

Oregon Farm to School & School Garden Network

Strategic Plan

Adopted: June 25, 2021

Introduction

Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Network (OFSSGN) has embarked on a strategic framework to guide its work over the coming 5 years. The following strategic framework was created by the organization's staff and steering committee, and informed by stakeholder feedback through surveys and a focus group. The plan highlights a general strategic direction that allows the organization to be nimble, flexible, and adapt to a changing environment, while also identifying important priorities for the immediate future. This strategic framework also identifies a new mission, vision, and values for the organization.

Mission, Vision & Values

The OFSSGN connects and supports members of Oregon's farm to school community to create a just and equitable food system that provides access to healthy, local school meals and food, farm and garden education.

Tagline: We provide resources, technical assistance, training, networking and policy advocacy, to build a stronger farm to school movement in Oregon.

We envision an Oregon with just and equitable food and education systems, supporting the well-being of the diverse network of communities in our state. To us, this means that:

- Every child and family in Oregon has access to nourishing, culturally relevant food.
- Our food is grown in a way that is sustainable and protective of the environment and local and regional communities.
- The people who work the land, and cultivate and prepare food, hold power in the food system, and are valued and cared for.
- Historic and current inequity and systemic racism are recognized and this inequity and injustice has been repaired. Original stewards of the land are honored and hold power.
- Our education system, from early childhood through high school, acknowledges the value of and prioritizes using local food systems, gardens, and the land as educational tools and resources.
- Students of all ages are provided regular hands-on opportunities to connect with and learn about food and where it comes from.

Future Direction & Strategy Lens

Deep Commitment to Equity, Justice, and Learning

We are committed to addressing racial and social (including economic/educational) inequities within the farm to school movement.

OFSSGN is integrating equity and justice principles and practices into all areas of the organization's programming and spheres of influence. This means welcoming and engaging in difficult conversations, embracing the discomfort of facing our own complicity in systemic oppression, and continuously integrating our learning into our policies, programs, and practices.

The following principles will guide our work for the next 3-5 years.

Below are OFSSGN's five core guiding principles that will serve as a lens as we work towards achieving our vision and mission, focused on farm to school and school gardens. These principles will guide the organization's decision-making, program design, and leadership structure for our work now and in the future. Our work remains focused on farm-to-school education and local food access in schools across Oregon. We are building a movement.

OFSSGN recognizes that this strategic direction will take internal capacity building and a commitment to doing things differently. We know we will learn along the way. We will examine, evaluate, and update these strategies yearly.

1. Focus on Leadership Development

Outcomes we're committed to: emerging farm to school leaders are recognized, respected, and resourced. Their voices and approaches are valued.

- a. How is this decision, program, or policy supporting, nurturing and/or resourcing leadership development?
- b. Are we considering existing leadership, approaches, and voices that are marginalized, undervalued, or unseen in dominant culture spaces?

2. Center marginalized stories, voices, and experiences, with a particular focus on young people

Outcomes we're committed to: Communities and community members who are and have been historically most marginalized, excluded, and oppressed are centered in the work. This includes Black, Indigineous, People of Color, young people, and rural-living people. Burden on those we are centering is managed and minimized.

- a. Is youth/young people's views, voices, and leadership being centered and lifted?
- b. Which groups will be most impacted by this decision, program, or policy? Are they being centered?

- c. Which groups being impacted are most marginalized, excluded, and oppressed? Are they being centered?
- d. Are we considering and minimizing burden to those most impacted and marginalized, excluded, and oppressed?

3. Shift Power and Resources

Outcomes we're committed to: as an advocacy organization that has influence and power regarding funding and resources, we are committed to shifting the inequitable distribution of power and resources to Black, Indigineous, People of Color, and youth led initiatives and farming.

- a. What are the resources available?
- b. Where is power centered?
- c. How are resources and power being shifted and distributed (or not) to Black, Indigineous, People of Color, and youth led initiatives and producers? What about other marginalized, excluded, and oppressed groups?

4. Treating people and land in a healthy way

Outcomes we're committed to: practices supported by OFSSGN are in service to environmental sustainability and the well-being of people, and consider these things as interdependent.

