

Foragable Community Project Template

You can use this template to guide the startup, development and launch of your foragable community project. Follow the steps listed in *Quick Start Your Foragable Community* to assemble a project team and use the Project Template to guide the development of your plan.

Remember that you can find additional resources to aid your planning and project development at the Foragable Community Website.

This template was developed in 2016 by Cultivating Resilience, LLC in collaboration with the Foragable Morganton project team.



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Quick Start Your Foragable Community

Step 1: Assemble a project team. Reach out to food businesses and others in your community with an interest in local foods, foraging, farming and gardening to assemble a small project team. This team should include representatives of at least two local food businesses actively sourcing product ingredients from within the region who are willing to take on leadership of the project. Recruit other project team member who can contribute the knowledge and skills needed to create a local curriculum, develop a teaching plan, coordinate event planning, and lead educational events. Members of the project team should include people with the time, skills, and experience to: a) facilitate project team efforts and keep the project moving forward; 2) develop a curriculum and teaching materials; 3) coordinate and staff foragable community events; 4) develop financial and community support for the project; and 5) lead publicity and community outreach efforts.

Step 2: Develop a project picture. Convene an initial meeting of the project team to discuss vision, mission and goals for your Foragable Community. Task a project team member to take notes that capture the major points of the discussion. You can use the vision, mission and goals listed below as a starting point for your discussion and tailor them to fit your community. Be sure to allow each project member to share their thoughts about the mission and goals of the project and how they hope the project will contribute to the well-being of their families, businesses, organizations and the community as a whole. Once you have a discussed vision, mission and goals, discuss some educational activities - perhaps a lecture, a workshop, a tasting or some other kind of events lead by project team member. Task at least two members of the project team to develop a draft project plan that includes a draft vision, mission, and goals, some educational activities and events, and a timeline for the project.

Step 3: Develop a project plan. Convene a meeting of the project team to discuss and finalize the plan and assess resources needed to complete the plan. Task project team members with specific responsibilities to implement the plan.

Step 4: Develop a curriculum. Task a member of the project team to create a foragable community curriculum by developing learning outcomes and background information that supports the vision, mission and goals of the project. You can use the project template to guide curriculum development. This step may be time intensive, depending on how easy it is for you to find foodways resources for your region, and requires some specific research, writing and curriculum development skills. Foragable Communities can provide some support for this step, ranging from limited coaching on specific challenges to developing the curriculum for your project team.

Step 5: Develop an educational plan. Convene a meeting of the project team to discuss and finalize the curriculum and discuss how to achieve the learning outcomes. Plan a series of educational events that incorporate the learning outcomes. These events can take many forms, depending on the desired learning outcomes: lectures, tours, discussion groups, tastings, cooking classes, workshops, or work parties. Task project team members with specific responsibilities to implement the plan. This step requires some specific teaching skills such as curriculum-based lesson development oriented to learning outcomes, developing teaching materials, and leading the educational activity. At this point, the project team may want to recruit experienced adult educators to contribute to developing and delivering the educational plan. Foragable Communities can provide some support for this step, ranging from limited coaching on specific

challenges to developing educational materials for your project team and identifying local individuals who can effectively lead educational events.

Step 6: Celebrate successes, examine challenges and plan for future. Convene a meeting of the project team and other interested community members to reflect on the challenges and celebrate the successes of your foragable community launch and discuss lessons learned. If there is interest in continuing the foragable community, make a plan for additional work going forward that includes developing a continuing project team and inviting new partners into the foragable community. Include in this plan the opportunity for annual review and revision of vision, mission, and goals, learning outcomes and events plans.

The Project Template begins on the following page.

Foragable Community Project Template

You can use this template to guide the development of a foragable community in your region by using the vision, mission, goals and learning outcomes as a starting point for project team discussion. You can also use this template to guide the research needed to develop background information to support the learning outcomes. You will notice the background information on Learning Outcomes 2 and 3 is included in this template because those learning outcomes are not place-based. Remember that you can also review Foragable Morganton's plan and educational materials on the Foragable Community website as an additional example of an initial project plan.

Vision, Mission and Goals

Vision: Community residents enjoy a high quality of life in a region that cultivates biological and cultural diversity, is self-reliant and holds a wealth of community assets. Our region and our city are recognized as a model of community sustainability and resilience.

Mission: Foragable (your city or region name) is a project of local businesses working together to increase the public's active participation in (your region) foodways in order to enhance the sustainability and resilience of the (your region).

