

Developing Networks to Expand Markets & Increase Good Food Access in Southern California

Organizational Overview: The Center for Food & Justice (CFJ), a division of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College, works to promote a sustainable and socially just food system by improving access to fresh and healthy foods in all communities. CFJ has over ten years experience organizing, evaluating, and promoting programs that connect local farms to urban institutions, including schools, child care centers, domestic violence shelters, and hospitals. Over the past year, CFJ has led an effort to assess local food distribution solutions for farm to institution programs in Southern California. Strong cross-sector relationships have been built with farmers, food distributors, institutions, and food and nutrition advocates in the region, establishing CFJ as the integral leader dedicated to convening stakeholders around issues of good food. This work has resulted in the development of a five-pronged approach to scaling up the local food distribution channels in the region.¹ CFJ also provides hands-on technical assistance in setting up farm to institution programs in Southern California, including groundbreaking programs in the Santa Monica Malibu, Los Angeles, and Riverside Unified School Districts, and at Kaiser Permanente hospitals. CFJ co-directs the National Farm to School Network, and is a leader in the farm to school community. CFJ leads the California Farm to School Taskforce, which brings together state departments and farm to school leaders to develop strategies to promote the farm to school model throughout the state.

Regional Priorities: The Southern California Good Food Network (SCGFN) will include the region of Southern California defined as the counties of Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Riverside, and San Bernardino. These six counties are home to 20.7 million people, or 56% of California's population.² This region includes 17% of California's farms, and 4.5% of California's farms that are smaller than 100 acres.³ With such a large population and a disproportionately small local agricultural base, it is vital that stakeholders work together to protect and expand local agriculture and secure systems of access to good local foods. The SCGFN will take a focused approach in developing good food strategies for Southern California, whose large population has been grossly underserved by statewide food justice efforts. SCGFN's priorities reflect the strategies needed to address the barriers that prevent vulnerable communities, institutions, farmers, and distribution firms from accessing good food in the region. These barriers have been vetted by partners and stakeholders in the region through work undertaken by CFJ to explore innovative distribution models for the region. SCGFN's priorities include: (1) Cultivating and leading a regional community of practice; (2) Identifying model distribution strategies to move good food into wholesale channels and into communities where access is most limited; and (3) Conducting distribution-related outreach and technical assistance. Table 1 presents SCGFN Scope of Work.

Regional Steering Committee & Regional Collaborators and Partners: Members of the proposed Regional Steering Committee have been strategically chosen for their diverse expertise and knowledge of the region, connections to the food industry, ability and willingness to act as spokespersons, and skills in organizing their community. They will provide authority and guidance to effectively execute SCGFN activities, develop educational materials, host workshops, conduct outreach efforts and reflect the needs of their constituents in the

¹ A report on the approaches is posted here: http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/publications/TCE_Final_Report.pdf

² USDA 2006. US Census Bureau. State & County Quick Facts.

³ USDA 2002. 2002 Census of Agriculture. USDA National Agricultural Statistic Services.

development of SCGFN plans. Open communication and sharing within the group will be achieved through various communication tools, such as a SCGFN list serve, regular conference calls, Webinars, website, community events and in-person meetings.

Regional Steering Committee Members (proposed): (1) Beth Levendoski, Tierra Miguel Foundation Farm. Assist in the development and implementation of farmer collaborative model. bethlevendoski@tierramiguelfarm.org (2) Rodney Taylor, Riverside Unified School District. Farm to school model project, institutional food service. rktaylor@rusd.k12.ca.us (3) Martin Anenberg, Worldwide Produce. Provide expertise for incorporating locally grown produce into a conventional distribution firm. martin@justpickedproduce.com (4) Jill Overdorf, Cooseman's Shipping. Provide produce industry expertise, assist in creating connections in field of distribution. jill.overdorf@coosemans.com (5) Marion Kalb, Community Food Security Coalition. Provide expertise in establishing networks related to institutional marketing and good food. marion@foodsecurity.org

