

Project Title: Development and Maintenance of a Website for the Food Systems Coalition of Greater Gainesville

Project Lead:



Funds Requested:

- Tangency Foundation - Web domain and hosting; reviewer compensation: \$880
- Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville - Personnel stipends: \$1,960

Project Summary:

The Food Systems Coalition of Greater Gainesville (FSC) is a grassroots networking organization seeking to improve the accessibility, justice, and sustainability of our local food system by facilitating collaboration and information-sharing among diverse stakeholders. We strive to build the capacity of our community to address complex issues of food access and food sovereignty that impact us all. To be successful in our mission and develop solutions contextualized for our community, the FSC acknowledges the need to arm ourselves with as much information as possible about the needs, assets, and barriers in our local food system, as well as lessons learned from previous efforts. Through this proposed project, we seek to expand the reach and transparency of the FSC by developing a publicly accessible website where informational resources relevant to the food systems of North Central Florida can be stored and shared amongst our community.

The proposed project seeks support from two organizations – the Tangency Foundation and the Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville. The Implementation Plan section of this proposal details how the funds requested from the two agencies will be used to perform specific activities within the project. The purpose of applying for support from two organizations is to keep the funds requested from each entity at a minimum while also appropriately aligning the funded activities with each organization's mission. When taken together, the individual contribution made by each organization has the ability to leverage a greater overall impact for the project, thereby enhancing the beneficial outcomes for the FSC and other community members seeking to improve the local food system. In addition, this project lays the groundwork for forming future funding relationships to improve and maintain the site.

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Organizational Background

The Food Systems Coalition of Greater Gainesville (FSC) is a networking group of nonprofit leaders, civil servants, academics, food producers, volunteers, activists, and other community members working on food-related issues in and around Alachua County, FL. Its mission is to improve the accessibility, justice, and sustainability of our local food system. The FSC is a grassroots organization and is neither an extension of an existing institution nor an independent legal entity. Since its first meeting in June 2019, the FSC has facilitated idea- and resource-sharing among its members. Notable examples of work that have emerged from these collaborations include 1) a drafted urban agriculture ordinance that is now on the schedule for consideration by the Gainesville City Commission, and 2) the attainment of a USDA planning grant by a member organization to implement a project to improve food sovereignty in a high-need area of Gainesville.

Need Statement

Members of the FSC are currently working to compile and organize place-based research specific to North Central Florida for inclusion in a user-friendly and publicly accessible searchable library targeted for food systems actors. The goal of these efforts is to enhance the capacity of food system stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions in serving the community. This project originated from discussions within the FSC's food accessibility working group, which was brainstorming possible projects and initiatives to pursue as a group. We arrived at an acknowledgement that there was much we did not know about 1) the current status of the issues we were discussing, such as the relative utilization rates of food distribution sites in the city; and 2) whether there was existing information on these topics. Group members expressed a desire to avoid burdening community members with providing this information

unless it was clear that existing information was insufficient to answer the group's most important questions regarding community food access needs.

In addition to this expressed need for a centralized repository of food systems-focused research, the FSC needs a way to publicly host the information we find as well as information about proceedings within the FSC itself. Because the FSC does not have an operating budget as a grassroots organization, we have since our inception relied upon Google Drive as a means of sharing digital files, including meeting notes and publishable data. While this has been sufficient for internal communications among regularly active members, we seek to expand the potential reach of our dissemination efforts and improve our transparency to the community. This is especially crucial because synchronous meetings are not always accessible to key community stakeholders such as farmers and food service workers who often cannot spare the time to join an in-person or Zoom meeting. The expected benefits of an independently hosted website include 1) sharing information regarding the proceedings of synchronous meetings and updates on members' projects and collaboration needs, 2) providing a platform whereby community members can submit comments or feedback regarding the information we share, and 3) serving as the foundation upon which we can build out the searchable database of North Central Florida food systems research.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of this project are as follows:

1. Expand the accessibility of information resources shared by FSC members.
2. Increase the transparency of FSC proceedings for the community.
3. Develop a centralized repository of place-based food systems research for public use.

