One Region Forward
Food Access and Justice
Working Team Notes
Meeting 4, August 5, 2013

Working Team Members in Attendance (sorted by break-out discussion groups):

Group A
Susannah Barton, Grassroots Gardens
Diane Held, American Farmland Trust
Sarah Jablonski, Food for All
Lauren Gousy, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County

Facilitators:
Brian Conley, UB Regional Institute
Cristina Delgado, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab

Group B
Sean Mulligan, Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County
Natalie Cook, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Mary Stottele, Wellness Institute
Mark Smith, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County

Facilitators:
Travis Norton, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab
Daryl Ryan, UB Regional Institute

Group C
Phil Haberstro, Wellness Institute
Charlotte MacVittie, United Way of Buffalo and Erie County
Jim Bittner, Singer Farms

Facilitators:
Jessica Hall, UB Food Systems Planning and Healthy Communities Lab
Brendan Anderson, UB Regional Institute

Note taker:
Bradshaw Hovey, UB Regional Institute/ Urban Design Project

Introductions and Agenda review

Re-cap and Process Overview
Discussion points:

- Haberstro: Will we be given an opportunity to look across the work of the other 1RF working teams in a comprehensive way to make sure there are no duplications, overlaps or gaps?
Conley: The overlap in goals, strategies and actions proposed by each working team will be tackled more explicitly during working team meetings in the winter and spring of 2014. In the meantime, we can go to the teamwork website to see what the other teams are working on.

Jablonski: To help us drive participation in Community Congress events this fall, can we get an overview of what will be happening at these meetings?

Conley: We will be presenting the current state of the region, how it may look in the future under a “Business as usual” scenario. This short presentation will be followed by a table-top workshop activity where participants will be asked to discuss and strategize their preferred development patterns in an interactive mapping exercise.

How to go about identifying specific action items:

Framing Question:

“What steps should our region take, both today and in the future, to ensure the long-term sustainability of widespread, equitable access to healthy food?”

Keep in mind the group of the broad group of possible actors when thinking of implementation. We want to be as specific as possible when proposing actions, giving an example. (See slide 8)

Reviewing the revisions in strategies:

- Strategy 1 changed to better highlight the need to protect potential farmland as well as current farmland.
- Strategy 6 changed to incorporate concerns of a presently inconsistent, tenuous food system workforce.

Haberstro: Need to promote careers as registered dieticians and nutritionists as well; the strategy should be altered to reflect this need by saying, “...food system workforce for distribution and education.” (See slide 9 of presentation)

Reviewing the Working List of Actions from Meeting 3:

As a reminder, this is a working list of possible actions and actors (see slide 10). There were no items of dispute from working team members.

Mission statement

“We strive to make regional food production, food consumption, and the ties between them sustainable, just, and sovereign. We seek to ensure that food production remains a viable livelihood; that people have access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally acceptable food; and that the links between regional food producers and consumers are strengthened.”

Goals

- Support food producers
- Support food consumers [Focus of today’s meeting]
Link food producers and consumers

A common language
See slide 14 of presentation posted on Teamwork site for definitions of the following terms:
- Food insecurity
- Hunger
- Diet related opportunities
- Healthy food

Digging deeper into the state of the regional food consumption:
See presentation document posted on Teamwork site for issues and data on the following topics:
- Food Culture
- Food Access
- Food Assistance
- Food Security and Hunger

Group Discussion Following Presentation:
- Haberstro: Will you be looking at policy at the local, state, or national level?
- Hall: Yes, all of the above.
- Talk to Bidwell Farmers Market about a double dollars program
- Farmer’s market at ECMC uses funds for a double-up bucks program, I think they get five dollars’ worth out of three dollars... (Jablonski)
- MAP NY State Fresh connect program gives five dollars of produce for two dollars
- Look at research done by the Center for Regional Food Systems at Michigan State, FARE Food Network.

Brainstorming Group Discussion:
“What are assets and opportunities related to food consumption in our region?”

- Bittner: One opportunity is for farmers to learn what new immigrants want to eat? Program in NJ to help farmers “We can grow the stuff, but we have to know what it is and what it’s called.”
- Haberstro: Erie and Niagara County both have public access television stations to educate people about what farmers are doing.
- Haberstro: Children’s Hospital and others are promoting breast feeding through programs; others include, baby cafes and lactation consultants.
- Stottele: Buffalo Car Share has food access potential -something to build on.
- Jablonski: Delevan Grider CC – shuttle service to Tops and Wegmans.
- Mulligan: Convenience stores are an asset if we can increase the amount of healthy food they stock.
- Jablonski: Why is there such low participation in SNAP and NSLP in Niagara County. There is a hidden opportunity there.
- Haberstro: Erie County food policy council is an important asset... and connections with state elected officials. We need to know who they are to affect public policy.
Held: Crystal Peoples is on nutrition committee?

