

**NRV Food Access Network
Leadership Team Meeting Notes – 4.25.18
Montgomery County Government Center**

Attendees:

- Mary Case, VT Engage - Virginia Tech
- Jaimie Edwards, Virginia tech
- Charlie Herbert, Giles Community Garden
- Christy Gabbard, New River Glean Team/Local Concepts LLC
- Kathleen Herndon, Feeding America Southwest Virginia
- Tami Kincer, Cross Creek Retreat +Hydroponic Education Center
- Meredith Ledlie Johnson, Family Nutrition Program
- Jon Low, Interfaith Food Pantry
- Tucker Morgan, Radford Sustainability
- Josh Nease, Radford University
- Enrique Rebolledo, YMCA at Virginia Tech
- Elizabeth Richardson, Plenty!
- Kelli Scott, Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Ellen Stewart, Prices Fork Food Center
- Maureen McGonagle, Farmacy Garden and New River Health District
- Kim Thurlow, Community Foundation for the New River Valley
- Pastor John Wertz, Micah’s Backpack and St. Michaels Lutheran Church

Purpose Statement Conversation:

The conversation was started by sharing and reviewing the current purpose statement developed at the beginning of the Initiative.

“In order to expand access to healthy food, we would like to share best practices, innovative approaches and encourage collaboration among the network of organizations working to relieve hunger in the New River Valley.”

This purpose statement was used during the first year of the Initiative focused on supporting the six initial community conversations. The focus of these conversations were to:

1. Encourage Collaboration
2. Share Best Practices
3. Innovative Approaches

Afterwards, as a group we discussed how our purpose might change in this next phase of our work as we better align our work and identify priority changes we want to see in the community and for our programs. We talked about how the above is still relevant but how our work might also include the following:

- Support partnership with organizations that have similar audiences, clients served, and mechanisms through which organizations serve.
- Identifying common learning needs
- Include the people that will be served by the network in the conversation.
- The desire to inform policy, engage in advocacy and encourage greater awareness of these issues and our work. Not everyone would need to play these roles. For example, how can the power of the collective group support the advocacy work done by Feeding America.
- Using group energy to package what we see, what we are doing, and TELL OUR STORY so that we can increase external support and buy in.
- Internal and external literacy and credibility
- Include client outcomes not just organizational outcomes
- Be more action oriented
- Have a focus on empowerment and helping clients create self-sufficiency, so there is a reduced need for services rather than just a focus on building more capacity to serve more people. How to serve “less” people – solve some of the Hunger issue.
- Better incorporate data so that our work is informed and responsive to needs- needs based. It will be helpful to understand the hotspots of need in our community and to inform our progress in these areas.
 - There is currently not a lot of local data to inform or assess the impact of our work, identify common measures and system for collecting data to tracking needs and impact. This would particularly be useful as it relates to health outcomes. Would it be valuable to link with the Community Health Assessments? Community Health “Barometer”.
- Reduce the Administrative Burden with a common way of collecting data, client intake, or centralized information source.
- Potential descriptors for our purpose statement: Collective, impactful, empower
- A coalition of the willing to support collective impact. Important to develop “We-ness” and respect for one another.

VISION = How would we know if we were successful?

To continue the conversation, we discussed how we might know if we were successful and achieving our purpose. What are some of the things that we would expect to see as results? We did not develop specific indicators, but see that this would be work that this committee continues to develop as we move forward.

Network Level:

- Community supports the work and the network

- Network mission and agenda aligns with community values
- Inclusion of the whole community
- Shared group identity

Organizational Level:

- Volunteer hours have increased/have a meaningful experience
 - Track – What makes a volunteer repeat?
 - Good Volunteer experience
 - Training of Volunteers
- Financial fitness/Operational Sustainability
 - Increased funding
 - Less reliance on grants
- Improved education offerings
- More clients served or less clients served, why?
- Increase in the # of collaborative efforts

Community Level:

- Number and types of people being fed
- Changes in health habits/shopping skills
 - Local fruit and veg consumption
- When others give back after receiving services
- Neighbors are helping neighbors
- Improved Quality of Life
 - What is our impact?
 - What is the effect on the folks being fed?

Other Questions raised/comments provided in group discussion:

- How do we define 'insecurity'?
- Where do our towns rank with regards to community health over the state and national average?
- What information are we able and willing to share – OR NOT?
- We can't forget about the Human Element – this initiative should be person centered and can collect personal stories.
- We can use network analysis as a benchmark as we move forward & grow
- Could we develop a map of our organizations around priority areas of need, transit, etc. to determine we are serving areas of need appropriately?

Structure of our Network

We had a discussion on how we would like to structure our network. The current network facilitators realize that it is necessary to expand the leadership in this next action focused phase.

We talked about eventually having a Leadership Team comprised of:

- Potential Terms, 2-3 years
- Widespread Representation by:
 - County
 - Type of organization
 - # of organizations a part of the network
- Fee?

For now working with the “Coalition of the willing” is preferred but that we should identify wholes and recruit as needed.

It would be good to hold an annual meeting with the larger group to expand awareness/reach

We discussed having leadership team meetings for now, every other month. Kim Thurlow will send out a doodle to determine a consistent day and time of the month for these meetings.

The goal of the leadership team would be to help:

- determine what does it mean to be a part of the network
- establish the scope, agenda, direction and priorities of the network
- determine measures and data needs
- support advocacy, engagement, outreach

The leadership team could break out into smaller groups to move these items forward depending on where their skills and interests lie.

Eventually, it will be good to have working groups developed around topics.

Inclusion & Diversity

We had a brief discussion how best to be inclusive and diverse in our structure.

- Very Important
- Have folks affected by the decisions made at the table
- Create ownership in the community
- Include this in our Values – Value Statement
- Think about the timing of meetings
- Where and how do we announce meetings & events?

- ID Communities and Locations where meetings/gatherings are needed?
- Look at the Giles Co. Focus model.
- “Family Café Model”
- Meal, Transportation, Child Care
- Stipends for low-income participants
- Major Issues = Transportation –Child Care – Working Multiple Jobs

Example shared from Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher

https://www.vabeginningfarmer.alce.vt.edu/content/dam/vabeginningfarmer_alce_vt_edu/coalition/org-decision-making-guidelines.pdf