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COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES

Candidate Forums:

An Event Planning Toolkit For Communities

Authors

This toolkit was developed by Community Food Strategies with support from Plate of the Union. The document was specifically developed as resource during the 2016 election season, but is designed as a general tool for candidate forum planning.

Community Food Strategies is a multi-organizational team of food systems experts that provides leadership and technical support for food council development throughout North Carolina. We partner with councils in all phases of development, with the goal of building more sustainable, resilient, and equitable food systems.

Community Food Strategies is an initiative of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) and is funded by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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Plate of the Union was a collaborative campaign driven by Food Policy Action, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and the HEAL Food Alliance to raise the voice of Americans who care about food and farm issues during the 2016 election season.

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For a video highlighting three candidate forums held in North Carolina in 2016, visit https://youtu.be/5UGG5Kk-eOM.

Table of Contents

COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES

01 Introduction

Pages 4-6

02 Planning A Candidate Forum

Pages 7-25

03 Day of the Event

Page 26

04 Following Your Event

Pages 27-29

References

Page 30

Appendix and Worksheet

Available at communityfoodstrategies.org

Introduction

COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES

Congratulations on deciding to host a candidate forum with policy makers in your community! A successful event will help decision makers see your food council as a local expert on issues related to food, health and agriculture. Developing these relationships is critical for the success of any food council or community group working on these types of issues.

Hosting this event will help educate key decision makers on community concerns and needs, and going through the process of organizing and following through with an event will help your food council build and strengthen relationships.

The tips and steps outlined in this toolkit are based on our team's experiences organizing candidate and community forums, working directly with elected officials on policy change and on common best practices for these types of events.

Worksheet and Appendix

Please use the accompanying Worksheet and Appendix (available at www.communityfoodstrategies.org/toolkits) to craft your plans.

We suggest forming your committee, reading through this toolkit, then working together to go through the Worksheet in one or two meetings to get all of your plans together in one document. We recommend that groups work together in-person as much as possible and to use collaborative technology – like Google Drive and conference calls – to work together remotely and virtually.

Most of this document will refer to food councils as the hosts of these events, however any community group can use this toolkit as a guide to organizing a successful candidate forum.

Food councils are groups that are cross-sector organizations that help promote more resilient food systems in their communities. They typically assess the current food situation, build community connections and collaboration on food system issues, make recommendations on how to improve it, and communicate recommendations to organizations and policymakers that can take action.

Community Food Strategies has a separate event planning toolkit – *Public Forums: An Event Planning Toolkit for Food Councils* – that has some of the same steps outlined in this document. That toolkit is specifically designed to help food councils plan a community forum to launch a new food council or to solicit input from the public on food system issues.

What Candidates and Elected Officials Want

Most candidates and elected officials hope for a large turnout at any candidate forum event. Candidates are typically spread very thin during a campaign season and elected officials are always busy.

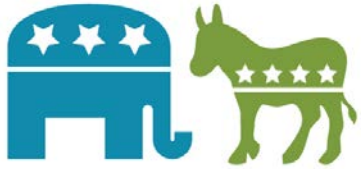
Your food council and any co-sponsoring organizations should focus on a strong turnout to increase the chances that your guests will attend. Be sure to communicate your expected audience size to your guests in advance.

A large turnout at your event demonstrates that your food council has influence on voters and is respected in the community, which can be helpful in building long-lasting relationships with decision makers.

Maintaining a Nonpartisan Space

When planning your candidate forum, it is important to remain completely nonpartisan throughout the entire planning process and duration of the event.

Not only is it necessary by law for 501(c)(3) organizations, but also a guarantee of neutrality will encourage more guests to participate and typically generate more interest from the media.



GUIDELINES FROM THE IRS ON KEEPING YOUR EVENT NONPARTISAN:

- The event should cover a broad range of issues,
- Each guest should be given equal time to present his or her view on the issues discussed,
- The guests should not be asked to agree or disagree with specific positions or platforms of the sponsoring organizations,
- The moderator should stay neutral and not imply approval or disapproval of the guests or their statements.

Tips on keeping your event nonpartisan from the Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network:

Invitations: Invite all viable candidates running for a specific office and make an equal effort to encourage them to attend.

Confirm with Candidates: In a multi-candidate race, it is ideal to have at least two candidates confirm. If it is a two-candidate race, and one cancels, you may go forward with the event as planned. In the unlikely case that this happens, it is important to announce that the event does not qualify as an endorsement of the attending candidate by your food council.

