

Jefferson Funders Forum Learning Community

Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment with Alison Hensley-Sexauer, Executive Director, Rogue Valley Food Systems Network, Maud Powell, Small Farms, Professor of Practice, OSU; Chair Rogue Valley Food Systems Network, and Chrissy Sollenberger, Senior Officer, Alumbra Innovations Foundation.

Summary Notes

March 14th 2024

OSU Southern Oregon Research and Extension Center Auditorium

Jefferson Funders Forum brings together public and private philanthropic leadership to share information, perspectives, and experiences; cooperatively explore and leverage resources to positively impact communities in southern Oregon and northern California.

Levels of Engagement: I. Communication and Information Sharing
II. Learning Together
III. Planning for Collective & Collaborative Action
IV. Action

Facilitator: Peter Salant, GAG Charitable Trust

27 Participants including: Peter Salant GAG Charitable Trust; Todd Blomquist, Nancy Castillo-McKinnis, *The Ford Family Foundation*; Amy Drake, Kurt Hildebrand, Heidi Binder, Lyn Hennion, *Oregon Community Foundation*; Jim White, *Nonprofit Association of Oregon*; Annette Batzer, Angela Durant, Jennifer Staton, *Gordon Elwood Foundation*; Anne Golden, *Threshold Foundation, Mountain View Foundation*; Bill Thorndike, *NWFH, OCF, SOU*, Paul Shelton, *Private Foundation*; Emily Mostue, Polly Williams, *Carpenter Foundation*; Dee Ann Harris, *Leightman Maxey Foundation*; Quin Collins-Pearson, *Redwood Foundation for Education*; Kate Dwyer, *Four Way Community Foundation*; Kari Geis, *Schwemm Family Foundation*; Carrie Hanson, *West & Chaney Family Foundations*, Maud Powell, Alison Hensley-Sexauer, *Rogue Valley Food Systems Network*; Chrissy Sollenberger, *Alumbra Innovations Foundation*; Avery Miller, *Rogue Farm Corps*; Doug Loftdahl, *Family Nurturing Center*

I. Welcome and Introductions: Peter Salant

Peter welcomed participants and shared about his "many hats" he wears in the community as a rancher, funder, board member active in many parts of the food network.

II. Communication & Information Sharing: Everyone
What is the one food you look forward to in the spring?

Food shared included: Micro greens, root spinach, chick weed, strawberries, Morel's and Morel hunting, spring onions, rhubarb, asparagus, sugar snap peas, produce from the farmer markets and more.

III. Reflection: Anne Golden, Threshold Foundation

Anne shared a poem titled "The Farmer" by Amelia Barr (see attached).

IV. Announcement: Jim White, Nonprofit Association of Oregon, Amy Drake, Local ONLC Committee Chair

- Oregon Nonprofit Leaders Conference will be held on April 8th and 9th this year at the Ashland Hills Hotel. Four hundred participants are expected to attend this year's conference.
- Please share informational pamphlet to your networks and nonprofit partners (see attached).
- Amy Drake, local ONLC Planning Committee Chair, shared the importance of providing this opportunity here in Jackson County. Funders support is key to providing scholarships to the conference.
- A question was raised regarding providing learning opportunities for nonprofit board members. Jim shared NAO's virtual board bright learning and Amy shared the one ONLC session on building future board members and taking the suggestion back to the local planning committee for future conference planning and feedback.

- Please visit Nonprofit Association of Oregon here: <https://nonprofitoregon.org/> to learn more about the Nonprofit Compensation & Benefits Survey and Thought Leadership Initiatives NAO is working on in its research and identification trends in the nonprofit sector.

V. **Learning Together and Dialogue: Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment**

- Listen and view the Zoom recording beginning with program: <https://youtu.be/KTnYsoeY4rk>
- Recording and PowerPoint will also be available at: <https://jeffersonfundersforum.org/jeff-virtual-meeting-notes/>

A Special Thanks to our guests who have generously offered to share their experience and perspectives with us today:

Alison Hensley-Sexauer, Executive Director, Rogue Valley Food Systems Network

Maud Powell, Small Farms, Professor of Practice, OSU; Chair Rogue Valley Food Systems Network

Chrissy Sollenberger, Senior Officer, Alumbra Innovations Foundation

History of Jefferson Funders Forum and the Rogue Valley Food Systems Peter Salant

- Peter shared the history of the Jefferson Funders Forum and food systems throughout the years (see attached).

