Equity in Value Chains

Erica Christensen, Corbin Hill Food Project
Omar Qureshi, Nanise Native Plants and Education LLC
Alex Cordova, USDA - NRCS/RD
Rachel Spencer, USDA - FNS

Welcome!
Who is in the room?

- Food hub operators
- Non-profits
- Higher Education
- Government
- Farmers
Why Are We Here?

1. Share and discuss strategies that several organizations and government agencies have utilized to align both a mission-based approach, with the economic needs and realities of all communities.

2. Share a few examples of racial equity work across the value chain.

3. Provide an opportunity for participants to engage with one another around challenges and barriers they face in operationalizing equity in their work.
Things to Keep in Mind

- Respect
- Reflect
- Resign
- Research and Relearn
- Reset and Reboot
- Recognize Bias and Privilege
The word agriculture, after all, does not mean "agriscience," much less "agribusiness." It means "cultivation of land." And cultivation is at the root of the sense both of culture and of cult. The ideas of tillage and worship are thus joined in culture.....It is only by understanding the cultural complexity and largeness of the concept of agriculture that we can see the threatening diminishments implied by the term "agribusiness."

Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America
Values  Strategies
Supporting local farmers

Supporting organic farmers.

Increasing food access

VS.

Supporting local farmers

Supporting organic farmers.

Increasing food access
Things to think about

• How are your values translated in your business or organization?

• How do you hold yourself accountable to those values?
Corbin Hill Model

- Non-profit food enterprise whose mission is to supply fresh food to those that need it most

- Established in 2010 as a traditional brick and mortar food hub

- Currently leveraging existing supply chain infrastructure to increase healthy food access and achieve equitable outcomes

- Consumer-focused

- Markets
  - Farm Share
  - Institutional
Pollinating Our Values

Social Justice

Food Sovereignty

Racial Equity
Realizing equity in our work

• Hiring practices reflect the communities we serve

• No one-size-fits all approach
  • Last Mile Delivery
  • Developing cultural value chains that reflect the diverse communities we serve

• Focus on scaling out into communities

• Bigger vision around community ownership
- Introduction

- Emerging USDA priorities:
  - Efficiency and Effectiveness
  - Customer Service
  - OneUSDA

- Role of Public Private Partnerships
NRCS is an agency committed to “helping people help the land” — mission is to provide resources to farmers and landowners to aid them with conservation

- Voluntary private lands conservation
- Local emphasis
- Partnerships and program delivery
An integrated approach:

- National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
- Conservation Initiatives
- Conservation Innovations
About the IC
- Rural Prosperity, Economic Development, Rural Leadership and local capacity development

Strategies
- Infrastructure/Program Delivery
- Partnerships
- Innovation
Food and Nutrition Service

Working with our public, private and non-profit partners, our mission is to increase food security and reduce hunger by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet and nutrition education in a way that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.

No American should have to go hungry.
Our Work

- FNS works to end hunger and obesity through the administration of **15 federal nutrition assistance programs** including:
  - WIC, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and school meals.

- We are committed to ensuring access to healthy and safe food for those participating in our programs including:
  - expecting mothers; infants and children in child care and school; low-income families going to food banks; local farmers markets; and local supermarkets.
In partnership with State and Tribal governments, our programs serve 1 in 4 Americans during the course of a year.
What is a Community Food System?

Often used interchangeably with the term “local food system,” a “community food system” is one in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated and proximal, benefiting the environment, economy, and social and nutritional health of a particular community. Across the agency, this focus on local foods is proving to be an effective strategy for improving the health and nutrition of our program participants.
Pillars of Work

- Grant Program
- Training and Technical Assistance
- Research

Pillars of Work = Opportunities for Engagement
BRINGING TRIBAL FOODS AND TRADITIONS INTO CAFETERIAS, CLASSROOMS, AND GARDENS

SCHOOLS AND NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES across the country are incorporating traditional foods, wild rice, and ancient varieties of squash and corn into school meals and providing complementary foods education that teach students about nutrition and Native American food traditions. There are more than 560 federally recognized U.S. tribes, each with its own food and agricultural history and culture. Operating a farm to feed the community may be a way to keep the farming tradition alive in a school setting or in a school with a high Native American population can help connect students to this history and tradition, while supporting local and Native American farmers. This fact sheet explores how school and tribes are integrating traditional foods and child nutrition programs (CNPs), buying traditional foods locally, and incorporating multicultural foods and cooking education into classroom curriculum and hands-on lessons in school gardens.