We seek to achieve the above goals by pursuing the following specific objectives:

1. Purchase a domain name and web hosting for a publicly accessible FSC website.
2. Develop a WordPress site with blog post functionality to archive FSC notes and updates.
3. Build a section of the FSC website that serves as a library of materials with information on North Central Florida food systems. This library, or research clearinghouse, will serve as a space to share notes, white papers, community impact reports and bibliographic information for research articles, as well as invite submissions of additional materials by community partners.

Implementation Plan

This project seeks support from two organizations—the Tangency Foundation and the Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville—in order to keep the funds requested from both entities minimal, as well as align with each organization's mission. The sections below describe how the funds from each organization will support the specific activities and resources needed for this project.

Tangency Foundation

Funds requested from the Tangency Foundation total \$880. These funds will support acquiring a domain name and web hosting for the FSC website for three years. The Project Lead will purchase a domain name such as fscgnv.com, gainesvillefsc.com, foodsystemscoalition.com, or

gnvfoodsystemscoalition.com from registrars such as Domain.com, Namecheap, or GoDaddy. The registration will be renewed yearly for three years. The project lead will also purchase web hosting from a service such as Bluehost, HostGator, or DreamHost. We will make final service selections based on the following criteria: 1) cost for the initial year of registration/service; 2) cost for subsequent years; and 3) ease of use so that any transfers of the webmaster role will require a minimal learning curve. We have also budgeted a fund to purchase cost-based installations and/or subscriptions to advanced WordPress plugins and services that provide important functionality. While many such tools are either free or have free versions, there will likely be a need for more advanced versions of certain services, such as those that scan for security threats and screen user comments for spam.

Tangency Foundation funds will also be used to provide compensation in the form of \$50 Visa gift cards for community members who agree to provide a critical review of the draft website design, content, and usability. The Project Lead will send out a digital flyer to the FSC listserv, requesting that members forward the flyer to one person outside the FSC who might be interested in reviewing the site. The flyer will advertise the \$50 gift cards for the first six people to sign up by contacting the Project Lead. Interested FSC members will also be allowed to serve as reviewers if interested, and they may refuse the gift card if they choose to or if their professional position prevents them from receiving outside compensation. Reviewers who sign up will receive the brief online questionnaire provided in the **Appendix** to structure their review. The project team will use reviewers' feedback to make modifications to the built-out website for improved user experience and utility.

Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville

Funds requested from the Partnership for Reimagining Gainesville total \$1,960. These funds will cover the personnel hours required for web development as well as the data/content population of the research clearinghouse subpage of the website. The timelines below list the anticipated tasks and estimated hours. A portion of the funds (\$400) will cover the personnel hours required to design and build the FSC website. These activities will include such tasks as importing and formatting website content as well as researching which WordPress plugins are most appropriate to improve and secure the website.

However, the majority of these funds will be dedicated to the personnel hours required to solicit, vet, translate, categorize, and store relevant materials that contain data (qualitative and quantitative) on topics related to the local food system in North Central Florida. An estimated timeframe of 26 weeks (6 months) at 3 hours per week is allotted for team members to engage in this data/content culling process. Tasks included in this set of hours are as follows:

1. Systematically search academic and nonacademic web sources for relevant food systems data and research conducted in North Central Florida;
2. Solicit submissions and contributions of data and research which are not publicly accessible and which are currently under the stewardship of food systems actors;
3. Develop and implement a quality control review process to ensure the relevance and validity of the data in the collected research;
4. Translate the information contained in the materials into more readable language that removes jargon and makes it accessible to the public;

5. Develop a hierarchical categorization system to organize research resources in consultation with the FSC, so that users find searching the database intuitive; and
6. Store and tag individual research materials on the website according to the developed categorization system to facilitate easy access by site visitors.

