

Central Committee
Food Hub Advisory Minutes

4/26/17

Attendance- Nadeen Lyndaker, Ed Waldroff, Mike Schenk, Dani Baker, Darrel Aubertine, Jay Canzonier, Courtney Schemerhorn,

CCE Staff- Catherine Moore, Kaitlyn Lawrence, Remy Cline, Kevin Jordan, Michele Ledoux, Melissa Davinson

- 1) Greeting
 - a. C. Moore thanks the group for the feedback and recommendations from advisory members at our last meeting. The comments have been taken into consideration especially in regards to our pilots.
- 2) Slack
 - a. Slack.com is up and running. This platform was developed for advisory members to communicate and collaborate.
- 3) Survey
 - a. We have received advisory committee feedback from the surveys and have posted all of the responses on slack.com for committee review.
- 4) Food Hub Marketing/Branding Plan
 - a. Website structure reviewed. We hope to have the website live soon.
 - b. Potential logos reviewed and discussed.
- 5) Pilot Updates
 - a. Wholesale Pilot
 - i. This pilot will be activated within the next month. Review: we do not have many producers in the North Country that grow for wholesale. Transitioning from direct to wholesale presents challenges. We will be testing if growers can grow for wholesale in both volume and quality.
 - ii. The distributor will try to get a premium for local from their customers.
 - iii. The wholesale pilot will include Martin's Farm Stand in St. Lawrence County along with Renzi's as the distributor.
 - iv. As part of developing infrastructure, the Food Hub intends to launch a project in 2018, where CCE supports production grants to growers to produce volume for the Food Hub.
 - v. If the pilot project of 1 acre of pepper works, we want to subsidize approximately 20 growers to produce 20-40 different crops.
 - vi. Based on this pilot we will learn what the investments are in order to make this successful on a larger scale.

- vii. We are asking Martin's to accept a significant risk therefore; we are trying to subsidize any potential losses.
- viii. Questions were raised about procurement policies and overhead needed to be sustainable.
 - 1. R. Cline responded that the pilot is to test these general ideas. We need to implement this in a way that reduces the farmer's risk. We will collect data and inventory numbers to track.
- ix. The budget is to not exceed \$11,000.
- x. CCE will continue to make connections with producers.

B. Warehouse Pilot

- i. Warehouse space is essential to facilitate the activities of a Food Hub. We anticipate up to \$70,000 for the duration of 18 months. This pilot is for vegetables, meats, and value-added products and will include dry, cooler, and freezer space. The hope is to provide a network and interconnection amongst producers in the North Country region.
- ii. The funding will be used to lease a warehouse facility, refrigerated truck, and hire one full time equivalent staff for warehouse management and transportation.
- iii. The specifications, request for, and letter of interest, went out and was advertised for two weeks in the Watertown Daily Times.
 - 1. C. Schemerhorn mentioned that she has an online inventory system at Midway that CCE could look at.
- iv. Ultimately, the warehouse will need to function independently possibly by a Co-op or LLC. We have had some initial conversations with some different groups.
 - 1. We need a legal entity to subcontract with – that third party needs to be formed in order to move on the pilots.

C. Local Roots Organic Produce Pilot

- i. R.Cline has a contact in NYC that he developed through his Food Hub class at UVM. The CSA called Local Roots is looking for # 2 organic produce. Wen-Jay, the CSA owner is educating her customers on zero waste and "ugly" vegetables.
- ii. We have a limited budget, but this is an opportunity for a foothold into the NYC market.
- iii. Local Roots is offering #2's at \$1-\$1.50. CCE will be subsidizing between \$1-1.50.
- iv. We hope to have a truck down to NYC once a week with an opportunity to show case maple syrup, value added and vegetables. They only want 140lbs of produce, so at first we will be looking into working with other distribution companies to get down into the city.
- v. Transportation costs will be subsidized up to \$1,000 a month through the warehouse pilot.

D. Producer Operated Restaurant Pilot

- i. The restaurant will be located in St. Lawrence County in Ogdensburg, right on the river and on Route 37. The pilot will be focusing on #2 produce and sub primal cuts of meat. The start date is unknown, but the thought is to open Friday-Sunday capturing tourists from Canada. This topic generated significant discussion.
 - ii. The restaurant will work with value-added processing and converting raw product into a meal. The pilot is tapping into consumers that do not cook anymore.
 - iii. J. Canzonier raised the concern that other restaurants might be upset if the Food Hub is subsidizing one restaurant. If we focus on outside markets this might reduce local disruption.
 1. R. Cline responded the Food Hub does have potential to cause disruption. We need to be aware and monitor.
 - iv. Another comment was the potential for the restaurant concept to act as a platform for other restaurants to buy local products.
 - v. The need to hire a good chef with great food experience is key to display the local farm products.
 - vi. P. Halderman mentioned that the restaurant may help market his asparagus.
 - vii. M. Ledoux raised a number of options by which the restaurant could support local food purchases.
 1. R. Cline agreed that there will be information on where you can find products at surrounding farms.
 - viii. E. Waldroff mentioned that maybe having a Bistro/Winery such as those found in the Finger Lakes would be an option.
 - ix. D. Aubertine noted that great chefs are a rare commodity.
 - x. Concerns were raised about complying with NYS Department of Health rules.
 - xi. Advisory members offered many suggestions for a successful restaurant pilot.
- 6) Next meeting times were discussed and Kaitlyn will be selecting a few dates and contacting members.