Goals:

1. Raise public awareness of the community resilience benefits of diversity, self-reliance, and a balanced portfolio of assets.
2. Raise public awareness and appreciation for (your) region foodways as an expression of the ecology and natural history of the (your) region.
3. Facilitate business-led collaborations between businesses, organizations, government, and individuals to promote the knowledge and use of local and regionally-sourced wild and cultivated foods.
4. Increase the number of businesses, organizations and individuals who cultivate, gather, prepare, preserve and consume local and regionally-sourced foods.
5. Increase the amount of land in the (your) region that is used for the sustainable foraging and cultivation of food.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the Foragable (your city) training, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the vision, mission and goals of the Foragable (your city) project and describe how each project partner is working to meet those goals.
2. Explain the concept of foraging as used by Foragable Communities.
3. Define resilience and describe how community well-being is sustained over time by diversity, self-reliance, and the accumulation of a balanced portfolio of assets.
4. Describe the ecosystem type within which (your city) is located and some of the plants and animals characteristic of this ecosystem.
5. Explain the major cultural influences on the foodways of (your city) since humans first arrived in the region that would become Burke County.
6. Describe the natural history, traditional and modern uses, and the sustainable production/foraging of the following plants: (your list of plants).
7. Locate credible information about the natural history, traditional and modern uses, and sustainable production/foraging of cultivated and wild foods used by people over the time that humans have inhabited (your) region.

Background Information Organized by Learning Outcome

Learning Outcome 1: Explain the Vision, Mission and Goals of Foragable (your city).

Learning Outcome 2: Explain the concept of foraging as used by Foragable Community.

The Oxford dictionary defines foraging as a verb that means “to search widely for food or provisions.” Popular use of the word today generally adds an additional distinction – foraging means to search for edible plants and animals inhabiting wild, uncultivated landscapes. This narrow definition of foraging stems from the common misconception that early humans survived by only hunting and gathering wild foods. Like most other animals, this line of reasoning goes, humans were a foraging species until agriculture was “invented” about five thousand years ago.

Recent anthropological and archeological research tells a different story. It turns out that early humans evolved variety of strategies for assuring a stable supply of food, medicine and useful materials. Hunting and gathering wild foods were important, but there is strong evidence that early humans also carefully managed the natural environments that they inhabited to enhance production of the foods that they favored by using practices such as plant selection, burning, weeding, tilling and mulching. As agriculture evolved – slowly and at different times – nearly all human cultures continued to depend on a mix of foraging and farming, with farmed foods eventually dominating the food supply of most cultures.

Foragable communities takes this broad view of foraging, which can take place in a diversity of environments ranging from unmanaged and managed wild lands, restored native ecosystems, food forests, to diversified farms and backyard gardens. The plants and animals the form the basis of a foragable food supply can be wild, naturalized, wild cultivated, introduced cultivated or any combination thereof.

The food species and the amount of human care involved are not important to the concept of foragable community. What is important is that foragable communities invest in and support the development of a regional landscape made up of healthy local wild and managed ecosystems at a range of scales that have the capacity to generate a wealthy and diversified portfolio of community assets.

Sources

Nature's Garden: A Guide to Identifying, Harvesting, and Preparing Edible Wild Plants, Samuel Thayer, Foragers Harvest Press, 2010

To Farm or Not to Farm, Ch. 10 in Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies, Jared Diamond, Norton and Company 1999.

Learning Outcome 3: Define resilience and describe how community well-being is sustained over time by diversity, self-reliance and a balanced portfolio of assets.

Everybody seems to be talking resilience these days — but what does it really mean? Can it be measured and managed? As weather-related disruptions become more frequent and intense, resilience has become a new goal of businesses, organizations and government. Resilience is generally understood as the ability to recover quickly or “bounce back” from a damaging disturbance or shock, but it actually refers to a broader group of community-based capabilities that support effective adaptation: the ability to respond, to recover, and to make changes in order to avoid or reduce damages from disturbances and shocks and take advantage of opportunities created by change. These three capabilities are called response capacity (ability to avoid damage), recovery capacity (the ability to recover swiftly or “bounce back”) and transformation capacity (the ability to capture new opportunities or “bounce forward”).

Resilience science has origins in a diverse set of disciplines: engineering, ecology, psychology, human health, business, and disaster management. Engineering concepts of resilience focus on the design of physical assets – technologies like pesticides and genetically-engineered crops, or built infrastructure like roads, buildings, greenhouses, and irrigation systems – so that they can tolerate a specific level of disturbance or stress. This type of resilience, called robustness, is particularly useful in situations when potential risks to the system are well-understood and can reliably predicted.

The resilience concepts developed in ecology, psychology, and disaster management are more relevant to understanding and managing community resilience, because these disciplines have developed methods to assess, monitor, and manage resilience as a dynamic quality of systems made up of a mix of living and built components, each with its own sensitivities that interact to create resilience that is characteristic of the whole system.

Managing for community resilience aims to promote three key system behaviors: *response capacity* (ability to respond quickly and effectively to buffer disturbances so to avoid or reduce damage); *recovery capacity* (ability to quickly restore the system after damage); *transformation capacity* (ability change when the capacity to respond or recover is exceeded or changes that enhance community well-being are desired). These system behaviors are supported by three key qualities: diversity, self-reliance, and a balanced portfolio of capital assets.

