



Community Organizing for Grocery Stores and Rural Food Access

FEAST

Food Education Agriculture Solutions Together

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Cole Cottin, Kansas Rural Center

The Fourth National Rural Grocery Summit

June 9, 2014



Oregon Food Bank Community Food Systems

VISION: We envision communities across Oregon and SW Washington where citizens are empowered and actively engaged across sectors to attain personal and community food security.

Three approaches:

- Community **FEAST**
- **RARE** Community Food Assessment Partnership
- Food Systems **Networking**





Resilient Food Systems

- 🍴 Resilience is the opposite of vulnerability.
- 🍴 Resilient food systems can withstand political, economic, social and environmental shocks.
- 🍴 Resilient individuals, households and communities are less vulnerable to changes in fortune that push others into food insecurity.



About the FEAST model

- FEAST was developed as a response to the need to help communities move to action around **community food systems work**.
- These events are organized by a **local** steering committee and feature local organizations
- A FEAST convenes a conversation that leads to a **self-determined** organizing plan for food systems work in the community
- Currently, OFB staff serve as **facilitators**, provide suggestions, feedback and support, but do not direct the outcomes.



What happens at a ?



- **Stories** are shared from the local food system.
- Themes and **solutions** from other communities are shared.
- Local themes and solutions are identified and **priorities** are set.
- Work groups are established and **Organizing Plans** created.

Community driven FEAST outcomes have included:

- New farmers' markets • Increased SNAP & WIC acceptance
- New/Expanded community gardens • New donors for food banks
- Additional Nutrition/Gardening Education events





Formats

- **FEAST** – 4-5 hour event
- **Community Conversations** – Shorter conversation over a meal.
- **Hunger Free Communities** – Directed at better organizing hunger relief efforts
- **Long Term Priority Planning** – Follow-up planning to CFAs