Delgado: Help single mothers and children reduce common barriers to healthy food access - time, income, family friendly places to bring children. Coop is hard to bring kids. It’s cramped and crowded. Maybe have evening hours for farmers markets? Think through the real barriers – need for easy preparation foods...

Delgado: Cab companies could offer reduced fares for low income people. (See Chicago)

Haberstro: Consider all the colleges and universities – UB Food Lab, dietetic programs, all those who deal with food issues – as assets.

Jablonski: Public schools possess a big opportunity to change curriculum on healthy foods.

Gousy: Increase outreach to build SNAP and WIC programs and NSLP. Overcome the stigma.

Delgado: The application process for public assistance programs for food procurement is cumbersome. Language barriers, financial documentation, unsympathetic administrators, pay stubs, etc. People drop out of WIC because it was too time-consuming.

Anderson: Research to create guides to “double-up” programs.

Barton: Localized info hub, multiple languages, to help people get into aid programs.

Hall: Target the growing number of elderly.

Haberstro: Cornell Coop Extension is an underused asset. It’s knowing what they’re doing and communicating their capacity to the people who could benefit from their work.

Haberstro: Erie Niagara farmland is an opportunity... to convert it back to local production.

Haberstro: The chefs in our community, culinary schools, etc... are also assets.

Barton: there are some educational opportunities connected to farmers markets.

Haberstro: Community foundations are also an asset (Wegman’s foundation for one).

Jablonski: Share our Strength. National group with incentive programs.

**Assets that can strengthen food consumers in Buffalo Niagara:**

1. Community Foundations (e.g., Wegman’s)
2. Media Outlets (Local and Public Access Television stations, radio, etc...)
3. Breastfeeding initiatives at children’s hospital and WIC centers
4. Public Transportation (NFTA, Buffalo Car Share, shuttle services, etc...)
5. High number of convenience stores often in areas with low access to healthy foods
6. Erie County Food Policy Council
7. Higher Education Institutions and food-, health-related research labs
8. Cornell Cooperative Extension
9. Climate and soils of the region provide ideal conditions to grow food on existing and potential farmland
10. Culinary schools and chefs/restaurateurs for food preparation training

**Opportunities to strengthen food consumers in Buffalo Niagara:**

11. Providing food that is culturally appropriate for a diverse and changing population
12. Heightening participation in public assistance programs
13. Connections with broad array of actors both within and outside of our region
14. Single parents – making access to healthy food fit into their schedule
15. Taxi cabs – could provide low and reduced fares to get people to fresh food retail destinations
16. Tapping into the networks of state/local politicians who are concerned with healthy food access
17. Public Schools
18. Overcoming the stigma and complicated process associated with public assistance programs
19. Getting the word out on “Double-up” purchasing programs for EBT, WIC at Farmer’s Markets through guides and resources
20. Increasing age of residents - getting healthy foods to seniors

Proposing Actions and Actors to Build off of our Assets and Seize Opportunities:

1. Community Foundations (e.g., Wegman’s)
   . Develop and launch a database/clearinghouse sharing info of existing foundations
   . Educate local foundations
   . Make sure foundations are present at major community events
   . Highlight collaborative efforts between foundations and other actors
   . Possible indicator: Number of foundations who acquire funding (quality over quantity)

2. Media
   . Use and coordinate existing networks and resources including:
     . Over-air TV, radio, 211
     . Public Service Announcements
     . Food Policy Council, Local media, broadcasting/communications students

3. Breastfeeding programs
   . Increase and enhance communications of these programs to the public
   . Use innovative, multi-pronged communications strategies
   . Use existing places for the program (Hospitals, day care and head start)
   . Build capacity through a network of community health care workers and volunteers
   . “Breastfeeding cafes”

4. Public Transportation
   . Subsidize car share, shuttles and cab rides
   . Create a program to help car share, shuttle services and cab companies provide special transportation to healthy food retail destinations
     . Could be a small program or a broader operation
     . Enlist community groups, environmental funders, grocery stores, AARP\Senior groups to implement
5. Convenience Stores
   . Develop and launch a program that does branding, materials and stocks vegetables from local farmers (a “franchise-like” model)
     . Use a network of convenience stores
     . Enlist non-profits, convenience stores and a regional food hub to implement

6. FPC
   . Create a Food Policy Council for Niagara County
   . Coordinate with media to advocate for local and healthy foods
   . Create a database of community foundations
   . Develop and launch institutional procurement programs

7. Higher Education
   . Leverage single purchase powers
   . Improve the quality of food provided and evaluate food procurement programs
   . Larger connection/enhanced collaboration between students and community
   . Enlist all local colleges and universities

8. CCE
   . Take advantage of their “Double-up Bucks” program offered in Niagara County
   . Provide a farmers/growers training program
   . Launching a nutrition education program
   . Convenience Store program
     . Advertising and providing access to healthy foods at these retail outlets
     . Mobile food truck serving healthy food options (see M.A.P.)