It is also important to make that announcement when going forward with an event with only one candidate confirming and one declining or not responding.

Questions: Depending on the format of your event, you may want to have one or more food council members in charge of reviewing audience questions before handing them to the moderator. The moderator should avoid asking any leading questions that point to a desired answer from your guests.
(See page 13 for more information on crafting questions.)

Planning a candidate forum

This section will walk you through the process of planning a candidate forum event. We advise using the accompanying worksheet to fill out all of your initial plans (Steps 1-12) in one or two meetings two to four months before your event, and your final plans (Steps 13 - 15) in a meeting a month before the date.

2-4 MONTHS BEFORE EVENT

1. Form a Committee
2. Select a Format
3. Create Ground Rules
4. Track Success and Evaluate
5. Identify Partners
6. Develop an Agenda
7. Coordinate Initial Logistics
8. Develop a Budget
9. Invite All Guests
10. Prepare the Questions
11. Develop Promotion Strategy
12. Recruit Volunteers

1 MONTH BEFORE EVENT

13. Follow Up With Guests
14. Finalize Promotions
15. Finalize Logistics

Form a Committee

Form a candidate forum Planning Committee of three or four people from your food council to plan and organize your event. Everyone else on the food council has a role to play, but this committee will take the lead and delegate tasks to other food council members.

The first task of your Committee is to set a meeting schedule. The group should identify three meeting dates – two that are three and four months before the event and one about a month before. Identify meeting locations that work for most of your committee members. If anyone cannot attend in person, try to find a way for members to meet by phone.

The Logistics Coordinator is responsible for sending out meeting reminders and regular communications by email, phone and in person during the planning stage.

Tip: Don't have anyone with event organizing experience to fill one of your roles? Encourage members of your council to step into new roles. This helps to build leadership and the overall capacity of your food council.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ROLES

Logistics Coordinator - identify space and materials for event, manage donations/budget, send out meeting reminders to the Committee

Media & Promotions Coordinator - get people to show up, contact media outlets, send follow-ups after the event. Contact and coordinate with potential co-sponsors

Guests Coordinator - invite moderator, candidates and elected officials, stay engaged with them until the event, prep guests for the event, coordinate question development

Volunteer Coordinator - organize volunteer roles, recruit volunteers and support them during the planning process and the day of the event

Select a Format

Format is one of the most important things to consider when planning a candidate forum.

It is essential to select the option that best meets your community's needs and your food council's capacity. Having an identified format for your event is also a good way to begin conversations with potential event co-sponsors and guests.

EXAMPLE FORMATS

***Moderated Question & Answer**:*

A moderator asks the guests questions that are not given to the guests before the event. Guests may answer the same questions or may be asked different questions, as long as each is given equal time to answer.

Follow - Up Question & Answer:

This is the same format as "Question and Answer," however, follow-up questions are permitted.

Town Hall Forum:

The audience asks all of the questions. Members of your food council might consider screening questions to avoid partisan questions and to facilitate stimulating dialogue.

***Adding an Informal Question & Answer** :*

An informal question & answer session at the end of the event can work with any of the above formats.

More formats on the next page…

More Formats

Be as creative as you can to increase attendance and energy.

EXAMPLE FORMATS

Hearings:

Focus the event on issues important to your food council. Have experts present concerns and suggested solutions for each issue. After the experts' presentations, the moderator and/or experts ask the guests to respond with specific proposals to answer the concerns presented. Guests are typically allowed to make a closing statement after all proposals are heard.

Prepared and Spontaneous Debate:

Guests are given questions before the event and the moderator asks a selection of the questions. The moderator, other guests and/or the audience can then ask additional questions.

Discourse Debate:

The moderator asks a question and the guests discuss the issue. A confidant moderator is important to help control guests who may try to dominate the conversation.

Informal Meet and Greet Event:

Give a welcome to set the stage and tell the audience the goal of the event. Each guest can then be given an equal amount of time to introduce him or herself (optional). Then attendees are encouraged to engage entirely in informal Q&A with guests. Providing tables or spaces to interact around certain themes might help to encourage discussion.

This type of event can be done as an event over coffee or food, but if you are providing food or beverages for your attendees, it is important to be aware of local political contribution laws if your food council is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Create Your Own and Be Creative!

As long as you follow the guidelines of nonpartisanship, you do not have to follow any of these specific formats.

