List of Appendices

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Appendix 1. Techniques for Participatory Data-gathering

Below are brief summaries of various techniques for participatory data-gathering, emphasizing how they relate to conducting a Community Food Assessment. See Resource List in Appendix 6 for more information.

1. Group consultation and listening sessions
This technique usually involves three phases that can be tailored to particular assessment situations:
- Information, in which the facilitator explains the objectives of the consultation and provides the larger context of assessment planning
- Analysis, in which the participants interactively provide options for assessment purposes and then in small groups, prioritize related goals and actions
- Conclusion, in which the results of the small group are disseminated to the larger group and examined by others who comment on the ideas and priorities

These phases may be completed in one long session, or in multiple sessions. Small groups then develop a report that incorporates comments and modifications to the assessment purposes, goals, and actions. The report could be as simple as compiling comments on butcher paper in view of all participants. It should also contain suggestions on how to implement the plan with available resources.

2. Community mapping and modelling
This process utilizes visual material to involve community members in an interactive dialogue. The focus is on developing a map or a model of the current state of the food system and the problems and opportunities inherent in it, as well as one or more alternative visions of a desired food system in the community. These models and maps tap into the daily experience of participants and help them express their ideas in creative, powerful ways. Through these models, participants are encouraged to discuss actions that are needed to achieve the desired vision for the food system.

Maps and models can be saved as a record of the meeting, and can be assembled into a report or a more visual form that can be distributed in the community. The models themselves can be preserved for ongoing discussion and for participatory tracking of changes to the current reality or to the alternative visions. This method requires planning for the range of materials that might be needed to assemble maps and/or models. Aerial photographs offer one good place to start in developing a basic map of the current situation.

3. Tabling
Tabling at neighborhood grocery stores, community centers, and similar places can be an effective and low-cost way to inform the community about an assessment and to invite input and participation. Tabling targets individuals who are curious and interested in talking to the person operating the table.

This method involves displaying relevant materials on a table that is staffed by someone who is familiar with the community and able to speak about the assessment. The materials and conversations with community members could meet one or more of the following objectives:
- Describe the assessment process and its goals
- Solicit input into the assessment goals and questions, or participation in the process
- Collect specific information, through surveys or conversation
- Convey the key findings of the assessment (if it already has been completed)
- Encourage or implement actions such as signing petitions or open letters

4. Open Space Technology
The objective of the Open Space approach is to empower individuals and the group by giving them the opportunity and the responsibility for creating their own work. This is facilitated by a structure that builds on the energy, commitment, and shared leadership within the community, with less time spent on advance planning and logistics. The facilitator creates a powerful theme statement to stimulate people's interest and to generate a broad discussion of topics that participants feel are important.

On the day of the event, all participants convene in a large room and sit in a circle. Posted on one wall is an empty conference schedule showing available meeting rooms and times. The facilitator explains the theme and process, and then invites anyone with a topic to convene a session by reserving a room on the schedule at a particular time. Convenors then have a chance announce their sessions to the group.

Once all the sessions have been posted and announced, people sign up for sessions. Successful sessions are commonly
held with as few as two people or as many as thirty. A common agenda for all the sessions is developed that includes goals, priorities, and action steps. After the sessions end, each convener is asked to present the highlights of their session and agreed-upon actions. Written summaries are then compiled into an account of the proceedings of the event, which can be done on site and handed out that day, or completed and sent out later.

If a follow-up process is necessary beyond what already is determined by the participants within sessions, proposals are made, discussed, and agreed upon. This can be accomplished in the actual Open Space process if it is long enough, or by a series of short meetings (perhaps by a sub-group) following the event. Once the implementation process is agreed upon, participants have an opportunity to briefly comment on what they have learned in a closing circle of the full group.

5. Future Search

The Future Search process is designed to generate a common agenda and a high degree of commitment to decisions.\(^1\) It takes considerable effort to determine participants, time frames, and tasks. It is based on social experience and theory, usually takes three days, and is structured around five general tasks:

- Reviewing the past
- Exploring the present
- Creating ideal future scenarios (five to 20 years)
- Identifying common ground (with the full participation of all members)
- Making action plans (including public commitments)

The main features include an emphasis on values, and an exploration of the present and the past specific to the community and its global context. These are brought together through the facilitation process. Finding common ground among participants is an essential element. Any unresolved differences are left as such if they have not been resolved by the end of the process.

The North Country case study in Chapter 3 utilized this approach.