- a. How is this decision, program, or policy in service to environmental sustainability and the well-being of people?
- b. Are we considering fair labor practices and environmental practices?
- c. What are the perspectives of the indigineous communities and other existing stewards of the land?

5. Focus on Systemic Impact

Outcomes we're committed to: we are addressing root causes and supporting programs and practices that have lasting, measurable impact.

- a. How does this decision, program, or policy address root causes? Do we know what the root causes are?
- b. Will this decision, policy, or program bring progress toward goals for the movement (TBD through state-wide strategic planning)?
- c. How are we measuring impact? How will we know we are successful?

Near-term Goals & Actions

Strategic Goals & Actions for by Program Area FY 22

(Melina has detailed tasks/projects for most of the activities in her own work plan version of this document. The proposed actions below are too much to complete in 2021-2023, given our staff capacity. Melina will be prioritizing into either 2021-2023 or the next phase of the strategic plan).

Building Connections (formerly Networking)

We provide Oregon's farm to school and school garden community with networking opportunities. We conduct outreach to connect with new stakeholders. We share existing Oregon and National program models and effective practices at events throughout Oregon. We unite and connect Oregon's diverse communities to work together towards our common vision.

Goal 1: Build strong relationships, foster partnerships and connections and deepen engagement across the Network.

Activity 1: Increase racial, cultural, geographic, generational, and economic diversity of stakeholders

Activity 2: Build and expand partnerships with education, health and agriculture leadership

Activity 3: Increase number of stakeholders and depth of engagement in the Network

Goal 2: Build more equitable partnerships and trust with communities that are most marginalized, excluded, and oppressed.

Activity 1: Listen to and integrate priorities identified by partners from communities that are most marginalized, excluded and oppressed

Resources, Technical Assistance and Training

We provide Oregon's farm to school and school garden community with technical assistance, training, and resources via Regional Hubs, the Oregon Farm to School and School Garden Conference, the OFSSGN's email listserv, web-based resources, and one-to-one communication.

Goal 1: Increase our stakeholders' capacity to effectively incorporate healthy, local food into school meals and implement food-, farm-, and garden-based education.

Activity 1: Coordinate & Host 2022 Farm to School & School Garden Conference and 2023 Farm to School Summit

Activity 2: Train and support Regional Hub Coordinators

Activity 3: Develop inclusive, accessible, culturally responsive practices for communications, resources, events and meetings

Activity 5: Create and curate resources to meet the evolving needs of stakeholders

Activity 6: Provide technical assistance and support to farm to school stakeholders

Goal 2: Establish leadership opportunities for emerging leaders in farm to school movement with emphasis on youth, marginalized populations and rural-living population.

Activity 1: Expand leadership of Regional Hubs to better represent Oregon's marginalized communities

Activity 2: Create new leadership opportunities for Network stakeholders

Activity 3: Work with statewide F2S leadership to explore the possibility of a paid BIPOC advisory board for Oregon F2S

Activity 4: Shift leadership of Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) to youth or determine if the YAC is the best way to serve middle/high youth. Explore youth position on Steering committee.

Advocacy

We advocate on behalf of Oregon's farm to school and school garden community to maintain funding from the Oregon State Legislature for schools to purchase healthy local food, and for schools and partner organizations to provide farm- and garden-based education.

Goal 1: Maintain state funding for the strategic, comprehensive Farm to School Grant Program, to provide consistent, sustainable funding for OFSSGN and programs on the ground.

Activity 1: Investigate and take steps to have Farm to School Grant Program included in Gov. Budget (2022)

Activity 2: Advocate for stable and adequate funding for Oregon's Farm to School Grant Program in the 2021 & 2023 legislative sessions.

Activity 3: During implementation, advocate with equity at forefront, particularly with a focus on shifting funding and resources to and centering the voices of communities and people who face the most disparities.

Evaluation and Demonstration of Impact

We evaluate the true impact of farm to school programs in Oregon. We maintain the [Oregon Farm to School Counts](#) website that documents the impact of Oregon's farm to school programs and makes the data accessible to stakeholders and the community. We conduct outreach on behalf of existing farm to school and school garden programs, sharing their impact at events in Oregon and nationally.

