

Building Capacity & Power: A Dialogue for Food System Trainers

September 9th, 3:00-4:30pm

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Overview of workshop: **Building Capacity & Power: A Dialogue for Food System Trainers** –*Do you provide training or capacity building efforts for food system development on a regional or national level? Are you interested in collaborating with other TA providers or building the movement for implementing social justice practices into your TA?* This dialogue session is part of a national effort to bring together capacity builders in the food system committed to social justice. We will explore the barriers and areas for collaboration among TA providers wanting to utilize a social justice lens in their work. Come and share your ideas and tell us how you build capacity for social justice in the food movement.

Objectives

1. Meet capacity builders who are not currently connected to the national network of providers, and introduce ourselves to each other.
2. Identify together opportunities for and barriers to collaboration among TA providers wanting to integrate a social justice lens.
3. Begin to explore what “capacity building with a social justice lens” is.
4. Collect names and contact information for capacity builders we would like to include in the national network.

I. Welcome –introduced CFSC and the network/movement of TA providers we are trying to build, reviewed design for this session

II. Introductions – went around the room and shared name, affiliation, and one thing you are most proud of in your capacity building work with a social justice lens

- Enlighten, heal and growth
- Making connections
- Unexpected feedback from outside immediate participants
- Increasing access to educational opportunities around organic farming for non English speakers
- 40% of low income participants
- widening view of where food comes from
- community members won initiative with county commissioner
- ask difficult questions
- introducing urban agriculture into architecture discipline
- use capacity to build fundraising capacity of others
- fought off negative projects/built community
- build capacity from being 1 chicken guy to many chickeneers

- build love of agriculture for young kids
- give youth a chance to be community teachers
- develop urban ag policy
- promote food security
- national day of challenge as a way of opening a dialogue
- push barriers of thinking for privileged people
- more effective programs, that seeks justice
- build capacity in communities to implement community food projects
- building leadership from within the community
- coaching and mentoring adults who are working with youth – about how to connect youth to broader movement and how to empower youth
- popular education
- creating opportunities for exposure to college and then helping youth enroll
- multigenerational experience around social justice
- exploring cultural richness within leadership
- farm workers feeling good and proud about growing food and promoting land ownership
- connecting farmers and sharing empowering models

III. Opportunities & Barriers – shared a little around current collaborations, then brainstormed a list of opportunities and a list of barriers to collaboration

Benefits to collaboration among TA providers/capacity builders

- Higher impact in the community
- Reducing redundancy
- Our capacity build through unique relationship with funder – new tools/experiences
- Expand our reach
- Build on strength of each partner

Opportunities to collaboration among TA providers/capacity builders

- Allows chance to get to know each other, explore possibility
- Allows you to do something new with support
- Workshop own abilities, communicate, communication technologies
- Capacity building = collaboration
- Do collaboration and maintain your power

Barriers to collaboration among TA providers/capacity builders

- One night stand phenomenon – collaborating before knowing each other well enough, unintentional (like calling someone to partner the day before a grant is due)
- Forced by funders to collaborate – can be a waste of time
- Lack of common language
- Redundancy

- Idea of an expert
- Scale – balance of local/statewide work and needs
- Existing barriers to our work
- How to present deliverables and give credit
- Adds complexity – buy in, slow, systems, accountability
- Involving community – tug of war between organizations, gatekeepers
- Power differential
- Need to protect your organization

IV. Small Group Work – we broke into small groups organized around one of the barriers, discuss the barrier, how it manifests, how it might be overcome

Group I: Barrier – Tokenism and undervaluing a community’s assets

- Tokenism – groups not being real partners
- Undervaluing Community’s Labor, Time & Knowledge & Expertise

Group II: Barrier – Fundraising trends dictating project directions and placing an (undue) emphasis on deliverables

- Building open and personal relationships with funders from the beginning (MOU’s, clear agreements)
- Organizations pursuing funders to invest in general operating costs/ whole organization/ long term vision (instead of individual events)
- Organizations Committing to being self-sustaining (saying no sometimes)
- Exploring innovative ways to evaluate and capture success

Group III: Barrier – Big entities - Community Organizations – Actual Communities (looking at the relationships between these – A –between big entities & organizations; B: between organizations and communities.

A. How to address the power differential?

- Allow nonprofits to be political and get funds
- Develop core principles that you require partners to adhere to
- Understand your niche/strength and joining coalitions where you bring value
- Be clear about deliverables from each partner
- Develop strategic alliances (this links to understanding your niche)
- Can food policy councils play a role here?
 - ↳ Can they be a part of a broader power building movement – with a justice/anti-oppression critical lens?

Group IV: Barrier – Power Differential/Protecting the Organization

- Committing to organizing around core values – within an organization as well as between organizations

- Diversifying funding
- Establishing roles of engagement
- Honoring self-determination of partners
- Defining value to funders and among collaborators

IV. Recommendations for Action – participants wrote suggestions down on index cards indicating the recommendations for what we can do to support a network of capacity builders.

- Have community partners who's capacity you hope to build, at the table from the beginning. Pay them to be there and ring them in paid to help build others' capacity.
- Really work to identify people who have the capacity to implement lasting change work in their communities.
- Share information within different organizations on alternative models to fundraising and alliance building.
- Support programs that demonstrate a track to empower local community leadership to rise, take ownership of programs.
- Give extra capital so that organization can invest more time with building skills in community.
- Support groups working to build youth leadership in culture shift, business development, activism.
- Train the trainer around building partnerships.
- Helping organizations to identify values and ways to share them with potential partners.
- There is a need to build innovative sustainability of the programs established – especially among youths and follow ups too.
- There needs to be a collaboration with these 3 groups to work with foundations, USDA and others to simplify the applications – so that small non-profits can apply.
- Convenings to discuss movement strategy.
- Value “disadvantaged” partners for their assets, not their deficiencies.
- Continue to inspire thoughtful and transformative dialogue to assess, adopt and embody core values of organizations in the good food movement.
- Learn as much as you teach – and credit the organizations/communities from which you also learn for what they taught you that enriched your understanding of the issues.
- Develop one alliance that folds in multiple organizations with a common thread of vision/purpose. The idea is simple: The whole will be stronger than the individual parts.
- Peer to peer capacity building – different organizations with different strengths helping each other. Not just Big to Small/ Train the Trainer/ Get smaller regional organizations to help train in their region.

- Consider how “BALLE” is now (past year and going forward) pulling a small cohort (about 12 people) together each year multiplies times for peer learning. It requires travel \$ and staff support to organize the gatherings.
- Put systems in place that ensure that the needs of the community are deemed most important. Be sure that the community is actually “the community”
- Let all of us get committed towards helping communities to grow.
- Education from your research to us to present to people in need.
- Organize focused and active forums (monthly calls, listservs, etc.) where individuals can network – with the intention of having in person meetings/events to address strategies to incorporate social justice into capacity building.