Tip: No matter what format you choose, build in time for informal networking at the start or finish of your event to increase community dialogue.

Create Ground Rules

TIPS ON GROUND RULES

from the Nonprofit Voter Engagement Network:

Equal Time: In a candidate forum it is very important to give each of your guests equal response time to all questions, as well as equal time to make any types of introductory or closing statements.

Partisan Materials and Attire: You may want to ask audience members to leave their partisan materials at home. This means no partisan buttons or signs in the event space.

Audience: Ask the audience to respectfully refrain from excessive excitement for or against a particular candidate.

Literature: Provide nonpartisan voter guides, voter registration and get-out-the-vote materials for your audience. You can go to your local Board of Elections websites for the voter guides and to Democracy NC's website (http://nc-democracy.org/category/our-issues/get-out-the-vote/) for get-out-the-vote materials. It is important to have a separate table outside the room of the event for candidates to place their campaign literature. It is also important that *all* candidates are made aware before the event that they are allowed to leave materials.

Track Success and Evaluate

Planning to track the success of your public forum is important. Tracking different metrics will help plan for future events and help write future grant applications.

Creating a Google Worksheet to track metrics is an easy way for all volunteers to enter in different measures of success during the planning process and after the forum.

The Committee should also create an evaluation form (template can be found in the Appendix) to gather input from your attendees. Your Logistics Coordinator should finalize your evaluation plans for the event and make sure that surveys are printed.

SUGGESTED METRICS TO TRACK

- # of volunteers involved with the event
- # of new media contacts made
- media coverage before and after the event
- $ of in-kind or fiscal donations
- # of event attendees
- # of applications submitted to join the new food council
- # of email sign-ups

Identify Partners

A strong coalition of sponsors will help to encourage guests to attend and will strengthen community participation.

Work together as a committee to identify potential organizational partners for collaboration on your event. Co-sponsoring organizations and groups can help achieve nonpartisanship by covering a range of issues.

Co-sponsors are not necessary but are helpful in providing support with promotion, logistics, volunteers, name-power, constituents, and more. Remember to be flexible and be open to adjusting the format of the event to best fit the needs all collaborators.

Your **Media & Promotions Coordinator** should follow-up with each potential partner about possible collaboration. This Coordinator should be the main point of contact between your council and any partners during the event planning process.

Use the template provided in the Appendix to create a Partnership Agreement Form. This can be made into a Google Form and sent to potential co-sponsors and partners.

"We organized a cross-sector list of co-sponsors to support our event by promoting the forum through their social media and email lists. This helped to bring in a diverse and large audience. Having a variety of co-sponsors from the local level in Durham as well as from regional and statewide organizations really helped us to get the word out and reach people who had never even heard of our council."

- Neal Curran,
Durham Farm and Food Network

Design an Agenda

Create a list of goals for the event, and then design an agenda based on those goals.

This event can be a springboard to future council successes because your group will have better relationships with community groups, more access to decision-makers, more members of the public who know about you and your mission, and new volunteers.

List the goals that your food council hopes to accomplish by hosting this event. Typically, goals include:

- educating the public on the food council and its recent work,
- creating space for dialogue between the public and candidates for public office,
- building relationships between the food council and policy makers,
- growing the network of the food council.

Then, craft an agenda that allows your food council to accomplish these goals.

Finally, make a list of the materials that will be needed to accomplish your agenda.

Sample Agenda

1. Networking / Food
2. Welcome
3. Co-Sponsor Introductions
4. Forum Rules
5. Forum Dialogue
6. Wrap-Up
7. How to Get Involved
8. Networking / Food

Tip: Create a Background Slideshow

Create a slideshow that can play in the background. Slides can highlight the work of the food council, the candidates in attendance, partner organizations, event co-sponsors, etc. You can set up the slides to play on a loop during any open networking time or during the event welcome.

Coordinate Initial Logistics

Date and Time:

Ideally, your forum should be held during the middle of the week and in the early evening to allow time for attendees to arrive after work or daytime commitments. Be sure to think about other community events that might be happening on that date. If you are hosting an event with County Commissioners, it might be a good idea to call the Clerk of Commissioners to check on any other event that might pull your guests away from your event.

Accessibility:

Try to host the event in a central location near public transportation access. Make sure your location is disability accessible. As a committee, decide if you are going to provide childcare and/or translation services for your event. Think about the budget that you have to cover these services and about in-kind donations or volunteers that could be accessed from within your food council or through other community partners.