IMPACT

Emergency
Food Agencies

Faith-Based
Organizations

Nutrition
Education
Programs

Farm-to-School
Coalitions

Gleaners

Community
Gardens

NONPROFIT

Farmers'
Markets

Farms

Food Retailers

Health Care
Providers

Food Processors

Fisheries

PRIVATE

OSU Extension

Elected Office

Public Health
Departments

Economic
Development
Offices

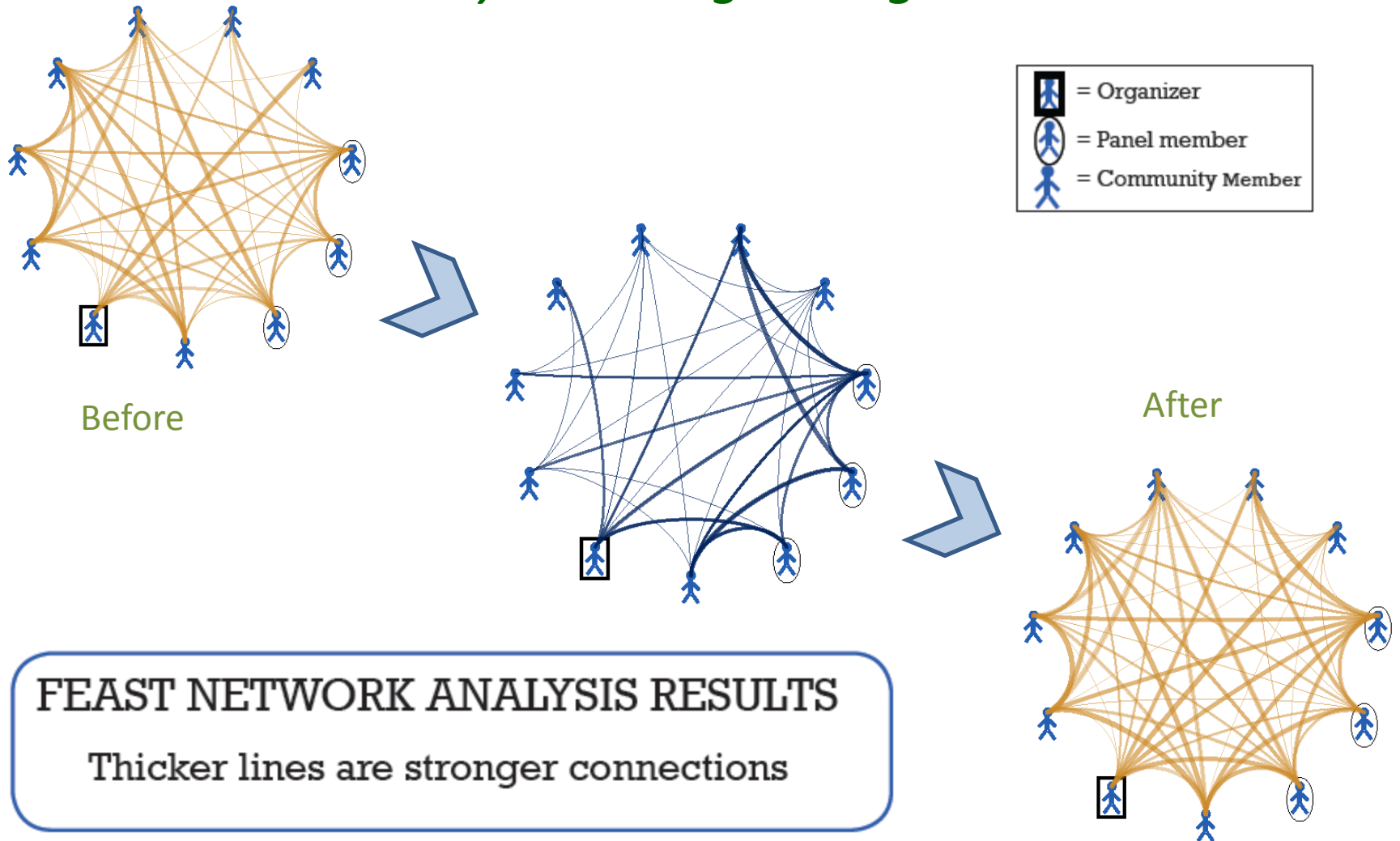
PUBLIC

FEAST engages a broad spectrum of the community to create self-determined organizing plans.

- 70+ events to date engaging over 2000 people
- Replicable model- being implemented in 6 states beyond Oregon
- Shown to increase community connections among participants
- 30+% of participants are food producers
- Program nationally recognized by Feeding America's 2013 Innovation Awards

FEAST Evaluation

Telling the story of community building through food systems organizing





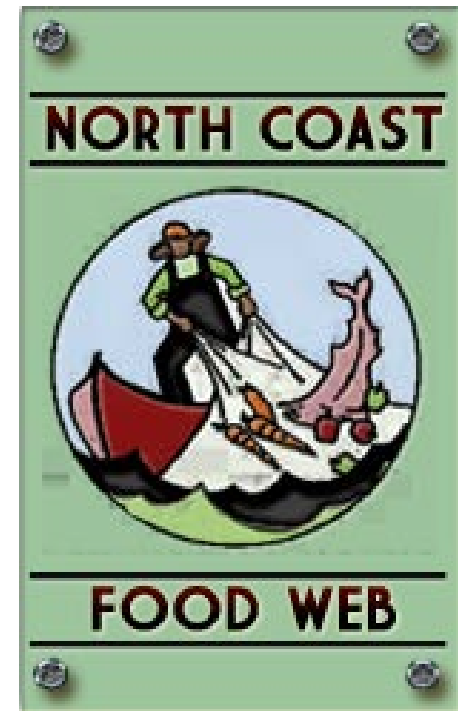
Results & Conclusions

- 19 FEASTs included in evaluation; 11 with enough valid surveys for network analysis
- Five FEASTs with statistically significant increases in connection strength
- Eight FEASTs with an average number of new connections over 1.00
- FEAST attendees make new connections with like-minded community members
- Existing connections are significantly strengthened in many communities
- Participation in follow-up activities varies among FEAST locations; recommendation to collect further evidence of follow-up



