

# Whatcom Food Network Steering Committee Meeting

*Purpose/function: Working to build common understanding and facilitate collaborative efforts toward an equitable, sustainable and healthy food system for all.*

Date: 10/07/20

Time: 1:30–3pm

Location: Virtual Zoom Mtg

## Present

Facilitator: Mardi & Laura

Note taker: Kerry Eastwood

Kerry Eastwood Rhys-Thorvald Hansen Ali Jensen Cheryl Thornton Amber Noskoff	Mardi Soloman Laura Ridenour Ander Russell Naomi Siegel
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**Red = DECISIONS**

**Yellow = ACTION ITEMS**

**Opportunities**

FOLLOW-UP ITEMS:		
By when	Action Item	Person(s) responsible:
10/10	Send out draft promotional language and draft public-facing agenda for SC review and input.	Kerry
10/25	Send updated outreach list to SC.	Mardi
10/31	Sign up for at least one strong connection to reach out to and ask that person to reach out. Feel free to sign up for more than one person/org on the list that you are connected to.	EVERYONE
10/31	Invite members of the FSC to meet with office to reboot their work on the community assessment. Ali and Mardi will try to coordinate this. everybody could be invited from WFN SC and FSC - joint meeting (public?).	Mardi & Ali
11/15	Come up with some prompts to shoutout onto the listserv on a weekly or biweekly or monthly basis.	Kerry & Rhys

Decisions:

- 1) At December meeting, we will decide if our next meeting should be in Jan or Feb (monthly or bimonthly).

## NOTES

- 1) Welcome.
- 2) Agenda review/finalization (see link to [draft agenda](#)).
- 3) Fall Forum: Review plan:

- a) As part of the EDI retreat we talked about what were the elements that would make our forum a success if we are centering equity. We used that feedback and reflections to plan the forum agenda.
- b) There was a planning committee that started this planning process, but had to dissolve and pass duties on to the CT.
- c) Here's what we are working on - here's what we're thinking is going to happen at the forum: we want to involve you in helping make sure that the speakers that are representative of our community are invited to speak
- d) As WFN we haven't been centering equity. We've been urged by our one POC on our SC to pay attention to this topic and focus on it: food access and equity (these topics also rose to the top of concern during spring forum).
- e) We need to make safe spaces for POC. We have some conflict within our own steering committee, not in agreement about equity - we have existing issues we need to attend to internally, these are in addition to our external goals for centering equity in our work as a membership.
- f) Starting with metrics is one thought.
- g) We want any input you all have in looking at the agenda, then talk about how each of us can help build relationships with communities of color.
- h) We structured the event content so that it builds on our role as network to spread awareness and bring food system together to collaborate on these issues.
- i) We have a lot of work to do to build relationships with communities of color.
- j) Right now as we start at the beginning of relationship building, it feels like this agenda is reaching a bit ahead of where we are at as a network.
- k) How can we get more real? How can we be more aware of communities that are or are not willing to show up and participate in this forum.
- l) Because we have work to do in terms of centering and including, but we can report on metrics because we are at least aware of some of the issues and things that are happening; we can also be transparent about the lack of diversity on SC and acknowledge that.
- m) First major topic: CARES Act \$\$ filtered through counties - county has received millions in CARES Act, alot is for testing, but a lot is for economic development and emergency food - hoping to have someone give an update on the County \$ and where they flowed into our food system. Would be really interesting to id where the federal \$ are going. I would like to get info from Executive office. Food system roundtable was tasked with coming up with a food system plan some time ago, they convened over the past several months to create immediate action recs for the state to take - invited Chris Elder to come speak with a staff person from the State to update us.
- n) Second major topic: speakers to give voice to current BIPOC experience in food system.
  - i) In looking at the potential speakers, wondering if we need to think about as a committee if we need to get more people on the SC to do outreach. Are we forcing something we are not ready for yet because we haven't built these relationships yet? If we are trying to get people to talk about the diversity in the food system: School districts are really struggling with diversity and equity in the school system, maybe we can help address this issue.
  - ii) Concern is who we would BIPOC speaker - to make it be very inclusive and approachable rather than forced.
  - iii) We've made this space, we're holding the topic very loosely so that they can share their experience in the way that feels needed.