Food:

As a committee, decide if you will be providing food and/or beverages at the event. Identify the potential budget that can be spent on food or beverages. Food councils are encouraged to source any food or beverages from locally owned businesses that are purchasing food from local and regional farmers and producers.

The Logistics Coordinator should gather information on each of these logistical issues, identify all options available, and bring them back to the committee for final approval.

This Coordinator should also maintain contact with the event space, food and beverage providers, and any potential services throughout the event planning period.

Develop a Budget

While a budget for food and festivities can help to bring in a crowd, ultimately your council has the ability to host this type of event at zero cost outside of printing.

It is entirely possible to pull of an event with a budget of $0 – do not think that you cannot host a successful event if you have a limited budget. Determine what budget your food council might need for this event.

As a committee, think of possible ways to raise funds or solicit in-kind donations for event costs.

POTENTIAL COSTS MAY INCLUDE: event space rental, printing, promotion, translation services, childcare, food/beverages

The Logistics Coordinator will manage the event budget, follow up on potential fiscal or in-kind donations opportunities, and for coordinate with the committee members around potential co-sponsorship / in-kind donation opportunities.

"The biggest cost for our event was printing. We typically spend most of our small budget on printing out signage and materials. We typically work with community partners for donations of food and beverages. But you should be careful about what kind of food you serve! We've gotten heat for serving donated breakfast pastries that were perceived to be out of step with the focus on food and nutrition."

- Nicole Peterson,
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Food Policy Council

Invite All Guests

Work together as a Committee to decide which public offices you will be inviting candidates and officials from to participate in your event. Will you be inviting only local offices (School Board, County Commission, Mayor, etc.), or state offices (State Representatives and Senators, Governor, etc.), or maybe some federal Congress people? You can also do a mix of all different types of offices and candidates to bring many different levels of government together.

As a Committee (depending on the format of your event), identify a potential moderator who is well respected and viewed by the public as politically neutral and nonpartisan. The objectivity of your moderator will be very important to guests, the media and any potential co-cosponsors. A journalist can be a good moderator because of their objectivity. Ideally, they should be someone who lives outside of the voting district. Also identify a backup moderator.

Your Guest Coordinator will take on the responsibility of inviting guests.

- First, send a printed invitation letter to each potential guest and an email (template in Appendix).
- Call their offices and let them know that the letter is coming and that you sent an email.
- Make additional phone calls after the letters have arrived to encourage responses.
- Once invitees are confirmed, maintain contact with them and their aides to keep them engaged with the event. This will help to ensure they are comfortable with the format of the event and will participate as planned.

The Guest Coordinator will also invite the moderator, confirm their attendance and prepare the moderator by reviewing the process and format with them and giving them questions in advance, depending on the format.

Prepare the Questions

Depending on the format of your event, it is important that an independent and nonpartisan individual or panel prepare the questions for your guests with the Committee's input.

No matter the format of your event, all guests should be aware that the focus of the event will be on issues related to health, food and agriculture.

Candidates should not be asked whether they agree or disagree with the positions, agendas, platforms, or statements of the food councils or any other co-sponsoring organizations.

As a Committee, decide if a nonpartisan individual or a panel will be asked to come up with the questions. Brainstorm who might fill these roles.

If an independent group or person is not available to develop the questions, it can be helpful to vet your questions with food, health and agricultural experts in your community or who work at the state or regional level. Getting that additional insight on your draft questions will help you to finalize productive, nonpartisan questions.

The Guest Coordinator should follow up with the group's suggestions of individuals or groups to prepare the questions and confirm who will create the questions for the event.

> *We held our forum in combination with a launch of our council's new strategic plan. That planning process involved a lot of community input and dialogue, so our knowledge of what was most relevant locally around food and farming issues allowed us to frame questions that encouraged honest discourse and raise awareness. My advice is to choose no more than five thoughtfully crafted questions which allow candidates to speak to local concerns while providing opportunities for them to learn more about what matters to the audience.*
> *- Ann Meletzke, Alamance Food Collaborative*

Develop Promotion Strategy

Be creative with your promotional outlets and get everyone involved in promoting the event.

As a Committee, discuss an overall strategy for getting people to your event. Make a list together of media sources, with contacts, where you would like to promote and/or cover the event (newspaper, radio, television, etc.).

This is a good place to engage your co-sponsoring organizations. They may be willing to share local media lists or contact reporters they have good relationships with about the event.

