

Planning and Designing Your Community Food Systems Project: Leadership Training for Community Food Projects

An educational mini-course at the 2007 Southern SAWG Annual Conference
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Presenter

Erika Allen, Project Manager
Growing Power, Inc.
Chicago, IL
773-335-1671 or 414-527-1546
growingpowerIL@aol.com
www.growingpower.org

Summary and Highlights

The purpose of this session was to educate attendees about a variety of community food system models developing in Chicago and the Mississippi Delta, and to encourage attendees to develop goals for their own projects. The presenter, **Erika Allen** recently helped found the Chicago Food Policy Council and serves as civic co-chair for The City of Chicago's Organic Initiative's Education, Training and Schools sub-committee. Allen stressed the importance of recognizing that community members can bring vital information to any community food system. Also, Allen stressed the importance of being a community food systems steward.

Growing Power, Inc. stresses cultural diversity, a connection to food, and preserving tradition. One of its purposes is to reconnect youth with the earth and food systems and to support community food centers. One of the programs includes an urban agricultural program in Chicago (Grant Park), which includes a partnership with the Chicago Park District. Allen says that growers can be the rock stars of the food world because they are helping to change an entire food system.

Other Growing Power partnerships include developing an urban farm at Kendall College, which is a working class culinary school. Also, the Cabrini Green Community Garden Partnership stresses community development as opposed to money making. The program requires community members to be engaged with the garden to receive food from it. Growing Power also does outreach training in Georgia and Mississippi and works with Native communities on growing practices. The Rainbow Farmers Cooperative is another program where consumers can support an alternative food system by buying local food on a weekly basis. There is no sliding scale and the cooperative accepts EBT. The major concern is trying to grow farmers and often demand exceeds supply.

Attendees were given a worksheet helping them to develop a comprehensive plan for their own programs, including long and short-term goals for their work. Questions on the worksheet included:

1. Who is benefiting from the project/program/resource?
2. Who is paying for the project, salaries, materials, resources?
3. What are the primary goals and benefits of the project?

4. How will the project be implemented?
5. What is the timeline for the project?
6. How do you plan to keep financial records?