Food Issue Area Network
Food Issue Area Network - Where we began

1. Issue area goals
2. Issue area outcomes
3. Network goals

“I hope that we might think about where we’d like to see the institution to be in 10 years, and where we’d like to see the state of Minnesota be with the University of Minnesota being a potential driver in that.”
Summary of Participants

14 members

14 departments / disciplines

9 organized opportunities to engage

8 delicious, tasty meals

85 people engaged (faculty, staff, students, community partners)
Summary of Participants

Retreat Attendees

- Duluth: 28
- Morris: 25
- Twin Cities: 32

Attendees by Role

- Faculty: 18
- Staff: 33
- Student: 20
- Community Member: 14
Success/Outcomes

- System-wide connections
- Frequent connecting and positive responses
- Network mapping
- Collaborative Presentations:
  - Dec. 11 Sustainable Food Systems Convergence Colloquium
  - Food Access Summit workshop connection
- Many network members attended and connected at the Food Access Summits in 2014 and 2015
- Knowledge Sharing and Generation*
- Strengthening current work*

* Sharing Food
  - Sharing Knowledge
Hosting the network here in Duluth helped me understand both the common and unique challenges we face on the UMD campus and advance the understanding of the value of the project with our administration and faculty.

Through the network I met a young farmer in Oakdale, about 15 minutes from my house and just outside of St. Paul. As a personal 'win' I will also be working on Alissa's farm to 'feed my soul' with a fun hobby and receive a free CSA share for my family as a gift for my work.
Reflections of Success by Network Members

I was able to work with Randy Hansen to help round out a team and find a soil scientist for a project proposal we are working on. I also met a student in Duluth I was able to get to come to a food hub networking event. It is the accumulation of these types of things that make this network meaningful.

Through my network connection, I was introduced to a teacher and three bright students from Duluth East High School who presented and provided the key to the success of our discussion with the Food Access Summit workshop participants about how to improve our approach to addressing adolescent hunger.
Challenges for Participants

- No dedicated time for networking
- Need to focus on primary functions
- Maintaining interest and involvement
- Developing a shared understanding of the value of networking
  - balancing *action* with *process* and *relationship building*
The biggest challenge is breaking from my ongoing work load to take part in what would otherwise seem as an extra task. It isn't easy to accommodate out of town trips that don't directly relate to my projects or work expectations.

“It’s a real challenge because we get pulled in so many different directions. For me, I have to squeeze it [Food IAN] in, and I don’t get any reasonable credit. It’s a real catch-22, and that’s the challenge.”
Strategies to Overcome Challenges

● Virtual Meetings
● Students to assist with continuous coordination
● OPE and staff who do public engagement work at the University can partner to advocate for the value of public engagement
Lessons Learned

- Participants highly valued the time to build strong relationships*
- Network members became better acquainted with virtual meetings
  - In-person retreats were key to building the strong foundation
- Faculty need financial support in order to commit time
- A dedicated coordinator for each IAN is critical for sustainability

*Strong Foundation, Strong Future
Next Steps

● Funding is necessary to keep the work going
  ○ Further Network Mapping*
  ○ Collaborative Grant Submissions*
  ○ Continued resource sharing on Food IAN website*
  ○ Explore Food IAN’s intersects with Statewide initiatives
    ■ e.g., MN Food Charter
    ■ UMN Grand Challenges
Process Feedback

- Funding support was critical to getting the Food IAN off the ground
- Only one year of funding leaves a lot of good work up in the air, potential loss of momentum
- Work among Food IAN members has grown to be integral in the work of many network hosts
- Funds are needed to sustain and build upon the momentum developed
Questions