Consider your partners and new ideas for getting the word to your audience, like table tents on restaurant tables, flyers at coffee shops, service provider offices, or radio public service announcements.

The Media & Promotions Coordinator should contact the media, and coordinate all efforts to build attendance. This is a good role for a food council member with communications experience.

The Media & Promotions Coordinator should send all media contacts an email and hard copy of a press release, (template in the Appendix) which should include date, time, place of the forum, co-sponsoring organizations and the flyer.

Develop Promotions Strategy – Create an Event Flyer

The flyer should contain a link to where people can RSVP to attend the event using a simple Google Form or other survey software.

The Media & Promotions Coordinator should coordinate the development of a flyer that is visually appealing, concise and includes the following information:

- Event name
- Date and time
- Event type
- Event point of contact / RSVP
- Event description
- Event sponsors
- Event guests (if confirmed)

Develop Promotions Strategy – Send a Save the Date

The Media & Promotions Coordinator should coordinate sending the “Save-the-Date” announcement (template in Appendix) with the flyer to all of your network contacts. Everyone on the committee should ask other community leaders to promote the “Save-the-Date” to their networks.

Advertise on your food council’s website, email lists and social media. Create a hashtag for your event (template in Appendix).

Be creative! If you have co-sponsors for the event, each organization should target their own constituents and members by sending out an announcement.

TIP: ENGAGE FOOD SYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS

As a group, brainstorm a list of important community food system stakeholders to personally invite to the event . This list might include:

- heads of local government departments
- other local elected officials
- farmers and agriculture organizations
- food producers & distributors
- organizations working on food access issues
- restaurant owners
- the visitor’s bureau
- conservation groups
- faith leaders
- community garden groups, etc.

Make a note of who on the food council has a direct connection with these important stakeholders and who might be willing to make a personal ask for them to attend (template can be found in the Appendix).

Recruit Volunteers

Make a list of additional volunteer roles that might need to be filled for both publicizing the forum and on the day of the event.

There are many roles for volunteers from your food council and your co-sponsors. For example: hanging up flyers, translation for promotional materials and for the day of the event, childcare, set-up and break down, signing-in attendees, managing parking, etc.

Brainstorm whom in your council, or your extended network, has the skills and potential interest in filling these roles. Make a list of potential volunteers.

One very important volunteer role is to give the welcome for the event and closing out the event. Ideally, the welcome and exit will be done by food council leaders who can set the stage for the event and direct attendees and guests towards follow up actions at the end of the event. Another important role is an event photographer and videographer.

The Volunteer Coordinator should contact potential volunteers to request their assistance. This Coordinator should be the main point of contact for all volunteers and should support them in fulfilling their roles on the day of the event.

TIP: IDENTIFY A TIMEKEEPER

Depending on the format of your event, you may need to identify a timekeeper. This volunteer will prioritize keeping the event on schedule. One way to manage time during a moderated discussion is to provide the timekeeper with color-coded cards: green card = start, yellow card = 30 seconds remain, red card = stop.

INTRO | PRE | EVENT | POST

STEP 13 *1 month before event*

Follow Up with Guests

The Guest Coordinator should confirm the attendance of all candidates and elected officials.

If you've not heard back from a guest, contact them again. Let them know which other guests have confirmed. You generally should have at least two candidates from a specific race, unless the candidate attending your forum is running unopposed.

Request brief bios from guests to use when introducing them at the forum. Notify guests about the format of the event, the schedule, and other arrangements (parking, arrival time, literature table, opportunity for one-on-one contact with voters, etc.).

INTRO | PRE | EVENT | POST

STEP 14 *1 month before event*

Finalize Promotions

The Media & Promotions Coordinator should follow up with all media contacts with updated promotional materials about your event and your food council. Ask the media contacts to promote the event in community events calendars or with a public service announcement.

Provide all food council members with the most up-to-date version of your promotional materials and ask them to contribute to distribute the information to their networks.

Check back in on your list of food system stakeholders. Who has confirmed and who needs another invitation?

Continue to share your promotional materials on your website and through social media.

Finalize Logistics

Use the checklists to make sure all the tasks get completed.

FULL COMMITTEE:

- ❑ Finalize your agenda.
- ❑ Finalize any logistical concerns (A/V, microphone, parking, refreshments).
- ❑ Make plans for convening after the forum to reflect on the event.
- ❑ Final confirmation of all materials and supplies (parking signs, restroom signs, sign-in sheets, nametags, pens, clipboards, easels, etc.).

