

Chesapeake Foodshed Network Overview

Our food system faces many pressing issues – unequal access to healthy food, concerning impacts on water quantity and quality, extraordinary amounts of food waste and nutrient loss, changing climate and growing patterns, just to name a few. These are wicked problems with no single origin or solution; addressing them and managing their impacts requires engaging people in all facets of the food system in a holistic and integrated strategy to improve the whole system. The Chesapeake Foodshed Network emerged from this recognized need.

The mission of the Chesapeake Foodshed Network is to catalyze connections and collaborations that build a sustainable, resilient, inclusive and equitable food system across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. We believe that by working to connect people and organizations working within the food system in the six state region (and Washington, DC), we can strengthen relationships and build trust; share information and learn best practices; and overtime identify opportunities for alignment and collaborative action so that we can help each other achieve more with less.

Network Building Blocks



Adapted from Curtis Ogden, Interaction Institute for Social Change

Chesapeake Foodshed Network



The Chesapeake Foodshed Network is still a new and evolving initiative. The idea was conceived in 2012 by a group of organizations in the Chesapeake region working on food system issues who realized that their goals were interdependent, but that they were not working together as effectively as they could to achieve them. They decided that developing a network approach to their work would help them be more effective and efficient, and could benefit the entire system. Funding from Town Creek Foundation in 2014 jumpstarted the network and it's been rapidly growing and evolving since.

Engaging people and organizations from different sectors and geographies, all with different goals and constraints is challenging in and of itself; finding common ground, creating a common vision, and encouraging them all to move in a common direction is a considerable feat. With that in mind, the Chesapeake Foodshed Network is designed based on the principles of "collective impact" which provides a model to help different organizations to achieve shared goals without changing what they do. The goal is NOT to duplicate efforts or add more work; it is to help everyone achieve more through building connections.

Activities in the Network

Successful 'Collective Impact' network initiatives share five common characteristics:

- Participants in the network **share a common vision for the future**. A CFN team is in the process of developing a draft Regional Vision based on review of food system plans from throughout the region, interviews, inventory of efforts, and needs assessments. This draft will be shared for feedback and comments through a variety of sharing methods, with a final 'vision statement' for the region to follow.
- Stemming from the shared vision will emerge goals and **common measures of success** for organizations working towards these goals.
- **Efforts and activities among network participants mutually reinforce each other** to maximize efficiency and capitalize on synergies. To get started, CFN is organizing a series of *Coffee Talk webinars* focused on specific issues salient to food system work and assemble people to learn, share, and organize for action. There are also *work groups* focused on specific issues including data, policy, and food waste (anticipated to expand).
- Coordinating between different network participants working towards different goals with different activities requires a strong communications platform for **constant communication**. A team is in the process of designing and building a collaborative web-based communications tool. There is also a *Chesapeake Foodshed Resource Guide* developed and distributed via email to network participants bi-monthly to provide an at-a-glance list of food system happenings in the region.
- Facilitating this type of network effort requires capacity that can't be provided by organizations in the network without their efforts suffering. Instead, providing **external backbone support** is critical to effective collective impact efforts. This backbone support for the Chesapeake Foodshed Network is being provided by *Local Concepts, LLC*, a consulting group that specializes in facilitating local food system networks.

Get Involved

- Participate in an upcoming Coffee Talk webinar:
 - December 8th at 9 am: *Maryland Grown: A Review of Consumption & Production*
 - January 7th at 9 am: *Food Waste & Recovery*
 - February 2nd at 9am: *Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast: Project Overview*
- Join the Policy Work Group Listserv
 - Intended to foster communication among those addressing food system policies. cfn-policy-work-group+subscribe@googlegroups.com
- Subscribe to the Chesapeake Foodshed Resource Guide
 - The Guide is an at-a-glance list of hot links to regional food system happenings that gets distributed via email twice a month. Send us your announcements. <http://chesapeakefoodshed.net/index.php/sign-up/>
- Provide strategic guidance to the development of the network and be a part of the regional vision development conversation.
 - Tell us how a regional network can help to advance your work. Please visit www.chesapeakefoodshed.net & contact us to learn more and to get involved.