Timelines & Outcomes: Clatsop County

- 2009:** FEAST (September)
RARE AmeriCorps member
- North Coast Food Guide
 - Clatsop County Food Assessment
- 2010:** North Coast Food Web (501c3) formed
- 2011:**
- North Coast Food Summit
 - River People's Farmers Market launched
 - Food Talk radio show
 - Cooking Matters Nutrition Classes
 - 4-H Kids Classes
 - FoodDay events
 - Meyer Memorial Trust grant
- 2012:**
- 4 new school gardens, Mobile Gardens
 - Grow the Coast



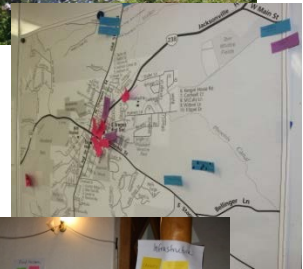


Timelines & Process: Rogue Valley

2011: - MMT Planning Grant

2012: - Coordinator Hired (Jan)
- Steering Committee Formed (March)
- 5 FEASTs (March-May)
- 5 Community Conversations (March-June)
- Community Food Assessment Report (Dec)

2013: - Food Summit (March)
- MMT Implementation Grant (April)
- Rogue Valley Food System Council (July)







SUSTAINING RURAL COMMUNITIES

RURAL GROCERY STORES



WHY?

- Rural Economic Development
 - Jobs. On avg. 5 full-time, 5 part-time
- Access to Food
 - 1/5 in rural areas are food insecure
 - 41 miles from nearest discount grocery
- Social Hub
 - “Without the local grocery store, many rural towns won’t survive



Food Access in Rural Oregon

"The two things I've noticed, in order for there to be a town, is a grocery store and a school. If you're missing one or both of those things, you're not going to have a town – people will leave."

-Chester's Thriftway, John Day

"I have to go once a week to buy fresh produce in town, also the stuff we cannot get from those vendors we go to town to Winco, Costco, etc..."

– Harbick's Country Store, Blue River

"Lots of elderly can't access food...small communities need grocery stores."

– Mill City Market

"I could buy whiskey, cigarettes, and gamble within walking distance of my house, but I cannot buy foodstuffs."

– Mike E., rural Josephine County resident

"Not enough money to meet requirements for trucks to deliver and not enough space for full truck loads."

– Long Creek Café



Challenges for Rural Stores

- Minimum Purchasing Requirements
- Product Delivery
- Stocking fresh produce
- High operations costs
- Slim profit margins
- Availability of satisfactory labor





Chester's Thriftway, John Day, OR

- Started in 1927
- Population: 1700
- 100+ miles from discount grocer
- Supplies hospital and local restaurants



- Attended FEAST in 2010
- Heard from local producers and other stakeholders from food system
- Decided to supply local products to support producers
- Very active with supplier and collaborates with other owners



Langlois Market, Langlois, OR

- Opened in 1949
- Population: Unincorporated
- 40 miles from discount grocer



- Attended FEAST in 2013
- Feature local produce and meat
- Adapt to changes (cater to RV park)
- “Store is an institution and touch point for the entire community”
- “World Famous” hot-dogs



M. Crow & Co., Lostine, OR

- Started in 1906
- Population: 213
- 6 generations have helped out
- Sold to local in 2013
- Featured in Edible Portland



- Concern for store surfaced at FEAST
- Community Conversation brought together 1/3 of community to discuss saving the store
- Fundraiser to pay utilities through winter
- Co-op was started



Maupin Market, Maupin, OR

- Store for over 50 years
- Population: 400
- 40 miles from discount grocer
- Food Desert



- Connected with other rural grocers around the state for advice, suggestions, distributors, funding.
- Received USDA RD funds for economic development (IRP)
- Focus on fresh, healthy products



OPPORTUNITIES

Healthy Rural Stores

Increase SNAP/WIC Acceptance

Funding for Infrastructure

Statewide Alliance of Independent/Rural Grocers

Shop at your local grocery store!





QUESTIONS?



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