

The County of Yuba

Community Development and Services Agency



TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Community Development and Services Agency
Business Engagement Manager, Rachel Downs

SUBJECT: (15 Minute Estimate) Receive Update on Foothill Community Supported Food System Needs Assessment Project.

DATE: September 12, 2023

NUMBER: 467/2023

Background / Discussion:

In the spring of 2022, Yuba County Foothill farmers and partner agencies including Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter and the Chamber of Commerce, invited the County to consider investing in a localized foothill food system, and assess the viability of a Yuba County based Food Hub.

Staff worked closely with community stakeholders, businesses, and farmers to more deeply understand this ask. It was determined that before investments are made into a physical facility, a better understanding was needed of the following:

- **Farmers:** Who and where are the existing farmers? Do they have the capacity or desire to expand?
- **Food:** What and how much is being grown? How is it currently being distributed, and are their institutional purchasers (like schools, hospitals, restaurants) that want to use local produce?
- **Facility:** What types of infrastructure are needed? From meat processing, to food warehousing, and vegetable washing or chopping; which type of facility would serve the most need and where could that be located?
- **Education:** Are there educational opportunities that would support the growth and stability of farmers? Do educational organizations have the ability or capacity to put local food on cafeteria menus? Do farmers and ag-tourism businesses need or want education on how to run a successful business?

Thus, at the direction of the Board, staff designed framework around these four categories, and released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to perform a needs assessment. Plan B Works was selected as the most qualified, responsible and responsive consultant for the project.

Over the next year the consultant team lead a robust community engagement effort; surveys were collected from farmers, ranchers, and institutional buyers, and community meetings held to discuss existing production and consumption channels. Such efforts identified opportunities for growth, and highlighted potential challenges to improving a localized food system.

The attached report provides an extensive list of recommendations associated with each key project area (Food, Farmer, Facility and Education).

The intent of the study was to create a launching pad for community stakeholders to identify existing needs to create a stronger localized food system and support small farming businesses, thus creating better economic opportunities for the foothill community. This intent has been met as two different grant applications for implementation projects, led by partner agencies and community stakeholders, have since been submitted. First, to the USDA for a pilot community food hub in Oregon House and secondly to CA Department of Food and Agriculture through the Farm to School Program, to increase the volume of local produce included in school cafeterias.

Discussion:

As the established project has concluded, and the above summary provided, staff will accept questions or additional direction from the Board on possible next steps to further the economic prosperity, food security, and improved agriculture supply chains throughout Yuba County.

Fiscal Impact: *No funding involved on Agenda Item - no funding commitment.*

Budget:

General Fund - None
Non-General Fund- None

Attachments:

Yuba County Foothill Community Supported Food System, Needs Assessment