

Strengthening the Teton area food system through the Teton Food and Farm Coalition

AT A GLANCE

Using Ripple Effects Mapping, the Teton Food and Farm Coalition evaluates impacts and sets future organizational priorities.

The Situation

The Teton Food and Farm Coalition (TFFC) is a Teton-based group (Jackson Hole and Teton Valley) formed as result of a handful of grassroots meetings held beginning in 2016 with chefs, farmers and others initially interested in having farm-to-table events and a local food directory in Teton Valley. Since then, the TFFC has broadened their focus to coordinate local food system efforts in the Teton Idaho/Wyoming “foodshed” moving forward under the larger umbrella of a food and farm coalition. They did this to also link their regional efforts with other food coalitions and policy councils. As a coalition of businesses, farmers/ranchers, nonprofits and other individuals, they recognize that there is strength in numbers, leading to increased social and economic resources.

After two years of regular meetings formally facilitated by University of Idaho Extension, the leadership team decided that an evaluation of the organization, as well as strategic planning, was warranted.

Our Response

In October 2018, the coalition’s core leadership and representatives from the main partnership organizations (UI Extension in Teton County, High Country



Teton Food and Farm Coalition participants begin the REM Evaluation Process, October 2018.

Resource Conservation & Development Council, Slow Food in the Tetons, Teton County, City of Driggs, Teton Valley Farmers Market and other local farmers) conducted a Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) evaluation of the group, followed immediately by a strategic planning session. REM evaluation is a group process that requires bringing together participants to discuss positive effects of a program through the process of storytelling and conversation. The motivation for using a REM evaluation was to articulate the positive ripple effects of the group’s formation, partnerships and projects. The REM was also the first formal evaluation of the coalition. Due to the fluid structure and unilateral leadership structure, the young group sought more, so the REM evaluation was also intended to reenergize

and reengage group members and served as a segue for a more formalized strategic plan.

Program Outcomes

Just over a half-a-dozen participants attended the REM evaluation. The participants identified numerous ripples from the coalition’s activities, most notably, an increase in awareness of local food system activities and increased collaboration amongst nonprofit and government organizations, although most of these activities were not directly identified as a TFFC activity. Some findings included that many nonprofit organizations were now holding farm-to-table fundraiser events utilizing locally grown and produced produce, bread, dairy and meat products. A local food directory had also been developed for the region. Some farmers and nonprofit organizations had also developed increased collaboration, as well as new avenues for farmers to direct market their goods to customers. National and local grant applications with coalition membership partners were also completed over a two-year period.

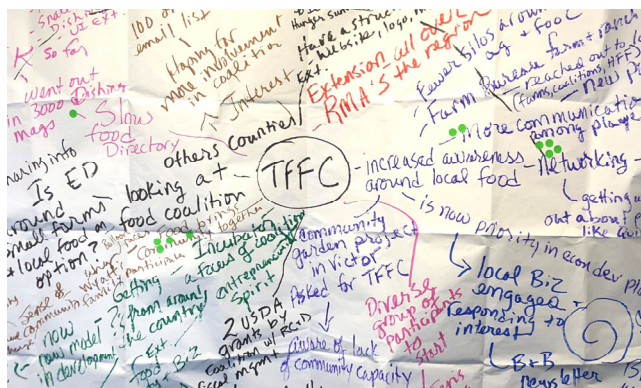
Overall, the REM provided a useful venue to identify ripples that wouldn’t have been captured in a traditional paper or online survey. Participants also were equipped with necessary energy to develop strategic planning goals and activities for the organization moving forward. Progress towards TFFC goals has been slow and steady, with consistent and steady increased participation at meetings.

In March 2020, the TFFC had to swiftly pivot meeting formats due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With Zoom teleconference and video meetings already an option for group participation, the group moved to solely remote meetings. Meeting primarily over Zoom allowed the group members to conveniently connect in a time of rapid societal change and stress to food and agriculture supply chains. With participants primarily at home, there was increased group participation, including participation from more regional food system leaders in communities as far as a four-hour drive away.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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A visual of the “positive ripple effects” identified by TFFC evaluation participants.

The Future

The Teton Food and Farm Coalition continues to meet primarily for networking opportunities over remote format, albeit with some breaks during the busy summer months. The group has also conducted some outside summer “field trips,” including a visit to the Jackson Hole Community Gardens. Learning from the positive successes identified in the 2018 REM, these outside meetings are intended to be fun and informative, helping to keep group members engaged in local food system issues. Moving forward, this food coalition will continue to serve as a resource hub for professionals, farmers and volunteers interested in strengthening the Teton Foodshed.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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