

## **From the Ground Up: Community Organizing and Participation in Local Food Systems**

AUTHOR(S): Julia Reynolds

PRESENTATION FORMAT: 15 minute oral presentation

TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Community Organizers

ABSTRACT: Strong, resilient food systems are integral to the health of a community. Unfortunately, from production to food access to waste, holes exist in the local food systems of communities throughout Oregon. This is especially so in rural areas, that are the backbone of our state's agricultural system. Over the last 11 months, through a community organizing processes that emphasized participation and collaboration, brought together food system stakeholders from throughout Clackamas County's rural communities, to assess their food system. Focus groups, community discussions, and organizing workshops allowed for a strong sense of community ownership over the process and resulted in grassroots action toward improving access to healthy, affordable food and supporting local farmers. Significant outcomes have included: a buying club in Welches, OR currently delivers hundreds of dollars of fresh, local-when-available produce at wholesale prices and offers nutrition education classes for members; a community food group meets in Sandy over monthly potlucks to spread local food awareness and network with farmers; and in Estacada, numerous food and social service agencies have joined together to increase communication and resource sharing. By identifying the distinct assets and needs of individual communities, grassroots-level approaches will result in lasting changes for healthier communities.

OBJECTIVE(S): Discuss efficacy of community organizing processes within rural communities. Asses the impact of food systems on the health of a community.

### PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION:

Julia Reynolds, BA

Community Food Organizer

Oregon Food Bank

Portland, OR

515-452-8242 | reynolds.juliam@gmail.com