- iv) In that vein, allowing that space for who we are reaching out to, to allow them to help set the agenda. What do they think is important in this forum? We ask for input to focus on what is needed?
  - v) Keeping initial outreach language vague for second section so that we can form it into what it needs to be for the BIPOC speakers - that is the plan to account for their needs and topics they want to share on.
  - vi) Thinking longer term - building longer term interest and involvement. Building toward vision of more inclusive and diverse WFN SC and membership.
  - o) No time set because we are trying to accommodate new communities who we want to participate. Can we talk to the speakers that - make decision about timing by Tuesday
  - p) Soliciting SC to reach out to new orgs and communities - Mardi will update the list and send it out for SC to help reach out individually to all orgs on the list about Forum and about WFN and our work and our desire to hear their voices at the table. [Mardi]
  - q) Kerry will send out draft promotional language and draft public-facing agenda for SC review and input. [Kerry]
- 4) FSC Update - started meeting Feb 2019
- a) Derailed one year in by COVID.
  - b) Since then, we've only had one meeting, we came up with a letter of recs for addressing food system needs and sent to County Council - response so far that we know is from Riley Sweeny said he spoke with Satpal and their office is working to enact with or without council support the following:
    - i) Utilizing County space for distribution of bulk commodities;
    - ii) IT staff to local County farms;
    - iii) SNAP flexibility;
    - iv) more funding at state and federal level for more assistance.
  - c) Three vacant seats - export sales farming (big ag: berries and dairies), labor issues, processing and distribution. Also looking to diversify.
  - d) Not meeting at all since the recs were created in July.
  - e) We could invite members of the FSC to meet with office to reboot their work on the community assessment. Ali and Mardi will try to coordinate this. everybody could be invited from WFN SC and FSC - joint meeting (public?). Could be really helpful as a way to then invite more reps to joining. [Ali & Mardi]
- 5) SC expectations and responsibilities - how are we meeting goals of communication and collaboration? What's here in the guiding doc and what's not here:
- a) Steering Committee structure:
    - i) We want to have 2 reps from each sector to give more voices and engagement.
    - ii) Is our structure what it needs to be to help us move toward increased inclusion??
      - (1) a lot of people don't have an org paying for them to come participate in the steering committee - it's a difficult barrier for many who fall into this unpaid category.
        - (a) This is a strong idea of the CT that we would like to pay unpaid SC members in the future;
        - (b) Everyone who is here should be paid at least a stipend;
        - (c) We haven't worked out the details yet.
    - iii) How are decisions made - we have these ideas for strengthening access and inclusivity but we don't have a process for helping us move the ideas forward

- iv) Each SC meeting has time dedicated to updates from sectors and cross collaboration - but this communication should also be happening on the listserv.
- v) How can we better connect with WFN membership as a whole?
  - (1) Get stuck in our own sectors and forget about the possible crossover. What we have to share is not applicable to every sector, but specific sectors instead which keeps me from posting.
  - (2) Similarly, are there ways to define more what is a food system and what aspects of the food system are important to inform other sectors on? Food system feels very vague and what content feels of interest to be sharing?
  - (3) Is the listserv content of interest currently to most of us here in this meeting?
  - (4) What are we measuring in regard to the listserv. What is important for us to be tracking toward goals we set forth under each sector?
  - (5) Sector dates.
  - (6) Struggle with wanting to rep my sector, not my org - maybe this could be clearer in the guidelines. Current guidelines feel like we should be repping sectors only not our org in general. Maybe we can add to the guidelines we can broaden what it means to rep sector and org to open the type of content that can be posted to the listserv.
  - (7) We talked about the need to revisit the existing goals under each sector, and that might help further address what we are going to measure as success in the food system. Talked about this at the August retreat.
  - (8) Kerry and Rhys - can we come up with some prompts to shoutout onto the listserv on a weekly or biweekly or monthly basis [Kerry & Rhys]
  - (9) Do we need to meet more regularly in order to do all of this work? Table this discussion until the next meeting. **At December meeting, we will decide if our next meeting should be in Jan or Feb (monthly or bimonthly).**
  - (10) Virtual events - personal touch means a lot. Pick one person you really want to have there, then ask them to pick one person. Then have them pass that request on to one person they have a deep connection with. More meaningful way to reach out. [Everyone]

6) Closing and adjourn

- a) County and Council budgets are being drafted and will be reviewed by Councils for finalization soon so if you have input please reach out and provide it.