Regional Collaborators and Partners (proposed): (1) Howell Tumlin, Southland Farmers' Market Association. Advisory role in farmers' market distribution related strategies. howell@sfma.net (2) Laura Avery, Santa Monica Farmers' Market. Assist in the development of farmers' market distribution, connect with farmers. laura.avery@smgov.net (3) Pompea Smith, Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles. Provide expertise for distribution solutions related to low-income communities and farmers' markets. pomepa@see-la.org (4) Sandra Diamond, North County Farmers' Market Association. Advisory role in farmers' market distribution related strategies. sandra@createabang.com (5) George Kibby, South Coast Farms. Assist in development of farmer-direct distribution. organicgrowerman@sbcglobal.net (6) Kimberly Pasciuto, Central Coast Ag. Network. Advisory role. senzapensieri@sbcglobal.net (7) Katie Ricketts, Heath & Lejeune Inc. Provide expertise for the development of good food basket delivery systems. katie@soulyyorganic.com (8) Frank Tamborello, Hunger Action Los Angeles. Facilitate connections with Los Angeles hunger advocates. frank@hungeractionla.org

Capacity, Staff, and Complementary Funding as Regional Lead Team: CFJ has been the de facto leader and coordinator of the good food movement in Southern California as part of its expansive food justice projects. Our strong partnerships and experience in bringing people together in this region have resulted in networks that have effectively advocated for positive changes in the urban foods environment. Our connections with food access projects, links with local communities and the Los Angeles Unified School District, and work around creating accountability in the grocery industry will strengthen this project. A minimum of five staff will be contributing to the development of the SCGFN and its outreach and publication materials. Complementary funding for this work comes from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, The California Endowment, the Gilbert Foundation, the California Department of Public Health, and the United Parcel Service. This funding is expected to support this work for a minimum of two years.

Sustaining the SCGFN: CFJ is committed to the development of innovative distribution strategies to advance the good food movement in Southern California, and nationally, and will continue to work in this area. The good food distribution business models we propose are expected to continue to operate beyond initial grant support as profitable socially just business ventures. The Wallace Center's support will accelerate our current efforts and enable the Southern California region to move a step closer towards securing and sustaining a good food system.

Table 1: Scope of Work - Southern California Good Food Network (September 2008 – August 2009)

Priority 1: Cultivating a Community of Practice

Goal: Facilitate the development of collaborative solutions to issues of food production, food distribution and food access in Southern California. Connect with Good Food Network nodes across the United States. Align multiple cross-sector stakeholders’ assets and skills for a cohesive food system.

Strategy 1: Serve as a networking, communication and information hub that convenes and connects a diverse group of good food stakeholders.

Strategy 2: Facilitate, design, and develop SCGFN local food programs and distribution strategies. **Strategy 3:** Develop working partnerships with distribution, produce, and farm business, as well as private industry. **Strategy 4:** Promote the work of the SCGFN across food chain stakeholders. **Strategy 5:** Evaluate the process of the SCGFN, track outcomes, and share lessons learned.

ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	MEASUREMENTS	TIME-FRAME
1. Invite diverse food chain stakeholders to participate in the SCGFN.	Development of a SCGFN.	SCGFN list of stakeholders. Roles and responsibilities	9/08
2. Evaluate and assess current models of local food distribution within the region.	Clear understanding of active distribution strategies and opportunities for growth.	Assessment conducted and shared with stakeholders.	Complete
3. Convene meetings and networking opportunities for diverse stakeholders from across the food value chain.	Increased collaboration amongst stakeholders. Shared resources and agreement on best practices. Recorded and shared sessions/outcomes. Build SCGFN identity.	List of meetings and attendees. List of resources where process and outcomes are made available.	9/08 – 8/09
4. Develop briefs, articles, and publications regarding Southern California local food issues.	Publication in print and electronic trade journals, newspapers, newsletters, blogs, etc. Promote work of SCGFN . Expand awareness of and participation in SCGFN to include more diverse stakeholders.	List of articles published and publications approached. Track press coverage and website traffic.	11/08-8/09
5. Connect with national Good Food Network nodes.	Garner support, information and resources from national Good Food Network.	Minutes of meetings and conference calls held with national GFN members.	9/08 – 8/09
6. Attend/present at food industry events and expositions such as Natural Food Expo Anaheim 2009 and Southern California child nutrition service events.	Promote work of SCGFN amongst wide audience. Connect with food industry “green” and “natural” foods marketing strategies and business models. Expand participation in SCGFN to include more diverse stakeholders.	List of events attended, partnerships developed, summary of information gleaned.	9/08 – 8/09

