

## **NOPREN Hunger Safety Net Work Group – August 22, 2016**

### **Presentation: How Food Policy Councils Address Anti-Hunger Issues**

**Presenter: Anne Palmer, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future**

**Bio: Anne Palmer, MAIA**

Anne Palmer is the Food Communities and Public Health Program Director at the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future at the Bloomberg School of Public Health. She directs the Food Policy Networks project which seeks to improve the capacity of new and existing food policy councils and similar organizations to advance food system policies. She has partnered with Baltimore city officials, business owners and health professionals on a food policy task force, facilitated community food assessments, and designed programs to improve food security and demand for healthy food in the city. Her research interests include food policy, food access, food environments, urban agriculture, local and regional food systems, and community food security.

Definition: Food Policy Councils (FPCs) are groups that bring representatives, decision-makers, experts, and stakeholders from across the food system to inform, advise, implement, and evaluate change within a food system. FPCs identify and address food system issues that are specific to the communities they represent. Those communities might be defined by political boundaries, such as a county, municipality, tribe, or state, or geographic boundaries, such as a region that includes multiple counties or states. The variation in how councils define their communities and what issues their communities identify as issues to address makes it challenging to describe the goals and achievements of FPCs.

- Overarching question to the work is how do we take science and apply it for people on the ground
- We want science to help improve decision-making
- The Food Policy Networks:
  - Mission: support efforts that can reform local, state, and regional food systems through effective public policy
  - How: listserv, FPC directory, resource database (approx. 900 resources currently in database), educational activities (webinars, topical briefs, etc), and training/technical assistance
- Why Food Policy Councils?
  - FPCs vary in capacity and how they look depending on their community and its needs
  - 1. Systems approach – so many food issues go beyond 1 sector; a multi-level approach is needed to address the root causes of issues
  - FPCs include stakeholders from different sectors
  - Some FPCs focus on policy issues while others tend to focus on programmatic interventions
  - FPCs help to build networks and relationships for further collaboration
- Anne recently published a paper in which she wanted to outline the history of SNAP and its interactions at all levels (federal, state, local) for FPCs that don't have a lot of policy experience.
- Examples:
- San Bernardino FPC
  - Doubled participation in Summer Meal Program (2013 to 2014)

- Created a "Healthy Food Bank Policy" for the San Bernardino Community Action Program food bank which has 177 member food pantry agencies
  - Phase Two will extend the policy to those 177 members
  - Working with the county's 37 congregate food organizations ("soup kitchens") to improve the nutritional quality of the food served at those sites as well as the training of their staff
- Adams Co FPC (PA)
  - Works closely with South Central Community Action (food bank), businesses and members to understand importance of nutritious, affordable food
  - Started Healthy Options: voucher program providing individuals living in the food gap (do not qualify for SNAP) with funds to spend at the Adams County Farm Fresh Markets
  - Heavy focus on improving quality of food being offered through emergency sources: food pantries, gleaning, Campus Kitchens, Meals on Wheels, United Way "Bag the bounty" fundraiser
- Tarrant Co FPC (Texas)
  - Food bank is lead organization for FPC
  - "Food Access" is motivator; using food system & policy lens
  - FPC has 4 "strategic teams": Assessment, Action, Advocacy, Awareness.
  - Conducted food access study for county which is being used for planning
- New Jersey (several examples focusing on school food)
  - Passaic Co FPC: held multiple public summits advocating for the expansion of School Breakfast & Summer Food
  - Paterson Schools adopting the community eligibility provision for school food programs
  - New Brunswick Community Food Alliance: implementation of Universal Breakfast After the Bell in K-8 schools
- San Diego: Food System Alliance
  - Formed a Food Recovery Working Group
  - State law on organic waste passed
  - Data analysis of countywide food waste data from each segment within the food system incl. cost benefit
  - Starting a countywide food rescue/ food runner program in San Diego County
  - Resource site for food recovery/ recycling solutions in San Diego County (with a dynamic directory)
  - Advocacy around regional planning & policy solutions to source reduction/ decentralized composting
  - Hosted a Food Waste Solutions Summit in Oct. 2015 and Sept. 2016
- Kern County FPC (Bakersfield, CA)
  - Mission "Ending chronic hunger and food insecurity in Kern County"
  - Started as an anti-hunger coalition and evolved into a food system approach toward ending hunger
  - Poor history of collaboration in county
  - Spent significant time building relationships within the group of diverse members including conventional agriculture
  - Community Food System Assessment being conducted that will help them better understand current situation and policy opportunities.
- San Francisco Food Security Task Force
  - Advisory body to the SF Board of Supervisors

