



2012 SAFSF Forum Workshop Overview

Food and Tech: Data, Collaboration, and Digital Innovation

How do we, as food movement leaders, best utilize data and emerging technologies to support and promote our organizations and sustainable, equitable food systems? This workshop seeks to energize the growing convergence between the food and tech communities, as a panel of leading food, tech and health experts share the latest models for reporting, mapping and sharing information, with real world examples from policy experts, agrarian advocates, food and recipe sites, open government developers, and other innovators. Participants are invited to bring ideas to brainstorm with the panel, so we discover and refine ways to leverage the latest tools to support our work. Prepare to be inspired! We'll explore:

- 1. The funders' role in supporting collaborative practice in food systems change.*
- 2. Best ways to make information and data available: How can we address existing challenges which impede progress in the food, farm and health movements?*
- 3. How can we reach new constituencies and expand visibility across media?*
- 4. What are the challenges and opportunities in data collection and collaboration?*

Moderator

Destin Layne, program director, GRACE Communications Foundation, NY

Speakers

Danielle Gould, founder, Food + Tech Connect, NY

Tim West, co-founder, Grub.ly, CA

DISCUSSION

Key Points:

- Moderator
 - How do we measure, collect, store, organize and communicate data?
 - How do funders help their grantees access technology and data?
 - We should not only fund new ideas, but existing ones as well.
- Danielle
 - Technology has the ability to improve efficiencies and it is important for grantees to understand this.

- Problems: People are collecting data in different ways and there is not enough publically and easily available data
- We need to increase collaboration between groups: non-profits, funders, and start-ups
- How do we incentive people to share data and get past hurdles such as privacy concerns?
- Tim
 - Sustainable agriculture has three components: software, hardware, and community
 - Software lets consumers connect with farmers

Major Points of Agreement:

- We need to increase collaboration and sharing of data between groups
- Technology is an opportunity to connect consumers to farmers and increase consumer engagement

Attendees: why they came to this session and what they are working on:

- Ross – (VA) use local commerce and link local consumers with farmers
- Karen - how technology can improve operational efficiency across supply chain
- Missed her name - Use technology for grass fed beef education and ranch management
- Deborah (Maine) – they are creating a food plan with research and data components that map poverty, social indicators, and economic impacts
- Kristin (New England) - what are the current state of affairs in their regional food system, what data is available to help tell the story, what metrics can we get over time, and how do we get people to input data in the plan.
- Abby – community food fund (NYC) – mapping the area and thinking how to create visual tools to look at the information. In addition, she wants tools that help funders share and aggregate information.
- Carol Pickering – ME – She is interested in knowing how tech can help non- profits and community groups. Also wants to know how tools can help funders support grantees.
- Kevin Boyer – Wants to help grantees use the internet for their programs
- Morrison Foundation (DC) – They are mapping their food system so they want to know how to collect data and communicate the data to other type of funders
- Naomi R (San Diego) – They had the option to purchase a large land area, and want to use social media and technology to create excitement about the local food movement. She wants to use it to build community involvement and engagement.
- Barbara – How should they collect data and organize it?
- Yoni (Parker Street Foundation) – how to build movements?

Moderator's Introduction about the session

- How do you maintain data over time and make sure there is consistency and meaningful?
- It is the time for the food movement because big tech and venture capitalists want to engage
 - We need to organize and take advantage of this moment or we could miss our moment
 - How do we use innovation and technology to support our work?
- We are funders who are supporting the grassroots movement

- How do we fund the movement?
 - We need to be smart and leverage our resources
 - Support new ideas as well as existing tools
- We need to access info that may not be readily accessible to our movement
- We need to figure out how do we engage with communities and bring different communities together
- How do we map data? – Apps can help with this
 - Sustainable table – resource database

Danielle Gold – Food + Tech Connect

- Highlight innovations and how design can improve the community
- Things they do:
 - Interview people who are developing technology
 - Interview startups
 - Create special series like hacking the food system
- Hacking the food system: Invited people to discuss the topic
- Technology and food have always been in conflict, but this is changing. It is important to help grantees understand this shift– tech can improve efficiencies
- Farm Bill Hacathon
 - Develop visuals that help the public understand how the farm bill affects their lives
 - Brought people together to discuss the topic
- What is open food?
 - Worked with entrepreneurs
 - Wanted to create a standard for data because people are collecting data in different ways, which creates a problem
 - People are creating a list of the different varieties of foods
 - Tying to let people crowdsource instead of just creating a list
- Nutrient data: FOODUCATE (ap)
 - Description of product: scan a product and it gives a rating on the product. It will give suggestions for other products that are better

Question from audience:

Question: Why do people not include supply chain into the food apps? Generally there is only nutrition and ingredients data

- Danielle – She thinks this is a huge opportunity. Currently, there is not enough data in an easily available form for supply chains. In addition, the general public only cares about health, not supply chain.

Question: Do investors have the power to force people downstream to start looking at supply chain information?

- As investors they are asking these questions
- The problem is that the data is not publically available
- One of Danielle’s goals: how to bring different communities together and encourage collaboration between the groups?