Alison Hensley-Sexauer and Maud Powell, Rogue Valley Food Systems Network *please see PowerPoint, notes from activity, word cloud, and recording for details.*

- The Rogue Valley Food Systems Network's timeline can be tied back to a Jefferson Funders Forum meeting with Thrive and Access in 2007.
- The evolution from council to a nonprofit organization started with the closure/merger with Thrive in 2018. The Rogue Valley Food Systems Network absorbed three assets from Thrive: their nonprofit status, the Flavor Guide, and their financial resources.
- The merger allowed the organization to seek and pool funding activities, work collaboratively, and share powerful applications from different perspectives.
- Their work focuses on developing markets, convene those who do the work, and incubate projects.
- Funders were guided through the food systems, its realities, and overlaps.
- Activity: What is the current funding landscape of food systems? Please see notes from activity where funders noted areas of organizational and project support in the following sectors:
 - Food Waste Management
 - Food System Emergency Preparedness and Resilience
 - Food Security and Access
 - Nutrition and Health
 - Consumer Demand and Marketing
 - Agricultural Production
 - Environmental and Natural Resource
- The participants in the Rogue Valley Food Systems Network includes a staff, board of directors, an executive committee, and council working within *Research and Assessment, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Network Management, Projects, and Programs*.
- The Community Food Assessment was last completed in 2012-13. The committee has representation from RVFSN, DEQ, Jackson Care Connect, United Way of Jackson County, Josephine County Food Bank, A Greater Applegate, OSU Extension, AllCare, Southern Oregon University, Access, and 1000 Friends of Oregon.
- Study objectives include:
 - Identify the current assets and gaps in our food system by developing an updated, collaborative Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment and Action Plan of Jackson and Josephine Counties.
 - To serve as analysis of the community's food system, outline a list of actions that will improve local food access, and result in economic and infrastructural improvements across the rogue Valley.
- Phase II is now in motion with the launch of an open survey on March 31, 2024. The survey will stay open until the committee feels they have good data that represents the community.
- Over the next several months listening sessions and convening are scheduled. Please see PowerPoint for data informing the assessment, action plan, and QR code to participate in survey. Also available here: <https://rvfoodsystem.org/>

Chrissy Sollenberger, Senior Officer, Alumbra Innovations Foundation *Please see Alumbra Overview Slides for details.*

- Alumbra Innovations Foundations serves communities in Southern Oregon, San Diego, Jackson Wyoming, Chicago, La Paz and Baja Sur Mexico, Panama, Halifax Canada.
- Their Vision: A world in which community, environment, and economy function as an integrated system for well-being. Their Mission is Collaborate on breakthroughs that become lasting real-world solutions. Learn more about Alumbra Innovations Foundation here: <https://www.ialumbra.com/>
- Alumbra's work in the Rogue Valley started with the establishment of Rusted Gate Farm in 2019 as a nonprofit. The foundation has local roots in southern Oregon and the farming community. The Rusted gate serves as an innovation and demonstration lab. They experiment with traditional and alternative methods and share outcomes. The Rusted Gate Farm intends to identify a mix of income producing activities that will increase average farm income, promote environmental health, and insure long term financial security for small farms. As a nonprofit, they are responsive to community needs, which has led them to engage in food systems, education, and preparing for climate impacts on land and water stewardship.
- This learning paired with strategic evolution, has led to an expanding funding focus in Oregon.
- Alumbra's North Star programs align in southern Oregon through:
 - Economically viable models, rooted in Sense of Place, catalyzes investments in and inspiring adoption of models that restore the environment, honor community, and advance economic prosperity.
 - Restorative and humane land-based food solutions for a rapidly changing environment are sourced and scaled.
 - The next generation is translating experiential learning into blue and green careers and active citizenship.

Discussion: Everyone

Questions and discussions followed:

- Locally sourced meat, availability to process locally, infrastructure and policy needs, and what is on the horizon regarding manufacturing of food at state level. It's a complicated system.
- At the peak of the hemp boom, 47,000 acres of farmland was being used for hemp. Only 3% are still in production.
- The average age of a farmer is 58. Programs like Rogue Farm Corps, Changing Hands hope to pass along knowledge and land to upcoming farmers.
- Who/how is mapping occurring and how do individuals become part of the system change that allow people ownership?
- How does the school system partner and how difficult is it to get into the schools? Schools need programs in their curriculum versus one teacher taking on the garden and once they leave the garden program is gone.
- How can we provide vocational education and job training in the field?
- School gardens need to be part of a school culture, funded through the school district with administration extra duty pay.
- What is the best leverage to connect in collaboration, not duplicate or compete for funding with organizations like Rogue Valley Farm 2 School, Family Nurturing Center, and others providing education, school/community gardens, and food education.

Lunch / Discussion / Farm Tour: Everyone

Participants able to stay enjoyed a locally sourced lunch by Chef Kristen, Jefferson Farm Kitchen. Guest presenters stayed to continue conversations and provide a tour of the farm.

Contact information for further questions:

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Maud Powell Email: maud.powell@oregonstate.edu

Chrissy Sollenberger Email: csollenberger@weimail.com