- Central hub for connecting organizations and individuals focusing on eliminating food insecurity and promoting healthy food for all San Franciscans.
- Prepared an Assessment of Food Security in 2013
- As a result, Mayor and the Board of Supervisors allocated an additional \$4.8 million in the 2014-15 city budget to address high priority food security needs.
- North Alabama FPC
  - Housed in Food Bank of North Alabama
  - Starting a healthy food initiative in conjunction with regional farmers' markets.
  - Secured SNAP benefits acceptance at several farmers' markets.
  - Influencing local food policy legislation and city zoning ordinances.
- Cumberland FPC (ME)
  - Mission: "Increase access to food – preferably healthy and local - for vulnerable populations in Cumberland County by building/expanding community capacity."
  - Supported increased minimum wage in city of Portland, Maine
  - Hosted forum on Child Nutrition Reauthorization with participation from USDA Northeast Regional Office
  - Hosted forum with USDA Undersecretary Kevin Concannon
  - Anti-hunger members (SOS, local food pantries)
- QUESTION: When you look at FPCs, are most involved specifically in anti-hunger initiatives?
  - Yes, we think they are. When looking at the FPC directory, we see a lot that are working on anti-hunger initiatives. But it looks different across all FPCs. Food access is still the #1 issue identified that FPCs are working on.
- QUESTION: If you were to think of those that have (worked on hunger issues) vs. haven't, are there differences? And is it common to have food banks involved?
  - Many FPCs include people/stakeholders from across systems and from different types of organizations. We have found fair amounts that were actually housed by the emergency food system/organization in their area. But this is typically a leadership decision and takes a strong, well-run non-profit to manage.
- QUESTION: If someone is living in an area without an FPC, what are the resources available to them?
  - There are several guides out there on how to start an FPC in your community. I'd be happy to connect anyone interested with other resources. Contact Anne Palmer for more information.
- QUESTION: Are you seeing a trend in FPCs addressing the social determinants of health in their work?
  - We don't see that many using that exact terminology but are addressing them in inherently in their work.
- QUESTION: To what degree are hospitals participating in FPCs? And at what level?
  - We did a study on MD hospitals – sent questions to the listserv. We got about 10 or 11 responses. Results showed that hospitals were members in a few FPCs but there is lots of room to grow. Hospitals have data that could help advance the work of FPCs.
- QUESTION: Are you finding strategies for FPCs to sustain themselves?
  - We have found that the lifespan of FPCs tends to ebb and flow, sometimes it is ok to sunset a group if they have accomplished their goals. Funding streams tend to be different because different groups focus on different issues (policy vs. program).

### **Subgroup updates:**

- Food Policy Councils
  - The FPC Sub-Working Group is working on a paper examining the types of PSE achievements that FPCs reported on a survey conducted last year
  
  - This study aims to fill this gap by describing five broad categories of intended outcomes that FPCs are working toward. Examples of programs, policies, and activities that fall into each category are reported and the potential public health impacts of these categories are discussed.
  
- Clinical Linkages
  - 1) editorial has been drafted and is being edited with the goal to have it out by the end of the month and 2) the group is still working on the algorithm which provides both the steps to screening for and addressing FI in a clinical setting as well as information about resource referrals. A list of people to send the algorithm to for feedback has been compiled as well.
  
- Food Systems
  - CHNA Food Systems Guidance has been released and is available on the NOPREN website. Next steps are being determined for the group.

### **Announcements:**

- Our next call will be in November 28 instead of October. Seth Berkowitz will present on food insecurity and health care costs.