure Standard.
* Small farmers need a new set of skills related to business & logistics of today
	+ Rick Liebowitz could maybe speak at a Crop Talk to share his business model; perhaps Michael Kelly can too.
* One participant asked whether a food broker would be helpful for the Gorge and the answer for now is probably not
	+ Michael says that volume must be very high to make up for the slim margins which brokers need to operate on to maintain profitability at all phases. Pacific Foods is an example of a food broker; they operate on 3% commission which means a lot of volume to be profitable. HR Organic already has lots of vans shuttling around, so let’s tap into existing networks.

**Discuss potential additional project opportunities for next year:**

1. Local feed milling project (see the next page for an outline of the potential project, described by Ben Zimmerman of Small i Farm)
	* Abby Stelzer’s father, David Stelzer, is the owner of Azure. Abby volunteered to ask him about his interest in cooperating on this project.
	* Dairy producers in Trout Lake have a lot of grain they use for feed, but it comes from all over the country. They could be interested in a local feed milling project.
2. Brainstorm/ recruit people who *do* have capacity, expertise for the Distribution Project we’ve discussed: Work with distributors to coordinate distribution for local farmers locally and to Portland.
	* Recruit & brainstorm- could invite Organically Grown and Azure for collaboration. It’s all about volume and logistics- Portland is a general market. Finding a specific marketing niche as a small farmer is important.
	* Through the producer survey, we have a list of farmers, and their contact information, who are interested in an aggregation/ distribution project.

**Group work on follow-up from producer survey**

**Project 1:** Create an infographic of the farm survey results, such as the format Rachel suggested: <https://infogram.com/osu-extension-farm-to-school-and-youth-gardens-1g0gmj1wnnzym1q>

Survey:

 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxiYZkMwT3BEdHBsai1uSzlSNzQ/view?usp=sharing>

* Participants helped draw out which results are of interest to stakeholders and the public, and time permitting, how we might display them in an infographic.
* Rachel Suits, Hannah Brause & Liz might better tease out information, since they created the initial survey.
* Questions 11, 12 and 17 emerged as being particularly important to highlight
	+ Price points are an important consideration for question 12.
* We may want different infographics for different audiences, such as the Food Security Coalition, the public, groceries/institutions, funders, etc.

**Project 2:** Connect farmers who participated in our survey to existing resources relating to the needs they expressed

* Participants looked at the needs expressed in the survey and discussed compiling the resources that already exist, so that we can pass that information on to the producers who expressed the need.
* There actually are a fair amount of commercial kitchens available but many people do not know about them
	+ Liz has a list that could be updated and sent to farmers/interested parties

**Thoughts from first-time Food Infrastructure work group attendees:**

* Darla was unaware of distribution issues that producers face and now feels more informed.
* Abby enjoyed making new contacts which can help move her projects forward, and observed that many people don’t know what meetings or resources exist to learn about food.
* Michael is interested in the bigger picture of food security from production to harvest, and the fact that 98% of food in the Gorge is imported.

**Local feed milling project description:**

“The feed question has the potential to hit lots of fronts.  Feed ends up being the major cost in raising animals and if that cost can be brought down it follows that the cost of locally raised protein could be more affordable, or at least more profitable and sustainable for farmers.  The ideal vision would couple with farmers on the east side to grow the inputs, grind and package at a farm or other location with the equipment and storage capacity and could be pretty small scale or easily be a farm's side business, small independent business or co-op style operation. The capacity to grow, grind and store our own local feed speaks to the emergency preparedness and resilience goals as well.”

**Next meeting:**

Sharon offered to host the next meeting at Columbia Gorge Food Bank in The Dalles.