LOGISTICS COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Review the event budget and make sure that any vendors have been paid.
- ❑ Reconfirm site arrangements. Make sure that your reserved site has all of the accommodations you need including set-up instructions for the room, tables, microphones, etc..
- ❑ Print evaluations and all other printed materials.
- ❑ Gather all needed supplies for the day of the event.

GUEST COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Get a written confirmation (email is fine) from each participating guest.
- ❑ Reconfirm moderator.
- ❑ Finalize all questions.

MEDIA & PROMOTION COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Check back in with partners and co-sponsors and coordinate any needs with the other members of your committee.
- ❑ Send another press release (template in Appendix) to all media contacts. If possible, provide media packets to media contacts that include information on your organization, co-sponsoring organizations and guest information.
- ❑ Write an op-ed piece on the local food system and why the food council is forming to work together to improve it. Be sure to restate that the event is nonpartisan.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Remind volunteers of their duties and reconfirm their attendance.
- ❑ Gather any materials needed for volunteers.

Day of the Event

Keep the following tasks in mind on the day of your candidate forums

LOGISTICS COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Set up the check-in table(s).
- ❑ Set up information table(s).
- ❑ Check that microphones and speakers work.
- ❑ Set up the projector and any presentation.
- ❑ Post signs in the building with arrows directing attendees to the event and the restrooms.
- ❑ Provide sign-in sheets and all other supplies to appropriate volunteers.

MEDIA & PROMOTION COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Be prepared with talking points about the event and why the food council is hosting the public forum.
- ❑ Be available to support and guide any media on site during the event.

GUEST COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Greet guests and provide name tags if they do not already have one.
- ❑ Ensure that guests have water and anything else that they requested on stage.
- ❑ Ensure that the moderator and/or “welcome volunteer” has guest bios for introductions.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Delegate responsibilities to additional volunteers.
- ❑ Support volunteers in their roles.

MODERATOR:

- ❑ Review the ground rules for the forum.
- ❑ Remind the audience of the nonpartisan nature of the event, including that no cheering/shouting will be allowed.

Following Your Event

Follow up from this type of event is critical. Your council should leverage all of the work that went into hosting your event into stronger relationships with policy makers. Quick and consistent follow up with policy makers will help them to remember your council and your issues.

Take the following actions within a week after your event:

LOGISTICS COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Send thank you letters to event host location and food and beverage partners.
- ❑ Contact attendees from sign-up sheets within the next two days (while the event is fresh in their minds) to let them know how to get involved with your council.

GUEST COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Send thank you letters to all guests and the moderator (template in Appendix) shortly after the event and include any anecdotes from the audience. Also thank anyone who helped to make questions for the events.

MEDIA & PROMOTIONS COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Send your partners and co-sponsors thank you letters (templates in Appendix).
- ❑ Use your website and social media to recap the event.
- ❑ Write a Letter to the Editor or an Op Ed piece about the event and send to your media contacts.
- ❑ Thank your media contacts for promotion and covering the event.

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:

- ❑ Send thank you letters to volunteers (template in Appendix).

INTRO PRE EVENT POST

Continue to Engage

Your council should build on the success of your event by continuing to stay engaged with the people who attended your event.

Occasionally update your high level food system stakeholders on issues relevant to your food council. Take care to thoroughly inform them on how your community will be affected by specific issues or topics.

Keep high level decision makers engaged with your issues by sending them stories about policy issues. It will be even better if those stories are from their constituents.

Keep your elected officials up to date on your council's activities. Send any recent news articles featuring your group and any blogs posts and annual reports.

Increase Your Capacity

Your council can also continue to hold space for advocacy and engagement around policy.

Take the following steps to keep your council actively engaged in policy change and advocacy:

- Develop a standing policy action committee. This committee could be responsible for drafting/crafting local ordinances, or legislative ideas or resolutions that can be adopted by their elected officials.
- Develop a strategic networking plan to meet more policy makers and strengthen relationships with food system decision makers.
- Connect with other local, regional and statewide groups who are working in these issues
- Develop or strengthen your outreach and engagement efforts by going through a community mapping process to identify additional resources and potential partners.
- Be strategic in your advocacy, visit our Strategic Advocacy Toolkit for Food Councils - https://toolkit.communityfoodstrategies.com/ - to learn advocacy tips.

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good luck

COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES

Community Food Strategies

Please contact with any questions and requests for support:

communityfoodstrategies.org

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