Incorporating Traditional Foods into Menus

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages Indian Tribal Organizations, along with all operators of CNPs, to serve traditional and locally grown and raised foods. The Child Nutrition Programs and Traditional Foods memo (TA01-2015) explains that traditional foods may be served in CNPs and includes examples of how several traditional foods may contribute towards a reimbursable meal. The USDA Food Buying Guide (FBG) is a great place to start when creating menus that incorporate traditional foods items since it includes crediting information and portion sizes needed to meet the nutritional standards for federal reimbursement.

The Circle of Nations Boarding School located in Wahpeton, North Dakota, a charter under the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe, incorporates bison meat from the Intertribal Buffalo Council (ITBC) Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate herd into lunch meals. Bison meat is substituted for ground beef in items such as chili and spaghetti sauce. In addition, food from the school garden is served daily on the salad bar. Lisa Erdrich, School Health Coordinator, says that the students rated her salsa verde recipe, made with traditional green tomatillos, “better than guacamole!”

GARDENS IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES are growing gardens of all shapes and sizes, from medicinal gardens and small community gardens to large food production gardens to school gardens. This fact sheet will primarily focus on tribal school gardens. Tribal Nations are increasingly leveraging school gardens as tools to preserve tribal language, a connection to the land, culture and a source of food for child nutrition programs.

Introducing whole, traditional foods into student diets can help children form life-long, healthy eating habits. Research indicates that children are more likely to taste, consume, and have positive opinions of fresh produce when they are given hands-on opportunities to plant and harvest. School gardens offer an interactive, outdoor classroom for engaging both elders and students in linking their past and future, and a broader educational and cultural history. USDA supports tribal communities and schools who use school gardens for educational purposes and as a source of produce for child nutrition programs.

The following are examples of tribal schools growing gardens to provide food for child nutrition programs, to connect students to the source of their food, and to create hands-on interdisciplinary learning experiences.

Arizona: Rooting Traditions to Today with Three Sisters

Service to All Relations (STAR) School has a garden program that includes outdoor, hydroponic, aquaponic, and greenhouse gardens. The greenhouses, certified by the Arizona Department of Health Services, provide produce for the school’s salad bars. STAR also hosts a harvest festival, where students prepare a feast for the community using the garden’s bounty. The “three sisters” – blue corn, beans, and squash – play a prominent role in the gardens, teaching students about their heritage, health, and sustainable growing strategies.

New York: Kanenhi:io & Akwesasne Freedom School (AFS)

The Akwesasne Freedom School conducts full-day Mohawk language immersion classes for students in pre-K to grade 8. The AFS owns a 10.5 acre site where Kanenhi:io, a collective of community farmers, educators, and entrepreneurs, has developed a community garden, greenhouse, and cannery. In addition, school staff and parents are partnering with Kanenhi:io members to involve students in the growing and production of food.

Colorado: Montezuma School to Farm Program

Since 2015, Montezuma School to Farm program has used their Seed to Table curriculum to teach students how to grow, harvest, and cook local foods. Students receive experiential education related to water and soil conservation practices. The school garden products are sold at student-run farmers’ markets and cooked and eaten by students at pop-up restaurants and in nutrition classes.
Farm to Child Nutrition Programs Planning Guide

Buying Local Foods
Once you have defined local and determined what local foods are available, it’s time to start purchasing them! When local foods are procured using federal funds, the purchase must be in accordance with regulations. There are many ways to purchase locally, and correctly!

- How does your program currently procure foods, both local and non-local? Who decides how and what foods are purchased for the program?
- What types of foods do you currently, or plan to, purchase? Do you track the amount of local product purchased?
- Through which child nutrition programs do you plan to serve local foods?
- What sources of local foods might work for your program?
- Would you bring in local foods through existing channels, or will new methods need to be established?

School Gardening
School gardens are a great way to engage students and provide interactive enrichment activities that promote the use of local foods. When students participate in garden education, they are more likely to try fresh fruits and vegetables in the lunchroom.

- What steps have you taken to plan, create, or expand a garden program at your school or district?
- What are your goals for your school garden program?
- How will the gardens be used and by whom?
- How invested are administrators, parents, food and nutrition services, maintenance staff, teachers, and students in the idea of a new or expanded garden program? How will you get their buy-in and the practical support you need from them?
- Who will take care of the various aspects of the garden, such as coordinating volunteers, summer garden maintenance, curriculum integration, weeding, and garden education?

