Food LINC: Leveraging Investment for Network Coordination

Updated July 2016
Food LINC: Description and Purpose

• **Funding**: USDA and Federal Partners* providing initial funding of $850k (matched at least 2:1 by philanthropy) to support 10 full-time value chain coordinator positions in urban & rural regions.

• **Coordination**: Coordinator dedicated to linking producers (largely in rural areas) to buyers (largely in metro areas) in particular food value chains.

• **Expected Outcomes**: Increased revenue to local producers, job creation along the value chain, and increased access to healthy, affordable food.

• **“Higher” Purpose**: Elevate the value of this work, leading to longer-term support from public & private funders.

*Funding from Rural Development, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Delta Regional Authority
Defining Food Value Chains
The food value chain may look a lot like a traditional supply chain on the surface, but . . .

- Businesses intentionally structure their core operations to **produce both financial success and social benefit**

- **Shared mission and operational values** support decisions and processes

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**What is a Food Value Chain?**

**Shared Mission Values**
- Farm viability
- Farmland preservation
- Healthy food access
- Sustainable production methods

**Shared Operation Values**
- Accountability
- Long-term commitment
- Open and ongoing communication
- Transparency

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How Do We Create Successful Value Chains?

Key Takeaway:
It’s Not About Infrastructure, It’s About Relationships!

- The best investment is often in human capital – i.e., Value Chain Coordinators

### Role of Value Chain Coordinators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Market Matchmaker</td>
<td>Identify and connect key stakeholders through referral services and other forms of short-term or one-off engagement. This “public interest broker” role is key to development of food value chains because many businesses are stepping outside their normal channels to find new collaborators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convener/Relationship Builder</td>
<td>Build the necessary relationships across the food value chain by engaging key stakeholders, maintaining communication channels, and fostering a trusting environment. Examples include convening stakeholder meetings, forming working groups, and implementing other forms of longer-term engagement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance</td>
<td>Work with food value chain members to build capacity through education and training programs in such areas as sustainable production practices, food safety, marketing/branding, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Thought Leader</td>
<td>Raise policy issues and partner with others to address policies and procurement requirements, such as bidding procedures and preferred-vendor practices that may interfere with the ability of food value chains to access certain marketing channels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource Prospector</td>
<td>Identify and pursue resources, such as grants, loans, and services to support value-chain collaborators as they develop their enterprise.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catalyst / Innovator</td>
<td>As a resource prospector, value chain coordinators can also utilize grants and other external resources to test new business models and thus lower the financial risk of the businesses engaged in the value chain.</td>
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## Initial Regions Selected & Value Chain Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Value Chain Organizations</th>
<th>Federal Place-based Initiative Alignment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Atlanta/South Carolina</td>
<td>Common Market Georgia</td>
<td>Strike Force/SC Promise Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Louisville/Eastern Kentucky</td>
<td>Farm to Table (City of Louisville)</td>
<td>Strike Force/KY Promise Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina--Rocky Mount/Coastal Plains</td>
<td>The Conservation Fund</td>
<td>Strike Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado--Pueblo/Colorado Springs</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain Farmers Union</td>
<td>Strike Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico/Southern CO</td>
<td>La Montanita Co-op</td>
<td>Strike Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia/Delaware River Valley</td>
<td>Fair Food Philadelphia</td>
<td>Promise Zone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chesapeake region--VA/MD</td>
<td>Metro Washington Council of Governments</td>
<td>Strike Force (VA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Appalachia—VA/WV/TN/KY</td>
<td>Appalachian Sustainable Development</td>
<td>Strike Force/KY Promise Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memphis/East Arkansas Delta</td>
<td>Communities Unlimited</td>
<td>Strike Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson, MS – Delta region</td>
<td>Soul City</td>
<td>Strike Force</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Federal Partners ($850K)
- USDA Rural Development
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Delta Regional Authority

18 Philanthropic Partners ($2.3M)
- Agua Fund
- Assisi Foundation
- CoBank
- The Duke Endowment
- Gates Family Foundation
- Hyde Family Foundation
- Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust
- Kentucky Agricultural Development Board
- Oak Foundation
- Pyramid Peak Foundation
- The One Foundation
- Prince Charitable Trusts
- RSF Social Finance
- 11th Hour Project of the Schmidt Family Foundation
- Surdna Foundation
- Thornburg Foundation
- Town Creek Foundation
- Z Smith Reynolds Foundation

Organizations and Locations
1. La Montanita Co-op
2. Rocky Mountain Farmers Union
3. Communities Unlimited
4. The Conservation Fund
5. Louisville Farm to Table
6. Common Market Georgia
7. Appalachian Sustainable Development
8. Metro Washington Council of Governments
9. Fair Food
10. Soul City Hospitality

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National Coordination Component
- The Wallace Center -

**Purpose:** A national entity coordinating the work of the value chain organizations to maximize impact of the initiative.

National coordination will entail the following (and more):

- Peer exchanges
- Sharing best practices
- Targeted technical assistance
- Webinars, etc.
- Evaluation
Addressing Social Equity

- Alignment with Administration’s Place-Based Initiatives, e.g. Promise Zones, Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2), Sustainable Communities, StrikeForce

- Targeting assistance to economically-distressed and socially-diverse communities

- Food LINC primary focus on impacts to producers – revenue generation for rural producers and job and business creation in middle of value chain.

- With intentional engagement of under-served communities to ensure healthy food access outcomes
More Info on Food LINC?

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