9. Farmland
   . —See notes from Meeting 3 for proposed actions related to food production

10. Culinary Schools
    . Educate broader public of all ages and backgrounds on preparing fresh foods
    . Attract recent high school grads to colleges with dietetics and culinary programs

11. Providing culturally-appropriate food
    . Work with religious institutions
    . Work with food banks to determine what food is culturally-appropriate and provide it to those in need
    . Education programs on different types of food preparation
      . Possibly through food pantries, culinary schools
      . Comment: *Add “preparation” as a step to Strategy #7
    . Enabling and supporting community gardens in refugee areas
    . Culinary schools can be used to recruit volunteers for food preparation programs
12. Participation in Public Assistance Programs
   . Bringing programs to food store owners to get people to use public assistance
   . Reach out to individuals responsible for SNAP programs in both counties
   . Educate people on how programs work

13. Broad array of actors

14. Single parents
   . Organize group child/daycare programs at healthy food retail destinations
   . Expand hours of farmer’s markets with alternative staffing options
   . Cab programs for access to healthy food retail destinations
   . Political day to give out cab vouchers
   . Grants for supermarkets in cities/underserved communities
   . Program to make carts, carriers accessible to commute to store
   . Bus routes to and from healthy food retail destinations

15. Taxi cabs and reduced fares to get people to fresh food retail destinations

16. Tapping into the networks of state/local politicians who are concerned with healthy food access
   . Find out who the authorities are and how they could be leveraged to improve food access.
   . Look to the Department of Health (has money), NYS Ag & Markets (little funding available) as partners.
     . Both agencies need better coordination with each other
   . Look to the Regional Economic Development Council
   . ACTION: Talk to state and local leaders about strengthening healthy food access—a meeting with all of them together.
     . Frame these talks in economic development
     . More farming means more jobs
     . Healthier foods mean a healthier, more economically productive workforce

17. Public Schools
   . Start nutrition education curriculum and programs for teachers in public schools

18. Overcoming the stigma and complicated process associated with public assistance programs
   . Increase awareness and funding to boost enrollment in existing programs
     . Provide information on public food assistance programs at public libraries
   . Investigate the program for Community Gardens in the NYS Capital District (Albany)
     . Does a similar program exist in WNY?
   . Start a fresh food Winnebago
     . Find ways to engage people without food access about healthy food
Use food trucks as social support to get healthy foods to people without access
Make allies with fast food and convenience stores
Find ways to enable these stores to sell healthier foods
Connect to senior services organizations to get more food assistance info out to growing elderly population
Senior services department, AARP
Enable food security for more people through a marketing campaign with data on under-use of nutrition assistance programs
Give notice about food assistance to college and grad students
Local colleges/universities could distribute food assistance information in their financial aid or admission envelopes.
Improve access to school reduced lunch programs
BPS eliminated stigma by giving reduced lunches to all
A Nutrition Outreach Education Program run by Food for All

19. Getting the word out on “Double-up” purchasing programs for EBT, WIC at Farmer’s Markets through guides and resources
Ensure easy access to information on all “special” food assistance programs. Put all food assistance information in one place.

20. Increasing age of residents - getting healthy foods to seniors
Food support across all age sectors may increase food assistance participation when people reach old age.
Direct programs to youth, college students, adults and seniors

21. Marketing fruits and vegetables to kids
Research marketing psychology to determine what marketing will make kids eat fruits and vegetables.
Research best practices to introduce fruits and vegetables to youth:
Conduct a literature review about changing school children’s dietary behavior to guide intervention program selection.
1. What interventions/marketing methods work to encourage healthier eating in school/excitement about more nutritious lunch programs? Talk to Buffalo Schools’ Food Services Director Bridget O’Brien Wood.
Contact the organization of school dieticians.
Tobacco behavior versus food behavior
Making the connection between outcomes in food behavior (diabetes, health, economics) to outcomes in tobacco use (second-hand smoke, lung cancer, etc...)
Assume a comprehensive approach to culture change by learning the community's capacity for change
Make a culture change that prioritizes preparing/eating healthy foods over other activities that currently have top priority
22. Other
   . Cost of food
     . Find out whether fruits and vegetables cost more than other foods.
     . Find out whether social security benefits are keeping pace with the cost of healthy food.
   . Increase food entrepreneurship
     . Best practice example – WEDI (Westminster Economic Devpt. Initiative)