Sustainable Food Systems Leadership Institute
Program Overview

Background

The Sustainable Food Systems Leadership Institute (SFSLI) is designed for leaders from across Maine with common interests in seeing and helping to create a food system in Maine that is local, strong, sustainable, just and healthy for all.

The topic of local food systems and the local food movement in Maine is a broad one. The key assumption in developing this program was that the best way to make a food system and food movement sustainable is to connect and support the people and the parts within the system so that they have the knowledge, skills, relationships and leadership sensibility required to successfully manage and support rapid transformation.

The purpose of SFSLI is to support and enhance the current leadership that participants have both in general and within food systems work. The program also intends to prepare participants to effectively find and assume even greater leadership roles in local food systems by creating a learning community that encourages personal and professional reflection, practical skill development, and the expansion of individuals’ networks within and between communities in the local foods movement.

The project is currently funded by the Kendall Foundation and has been supported previously during its five years by local funders - Broadreach Foundation and the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation.

2014 Program Overview

The Sustainable Food System Leadership Institute curriculum seeks to strengthen Maine’s local food movement by offering participants a variety of learning opportunities that focus on core competencies of:

- **Network Development**: Building and connecting the network of people and organizations working on this issue;
- **Leadership Development**: Building leadership capacity (individual, organizational and network/movement);
- **Movement Building**: Building the knowledge base, and core competencies related to strengthening the food movement.
Program Format

The program is offered through **day-long, theme-based, in-person gatherings**, which are interactive and content-rich, with plenty of time for participants to learn, teach, connect, inspire and grow from one another. The curriculum and process is deeply participatory and asks participants to think, question and discuss core themes and topics related to food systems.

The program provides participants with the opportunity to get to know each other’s expertise and resources, with the overall goal of strengthening the movement. The program involves individual goal-setting as well as small group work, and is a balance of discourse and action-oriented components.

We believe that leadership development is something we practice and define as we work together and not something static and externally given.

The curriculum features:

- Large and small group work + discussion
- Invited guest panelists (sample list below)
- Peer-to-peer consultations
- Program alumni as featured panelists, mentors, and resource people
- Reflection on program, content and process
- Individual leadership development plans
- Formal and informal networking opportunities
- Project work to reinforce and apply learning

Past guest speakers/panelists include (but are not limited to):

- Alan Furth, Cobscook Community Learning Center and Cobscook Bay Company
- Amber Lambke, Maine Grain Alliance
- Bob St. Peter, Food for Maine’s Future
- CR Lawn, FEDCO seeds
- Commissioner Walt Whitcomb and Commissioner Patrick Keliher
- Carol Pickering, Dietel Partners
- Dan O’Leary, Quimby Family Foundation
- Eric Jensen, Pineland Farm
- Glenn Libby, Port Clyde Fresh Catch
- Jay Friedlander, College of the Atlantic
- John Piotti, Maine Farmland Trust
- John Yanga, Yanga Family Farm
- Ken Morse, Healthy Oxford
- Jim Hana, Cumberland County Food Security Council
- Linzee Weld, Slow Money Maine
- Mark Lapping, USM Muskie School of Public Service
- Marada Cook, Northern Girl
- Penny Jordan, Jordan Farms
- Robin Alden, Penobscot East Resource Center
- Roger Doriron, Kitchen Gardeners International
- Russell Libby, Formerly of Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
- Sarah Smith, Grassland Farm
- Virginia Manuel, USDA
Participation Requirements

Each year we select approximately **20 individuals** to participate. The selection process concentrates on individuals who can demonstrate the willingness and capacity for long-term leadership. We strive to reflect diverse experiences and perspectives in the group and we seek balanced representation from nonprofit and private sectors. We are committed to not letting personal financial need be a barrier to participation.

Please join us if the following describes you (or at least some of you!):

- Committed to personal growth and leadership development,
- 23-45 years of age (exceptions considered) who make a substantial percentage of their income from occupations in Maine agriculture, fisheries, natural resources, and/or related areas, and
- Interested in supporting and growing the food movement in Maine now and into the future.

Participants are asked **to commit to**:

- Attending all day-long sessions (final schedule TBD – will be distributed to all accepted applicants before they confirm participation)
- Co-creating a vibrant learning experience that extends beyond and between the formal sessions.
- Practicing leadership by:
  - Creating an individual leadership plan that will serve as an action plan or actionable goal related to work in the food movement and that will be shared with the group;
  - Completing an individual and/or group project to help build leadership skills and core competencies.
  - Taking a leadership role in your community, in the group and in the food movement as applicable and able.

Enrollment

Candidates should complete the 2015 Sustainable Food System Leadership Institute Application, including the leadership self-assessment portion, by December **31st** via the link that can be found at www.NonprofitMaine.org/FoodSystemLeadership starting in early December.

If you have questions about the program please contact Deb Bicknell at deb.bicknell@gmail.com or Molly O’Connell at moconnell@nonprofitmaine.org.