Budget

Item	Budget
3-year domain name registration	\$50
3 years of web hosting	\$300
Fund for cost-based WordPress plugins for advanced functionality & security	\$200
\$50 Visa gift cards for 6 community reviewers (includes activation fees)	\$330
Total funding requested from Tangency Foundation	\$880
Stipends for web development team, covering 20 hours at \$20/hr	\$400
Stipends for data/content population team, covering 78 hours at \$20/hr	\$1,560
Total funding requested from PRG	\$1,960
Project total	\$2,840

Timeline

Task – Website development	Est. Hours	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Choose domain registrar	1				
Choose web host	1				
Install WordPress on web host	1				
Choose & install theme	1				
Customize theme	2				
Choose & install plugins	3				
Create home page	1				
Create about page	1				
Create news page and initial posts	2				
Create database project landing page	2				
Create contact page	1				
Solicit reviews and populate survey	1				
Edit site based on feedback	3				
Total:	20				

Task – Data/content population	Est. Hours	Timeframe
Soliciting, vetting, and culling data	26	1 hour per week for 6 months
Information translation & annotated bibliographies	26	1 hour per week for 6 months
Categorizing & storing resources in website clearinghouse	26	1 hour per week for 6 months
Total:	78	

Project Lead

Miranda Carver Martin, M.A. Anthropology, is an active member of the FSC and currently leads the project developing a searchable database of North Central Florida food systems research. She has experience managing WordPress websites as the current volunteer webmaster for a local nonprofit organization. She also had prior work experience interacting with the backend of WordPress sites as a Research Analyst at a social science research organization and as a content contributor to FoodTank.com. In addition to technical knowledge of WordPress site development and maintenance, she has experience managing large and small projects, most notably a \$2 million multi-institution grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Evaluation and Sustainability Plan

We will evaluate the degree to which we have expanded the accessibility of FSC-produced informational resources by using Google Analytics to monitor web traffic to the site and user engagement with its pages and features. We will also assess the content of user comments to understand how the public responds to this information. To assess the effectiveness of the research repository, a long-term goal of our project team is to hold one-on-one conversations with target database users to solicit feedback regarding the organization of the site and the information presented.

The funds for this project will support FSC members in expanding our web presence and service to the community even beyond the proposed end of the activities described here. Having funds to cover three years of domain registration and web hosting will provide ample time to optimize the site's usability and appeal, which will position us well to pitch the long-term operation of the site to potential partners who could provide the necessary resources for an operating budget. Moreover, funding for personnel hours will support us in developing specific processes for finding, assessing, and adding new resources to the database. With procedures for maintaining and updating the database already determined, it will be more feasible not only to onboard new team leadership and membership in the future but also to apply for further institutional support for these activities.

Appendix: Community Reviewer Online Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to review the new website for the Food Systems Coalition of Greater Gainesville. Your feedback will help us improve the site so that it is both easy to use and visually appealing. We have some specific questions we'd like to hear your thoughts on, and then there is a spot at the end of this questionnaire for you to add any additional ideas or comments.

1. Please let us know how you would rate the following aspects of the site:

	Needs no changes	Needs few changes	Needs work	Needs a lot of work
The organization of information				
The visual appearance				
The ease/difficulty of navigating				
The readability of the text				
The use of images				
The 'Home' page				
The 'About' page				
The 'Recent Posts' page				
The 'NCFL Research' page				
The 'Contact' page				

2. If you rated any of the items above as "needs work" or "needs a lot of work," what specific improvements do you recommend?

3. Did you learn anything new by exploring this website? Yes No

If yes: What did you learn?

If no: What would you like to have learned?

4. What was the *most* effective feature of the website?

5. What was the *least* effective feature of the website?

6. Do you expect that you and others you know or work with will want to visit this website in the future? Why or why not?

7. What, if any, additional ideas, suggestions, or comments do you have for the web development team?