Education & Curriculum Integration
Local food systems, agriculture, and nutrition education can be woven into subjects like math, science, English, and history. Doing so can reinforce farm to school programming in the school garden and cafeteria.

- In what ways is your program already educating students about food, agriculture, and nutrition through hands-on activities, field trips, demonstrations, and classroom education?
- How will you integrate food, agriculture, and nutrition education to students in the classroom? Whose support or approval would you need to integrate farm to school principles into the curriculum, and what does that process look like?

Promoting & Marketing Your Program
Clearly communicating your goals, achievements, and needs is key to getting buy-in and financial and in-kind support for your farm to school program. Plus, marketing your program can be a creative and fun way to engage partners!

- How does your school currently communicate to students, teachers, administrators, food producers, parents, the media, and the community?
- What are the primary messages you want to send to each constituent group?

Evaluating Your Efforts
Laying the framework to evaluate your efforts is an important part of planning. Evaluation findings can help you learn what works, identify ways to improve your program, and demonstrate your success to funders, parents, administrators, and others.

- How will you measure how effective and efficient your activities and processes are?
- What outcomes are you trying to measure? Will you assess the impacts of your program on students, teachers, parents, and/or food services?
USDA Grants and Loans that Support Farm to School Activities

Funding from the US Department of Agriculture is available to assist farms, schools, and every link in between in feeding kids healthy local meals; teaching them about food, farming and nutrition; and supporting local agricultural economies. While the programs listed below provide a good starting point for those looking to bolster farm to school efforts, other USDA grant and loan programs support local food systems work as well. Visit [www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer](http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer) and [www.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.usda.gov/farmtoschool) for more information.

**Funding Agency**
- Agricultural Marketing Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Food and Nutrition Service
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Rural Development

**Notes:** Eligibility guidelines can be quite specific, so be sure to confirm your eligibility on the webpage for the grant or loan program before applying. In addition, non-eligible entities can often partner with eligible entities to benefit from programs they might not otherwise have access to.
USDA PROGRAMS IN THE LOCAL FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

USDA is committed to supporting robust regional food economies across the food chain through the programs noted below.

**LAND CONSERVATION**
- Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Whole Farm Revenue Protection

**PRODUCTION**
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
- Farm Microloans
- Farm Storage Facility Loans
- Grass Fed Small and Very Small Producer Program
- Organic Cost Share
- Rural Energy for America Program

**PROCESSING**
- Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
- Community Facilities Loans and Grants
- Local Food Promotion Program
- Rural Business Development Grants
- Value-Added Producer Grants

**AGGREGATION/DISTRIBUTION**
- Business and Industry Guaranteed Loans
- Community Facilities Loans and Grants
- Local Food Promotion Program
- Rural Business Development Grants
- Specialty Crop Block Grants

**MARKETS/CONSUMERS**
- Community Food Projects Competitive Grants
- Farmers Market Promotion Program
- Farm to School Grant Program
- Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program
- Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program
- Specialty Crop Block Grants
- WIC Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program

Research, Education, and Technical Assistance Programs Along the Supply Chain:
- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- Conservation Technical Assistance
- Federal State Marketing Improvement Program
- Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501 Program)
- Risk Management Education Program
- Rural Cooperative Development Grants
- Small Business Innovation Research
- Specialty Crop Block Grants
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

**Color Key**
- Agricultural Marketing Service
- Farm Service Agency
- Food and Nutrition Service
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Office of Advocacy and Outreach
- Rural Development
- Risk Management Agency

www.ams.usda.gov/localfood
USDA Takeaways

- Public Private Partnerships
  - Effectiveness
  - Efficiency
  - Improved Customer Service

- Emphasis on local and community input and participation

- Increased community impact:
  - Technical assistance available from USDA to support this work
Let’s Talk!

What opportunities do you see to promote equity in your work?

If you’re already supporting equity, what are you doing?
• Organizational alignment

• Intentional use of culturally appropriate crops
  » Social capital and culture
  » Agriculture and nutrition linkages

• Both regional and household level impacts

• This intentional alignment can lead to success
Contact Us

christensen@corbinhillfarm.com
qureshiominar@hotmail.com
alex.cordova@wdc.usda.gov
rachel.spencer@fns.usda.gov