- Apps are a great way for people to see data
- Wants to figure out how to create incentives to share data
- What data needs to be shared and what are the privacy concerns
- Real time farms
 - Maps farms in real time.
 - Consumers, farmers, and restaurants can take and upload pictures
 - Menu items can link to farmers' profile.
 - This tool increases community engagement by giving people more information
- Phisic Ventures
 - Interviewed William R. about his investment goals
 - How do we create more integrated solutions with collaboration
- Interview with Animal welfare approved (certifier)
 - They want to expand their database but they are concerned about privacy.

Tim West

- Sustainable agriculture has three components: software, hardware and community
- He took part in the slow food movement
- He wanted to make the world a happier, and healthier place
- Grubly – a startup that turns people's homes in restaurants
- He started focusing on the community
- The hardware is a major piece of sustainable agriculture (farms, restaurants, etc).
- His experience with Facebook helped him understand that software is important to give people tools to connect with farmers
- How do we use money to fund technology that helps consumers?
- Many cities are doing hackathons – entrepreneurial event
- Sharobal – Share San Francisco
 - Trying to create a innovation center in San Francisco
- Burning Man wants to create a new area in food (global HQ in San Francisco)
- SF mayor – want to use food issues to address social justice issues

Question/Answer Period

- How do you measure what is going on, how to provide the information to others?
- Foundation boards are now more interested tech and want to know what they should do
 - Communication tools are important because they allow us to engage
 - How do we collaborate or leverage other groups to fund together technology together?
 - How can you use apps or information to tell a story?
- Danielle – what data do you need, and how do you get it?
 - Hard for startups to navigate what tools they should use, there are so many tools out there
 - She encourages people to connect with stakeholders
 - She thinks it is beneficial for non-profits to partner and invest with startups to get data
 - There are a lot of mapping tools

- Moderator - There is a list of apps and tools on the website for people
 - Problem: people are reinventing the wheel with apps
 - People need to partner and work with others because many time people's ideas already exist
- Tim - Institute for the future – food map
 - Good eggs – building a market place for food on-line, most professional startups, they will disrupt the industry
- Danielle's favorite tools and sites
 - Twitter and Facebook
 - She does not use the food websites because they do not solve her problems. They do not connect the different aspects and problems that are out there.
 - Sustainable table
- Moderator
 - People are resistant to releasing data
 - As things become open source, how do we prevent people from monetizing on someone else's data
 - Every funder needs to make sure proper analysis and research is done. Otherwise, people are competing on the same thing and there is limited funds
 - Groups need to work together
 - There needs to be one data source for the food movement instead of people building many different places
- Question: how use tech for low income groups? (Danielle response)
 - Myafoodoasis – fantasy invested in them (new group)
 - Distribution platform for low income communities.
 - People can text message the group and they will drop off food where you are
 - Farmers web – wholesalers distribution platform
 - It is difficult for farmers to use computer systems
 - They are aggregating small farms
 - Text messaging is the most important in the future
 - Moderator – mobile is the future, mobile text, mobile website,
 - Equality and justice will be important
 - Animal harvest.org – created a mapping system that maps the food pantries on the website. Farmers can access and donate to the food pantry.
 - Consumer union – look at data and educate consumers about eco-labels
 - Need to have a conversation on labeling
 - They is a huge opportunity for clear messaging
 - Agsquare, farmeco (how farmers should load their trucks for efficiency)
- Question: how do you put tools into the hands of activists and people so they can update what is going on the ground? People getting sick, Spraying pesticide?
 - Sharable.net – youth and recession. (Tim)
 - Site talks about what people are doing around the world
 - It is trying to get people to tell their stories
 - Big ag is scared of the viral videos and campaigns (Danielle)
 - Mommy bloggers are powerful in raising issues

- Questions: Why does something go viral?
 - Twitter, and facebook helps things go viral
 - Twitter can be an organizing tool
 - Text messages could map onto twitter
 - Tim – corporations are using media to go viral (Chipotle sustainable agriculture video)
 - Moderator – problem with Chipotle is that the youtube video did not go far enough. There was no action plan, or next steps.
- Problem: people are not accessing the information.
 - How do NGO leaders, public health officials, local communities, or illegal immigrants find out about the movement?
 - The information is clustered in the cities
 - How do you connect the information to the smaller communities?
 - How to you get illegal immigrants to access the information without be scared?
 - Engage communities through anonymous surveys because people feel more comfortable.
 - Then reach out to community leaders. Train them and use them to reach the community. We need to provide them with access to the information.
- Danielle – journalists can be a conduit for resources
 - Journalists interview people who know where the resources are
 - Kickstarter is another way to get ideas into the mainstream
 - Bloggers can really spread news and get general conscience
- Tim – the root of the problem is education
 - Need to start with kids and teach them at schools
 - It needs to be fun. If we make food fun, then it will snowball.
 - Moderator – Food can bring people from different groups together
- Technology – popbox – system to tack legislation (audience comment)
 - This may help people be more engaged with local justice industries.
- Collaboration is important