7. Evaluate the SCGFN strategies and effectiveness at providing network and implementation opportunities.	Assess the progress and effectiveness of the SCGFN. Inform future work of SCGFN partners.	Level of engagement of participants. Programmatic outcomes. Satisfaction with quality of outcomes.	8/09
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Priority 2: Identifying distribution strategies to move good food into wholesale channels and communities where access is most limited

Goal: Identify and create implementation plans for a minimum of three new strategies to scale up the distribution of locally grown foods to schools, institutions, and communities where access is most limited. Design strategies to allow for growth in scale without denigrating the values of local foods.

Strategy 1: Identify strategies to build wholesale marketing channel for good food. **Strategy 2:** Identify new institutional and retail markets for good food. **Strategy 3:** Build capacity of farmers to meet needs of large-scale marketing channels. **Strategy 4:** Identify communities of need. **Strategy 5:** Develop action agendas based on community needs. **Strategy 6:** Evaluation of developed strategies.

ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	MEASUREMENTS	TIME-FRAME
1. Introduce SCGFN members to the five local food distribution strategies and community food assessments developed by CFJ.	Familiarize SCGFN members with potential models and assessments from which to build good food network strategies.	Models shared.	9/08-1/09
2. Engage SCGFN members in identifying and creating local good distribution strategies.	Draft potential programs, identify potential project partners.	Strategies identified, target audience/beneficiaries of work, list of partners.	9/08-1/09
3. Assess existing resources and gaps to achieving strategies.	Create document of opportunities and barriers for good food distribution.	Opportunities and barriers document created and disseminated.	9/08-1/09
4. Host minimum of one workshop for institutional food service and retail store audience.	Build awareness of emerging wholesale sources of good food amongst food buyers. Increase capacity of wholesale and retail purveyors to work with good food.	Workshop held. List of attendees. Track follow up technical assistance.	2/09-6/09
5. Host minimum of one workshop for growers to participate in emerging local distribution efforts.	Build the capacity of local farmers to participate in a food production, processing, and distribution system that can meet the good food needs of Southern California.	Workshop held. List of participants, track follow up and growers' continued involvement.	2/09-6/09

6. Compile and examine existing community food assessments.	Identify area of high need for good food. Connect with existing food access efforts.	Assessments compiled. High need communities identified.	11/08-7/09
7. Draft public action agenda.	Identify action steps for SCGFN members and community food access advocates to increase access to good food in high need areas. Disseminate plan.	Action agenda created. List of distribution sources.	05/09-8/09
8. Evaluate the workshops and strategies through interviews and surveys with stakeholders.	Assess the feasibility and effectiveness of good food distribution strategies. Inform future activities.	Surveys conducted. Results compiled and shared.	8/09

Priority 3: Technical assistance and outreach

Goal: Provide technical assistance and outreach in the areas of local food distribution, grower readiness, and local food purchasing program implementation.

Strategy 1: SCGN members provide technical assistance to institutions, food outlets, distributors, and farmers. **Strategy 2:** Share program learnings.

ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES	MEASUREMENTS	TIME-FRAME
1. Respond to queries and requests for assistance in the area of good food work related to implementation of distribution strategies, farming and food production and program implementation.	Build farmers' capacity to grow and distribute good food. Assist distribution firms in implementing distribution strategies and/or new local food programs.	List of organizations contacted, track programs implemented.	9/08-8/09
2. Host site visits to exemplary farms, distribution facilities/business, and good food programs.	Demonstrate working models to inspire and educate farmers, food service, and distribution firm staff on how others are implementing good food solutions.	List of site visits and attendees.	11/08-8/09
3. Convene statewide conference for good food advocates.	Publicize SCGFN findings and strategies. Disseminate lessons learned. Provide statewide networking opportunities.	Attendee list. Agenda. Meeting evaluation.	11/09