Goal 1: Increase effectiveness of Oregon's farm to School programs

Activity 1: Support ODE's evaluation of the F2S Grant Program

Activity 2: Maintain and update [Oregon Farm to School Counts](#) website and consider modifying measures

Activity 3: Evaluate what's working and what's not for F2S in Oregon and what's needed to address challenges and issues through targeted resources, training and advocacy
Ex: Scratch cooking training, recipe development
Ex: FSMC challenges with F2S procurement funds

Activity 4: Attend outreach events to offer training in effective practices and demonstrate model programs

Activity 4: Plan for and support Statewide strategic planning, defining roles of statewide leadership, and goal setting to establish shared goals and measures --including equity measures for Oregon's farm to school movement

Activity 5: Identify the root causes of disparities in the farm to school movement.

Activity 6: Establish and coordinate OFSSGN Evaluation Working Group

Activity 7: Storytelling, highlight champions (maybe on OFSSGN website, social media or at events).

Organizational Strength & Culture

OFSSGN is an organization with an ambitious mission, large network, and small and nimble staff. We are governed by a steering committee made up of our stakeholders who are uniquely skilled to advance us in this strategic direction. In the next year, OFSSGN faces an executive director transition, and is examining its leadership structure to ensure it is sustainable, equity and justice-focused, and mission-effective.

Goal 1: Build strong leadership within OFSSGN that is informed by and led by the people and communities most marginalized, excluded, and oppressed.

Activity 1: Take steps to over time shift leadership of staff and steering committee to people and communities most marginalized, excluded, and oppressed.

Activity 2: Examine alternative models of leadership including paid committee chairs and members for individuals representing communities most marginalized, excluded, and oppressed; and co-directorship.

Activity 3: Navigate successful leadership transition and establishment of new staff structure

Activity 4: Create professional development opportunities for staff to build skill and capacity within the organization to support advocacy efforts, and other program areas.

Goal 2: Establish a stable funding structure that supports leadership and programs.

Activity 1: Create and implement a development plan including grants from foundations, and state and federal agencies, and funding from organizations, businesses and individuals, in alignment with organizational priorities above.

Activity 2: Establish financial reserves.

Activity 3: Prioritize funding which compensates partners from communities and people who face the most disparities, for their leadership and partnership in the organization's budget.

Goal 3: Foster and build an inclusive and multicultural organization

Activity 1: Develop organizational policies and practices to institutionalize the centering of equity and inclusion.

Activity 2: Develop an internal culture where we ensure that historically marginalized people are not expected to conform to the dominant culture as we meet and collaborate.

Activity 3: Develop policies, procedures and practices to ensure growth in the recruitment, retention, mentorship and skill sharing and promotion of underrepresented participation across the organization's staff and leadership.

Activity 4: Develop a DEI vision statement

Activity 5: Establish accessible meeting processes and facilitation methods for Steering Committee, other Committees and staff meetings. Implement inclusive internal communications (translation/interpretation of materials and at meetings).

Activity 6: Ensure a shared analysis of diversity, equity, and inclusion among all organizational leadership bodies (Director, staff, and Steering Committee Members).

Recommendations for Future Activities

EDI [Org Self Assessment](#) recommendations to include in activities after 2023

(Most of the recommendations in the Org Self Assessment have been incorporated into 2021-2023 activities but these recommendations for future activities, not prioritized by the DEI Committee were not able to be incorporated into this plan due to capacity limitations)

PRACTICES & PROCEDURES

- Create avenues for difficult conversations about race in a safe, confidential, private space.

COMMUNICATION

- Develop transparent internal and external communications with Steering Committee Members, partners, and Network Members and participants regarding the organization's DEI commitment, efforts, and deficiencies. Develop an internal plan for sharing what we're learning through our work to center DEIJ.
- Develop process for assessing for bias in organizational materials to ensure reflection of our community's diversity.

DATA COLLECTION

- Systematically collect demographic data in programmatic and operational work in a way that aims to: 1) self-identify race, ethnicity, and language 2) be driven by community stakeholders, and 3) incorporate community narratives and experiences.

PERSONNEL

- Develop formal internal complaint procedures for staff and Steering Committee Members specifically regarding equity and inclusion related complaints.