

PLANNING IN PRACTICE:

Creating Successful Food Systems Plans Using a Collective Impact Model

A Study Conducted for Transforming Hawai'i's Food Systems Together
Honolulu, Hawai'i



By Ella Geismar
May 2022

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Goldman School of Public Policy, University of California at Berkeley. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author and are not necessarily endorsed by the Goldman School of Public Policy, by the University of California, or by any other agency.

Executive Summary

This report was conducted for the Transforming Hawai'i's Food Systems Together initiative in order to help inform their work towards creating a state-level food system plan (FSP) for Hawai'i and contribute more generally to the growing field of food systems planning in the United States. The purpose of this analysis is to identify the “enabling conditions” for successful FSP creation and, where possible, provide considerations for operationalizing these conditions in the process of creating and writing a state-level FSP.

In brief, a FSP is a published set of strategies and/or recommendations for various audiences with the goal of aligning and coordinating efforts within food systems work, often towards substantive improvements to food access, sustainability, economic development, and/or equity. As FSPs emerge as popular tools for food system transformation efforts across the country, a growing need for resources, best practices, and support has emerged as more and more localities and regions embark on crafting their own FSPs. This includes not only the scope and content of the plans themselves (see: [Toolkit](#)), but also, more broadly, the purpose, function, and value of the FSP itself (covered in the core [Analysis](#) of this report).

Via interviews and review of existing FSP efforts across the country, this analysis starts by establishing two simple premises (detailed in section 0. [Defining Successful Plans](#)). The first is that FSP efforts should focus as much on the process of creation as the content of the FSP itself. Specifically, FSP efforts should consider the planning process as a powerful opportunity for building networks and generating buy-in, both of which are crucial to the successful implementation and coordination of these plans and strategies. The second premise, building off the first, is that the Collective Impact Framework (CIF) stands out as a powerful schema for framing these efforts. For nascent FSP initiatives, the CIF model can help to both inform and articulate decisions and priorities, with a strong emphasis on building trusted, lasting relationships towards a common agenda laid out in the FSP itself.

Drawing from these assumptions, the following six sections of the analysis establish six enabling conditions for successful FSP efforts: [1. Engagement](#), [2. Leadership](#), [3. Governance](#), [4. Government Involvement](#), [5. Funding](#), and [6. Windows of Opportunity](#). For each condition, the report offers **guiding questions** for consideration, **key findings** drawn from research, **case studies** as examples, and **potential actions for FSP efforts** that initiatives can consider as they embark on this process. Broadly, the hope of these findings is to offer guiding principles and a summary of key decisions – and considerations – that FSP efforts should incorporate into their planning processes.

Lastly, this report argues that, to fully maximize the impact and success of a FSP, intentionally planning out the creation process is critical. The [Further Recommendations](#) section offers some final, broader considerations for initiatives as they embark on planning for their plans.

A summary of these findings and recommendations can be found on the following page, as [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings

Condition	Guiding Questions	Key Findings	Case Studies	Potential Actions for FSP Efforts
0. Defining Successful Plans Along a Collective Impact Model	<i>What is the value of the FSP creation process?</i>	<p>0.1. The FSP creation <i>process</i> should catalyze network-building, generate buy-in, and build a common language for advocacy efforts.</p> <p>0.2. The Collective Impact Framework (CIF) is a particularly powerful model for framing FSPs and broader food systems transformation work</p>	Vermont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider adopting the Collective Impact Framework, understanding its limitations. Identify the goals and values of the FSP creation process, and intentionally build out a creation strategy to match.
1. Engagement	<p><i>How do we define engagement, and how should it be incorporated into the planning process?</i></p> <p><i>What are the tradeoffs of community-led versus top-down processes?</i></p>	<p>1.1. Engagement must be intentionally incorporated into the writing and planning process. Moreover, a distinction needs to be made between community engagement versus strategic network engagement – and both are necessary.</p> <p>1.2. Meaningfully engaging communities – the people most affected by these plans – was broadly viewed as both a moral imperative as well as a key ingredient for success.</p> <p>1.3. Engagement that centers network-building – between advocacy groups, organizations, institutions, and businesses – should be viewed as critical for FSP success, as described in the CIF model. These efforts will be strengthened by drawing from existing work.</p>	Minnesota Vermont	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize engagement as a critical part of the FSP creation process and its success. Intentionally plan for both community and network engagement. Identify and assess existing food systems networks and efforts locally; actively incorporate these existing organizations and efforts into the FSP planning process.
2. Leadership	<i>What does successful leadership look like in FSP efforts?</i>	<p>2.1. Leadership should facilitate network-building, guide processes, and offer ongoing support without creating a top-down feel, as defined by the “backbone organization” idea of the CIF; however, a formal organization may not always be necessary.</p> <p>2.2. FSPs also benefit from individual leaders who are skilled in navigating relationships, facilitation, and being a “champion.”</p>	Vermont LA, CA Minnesota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intentionally build leadership structures around a “backbone” model or ethos: prioritize facilitation, coordination, and support, rather than top-down leadership. Identify individual leader(s) with the necessary skillsets to lead network-building efforts.
3. Governance	<i>What does effective governance for FSP processes – and food systems – look like?</i>	<p>3.1. Governance is critical; <i>further research is required to fully understand its significance.</i></p> <p>3.2. Key questions emerged around operationalizing CIF models through governance, and the tradeoffs of formal governance structures.</p>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the importance of governance in both FSP creation processes and broader food systems change; take time to identify and develop governance structures best-suited for the local context.
4. Government Involvement	<i>What should the role of government be in creating FSPs?</i>	<p>4.1. Government involvement is critical in both the short- and long-terms, particularly for network-building.</p> <p>4.2. There are different ways that governments can be involved, each with different tradeoffs.</p>	NYC, NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively seek government support and involvement. Assess local political contexts to identify viable and effective forms of government involvement. Consider organizing advocacy efforts around legislation that codifies FSP creation.
5. Funding	<i>How will FSP efforts be funded?</i>	<p>5.1. Sufficient funding is, unsurprisingly, critical.</p> <p>5.2. FSP efforts should intentionally plan for funding and financing.</p>	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seriously assess and plan for funding needs in both the FSP creation process and its subsequent implementation, with a particular emphasis on sustained funding sources.
6. Windows of Opportunity	<i>How can emerging political, social, or environmental events be leveraged for success?</i>	6.1. Many successful FSPs are able to take advantage of administration changes, disasters, or national movements to secure funding and initial support for FSP planning processes.	Austin, TX	N/A
Further Recommendations: Planning for the Plan		Intentionally planning out the creation process is critical towards successfully operationalizing these enabling conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure funding and resources for planning the process. Establish a planning body and/or leadership; focus on multisectoral representation. Conduct preliminary studies to understand the unique local context and food systems community. Record and document the planning process and methodology. 	