Diversity

Diversity—biological, social, and cultural—supports the capacity to adjust to changing conditions, disturbances, and shocks; to invent creative solutions to novel challenges; and to capitalize on new opportunities created by change. Two forms of diversity are particularly important to resilience: functional diversity and response diversity. Functional diversity describes the different kinds of services needed to maintain community well-being like food, water, energy, housing, transport and waste disposal. Most communities in developed nations have a high level of functional diversity – in other words, they have the capacity to provide a multitude of services to their community.

For some of these services, community members can choose between a number of different options that have different pros and cons depending on specific needs and existing conditions. For example, think about all the possible the transport options available to commuters in most mid-sized to large cities: walking, bicycle, private car, taxi or public transport by bus or train. Depending on existing conditions, which change over time, some of these options will support your commute better than others. Over short distances or during rush hour, walking or bicycling may be a good option, while at other times public transport may be your best bet. During a transport strike, private vehicle or a taxi may be your only option, but if fuel is unavailable because of a disruption in supply due to a pipeline failure or refinery shutdown, then you may need to fall back on the bicycle to get you where you need to go.

This ability to commute to your job no matter the conditions is an example of the response diversity of transport services. You can probably think of other important community needs – food, fuel, power, water, banking, education, medical, and waste disposal just to name a few – that differ in their response capacity. For example, many communities have very low functional and response diversity in their electrical power supply. Most have only one electrical power supplier who depends on a limited number of fuels (coal, oil, natural gas or uranium). Customers have few alternatives when the grid goes down, other than backup generator or battery power. High response diversity in critical services supports the capacity of a city to continue to function across a wide range of conditions.

Self Reliance

Self-reliance refers the ability of a community to provide for critical community needs – such as food, water, energy, housing, and waste disposal – largely through local or regional suppliers. Self-reliant communities can and do enjoy the benefits of products and services provided through national and international suppliers, but these supplies are not crucial to community well-being. Communities that are not dependent on national and international suppliers for critical needs are less likely to experience disturbance or damage from events that happen in far away places.

Managing your community to promote regional self-reliance tends to restore healthy natural resources, enhance human capacity, invest in social assets and increase regional financial flows.

In contrast, a community that depends upon a few, large-scale, highly-connected global suppliers for critical services is vulnerable to disturbances that occur both near and far. This is because in highly networked systems, disturbances can be swiftly transmitted through the whole system. Like toppling over a row of dominos, failure of one supplier in a tightly connected system quickly threatens all connected in the system. Large-scale, highly-connected systems are uniquely vulnerable to spectacular, system-wide failures that cause local damage throughout the network. Recent examples of these kind of failures include the East Coast blackout of 2003, the global financial meltdown of 2008, and the late blight pandemic in the Eastern United States in 2009.

A Balanced Portfolio of High Quality Assets

A balanced portfolio of high-quality capital assets—natural, human, social, financial, and physical—provides the diversity of resources communities need to respond and to quickly recover from disturbances and to put innovative ideas into action. Governing the community with a goal of accumulating diversified portfolio provides the resources for sustaining community well-being under variable and changing conditions.

A healthy natural resource base enhances the functional and response diversity under a wide range of environmental conditions and buffers disturbances or shocks coming from outside the system. High-quality human and social resources enhance the learning and creative problem-solving required for innovative responses to challenging conditions. Financial and physical resources provide access to the necessary funds, tools, equipment and technologies for effective response and recovery efforts and to put innovative solutions into action.

Holding an abundance of capital assets in reserve to enhance recovery from disturbance and shock is another feature of resilient communities. Recovery reserves can be natural (energy, water, food stores), human (experience/ease of managing change), social (community memory, disaster response skills, public assistance), financial (savings, access to financial resources) or physical (public shelters, communication technology, backup generators).

Resilience thinking offers a new community management strategy that is particularly useful in a changing conditions. It extends the principles of sustainability with the explicit recognition that all social and ecological systems exist in a state of continuous dynamic change. Applied to the design and management of communities, resilience thinking has the potential to enhance community resilience while furthering economic, social, and environmental sustainability goals.

Adapted from New Times, New Tools: Managing for Resilience, Chapter 9 in Resilient Agriculture: Cultivating Food Systems for a Changing Climate, Laura Lengnick, New Society Publishers 2015

Learning Outcome 4: Describe the ecosystem type within which (your city) is located and some of the plants and animals characteristic of this ecosystem.

Learning Outcome 5: Explain the major cultural influences on the foodways of (your city) since humans first arrived in the region that would become Burke County.

Learning Objective 6: Describe the natural history, traditional and modern uses, and the sustainable production/foraging of the following plants: (your plant list).

Learning Objective 7: Locate credible information about the natural history, traditional and modern uses, and sustainable production/foraging of cultivated and wild foods used by people over the time that humans have inhabited (your) region.

Gathering foodways resources can be difficult because of the large number of topics and the local scale of information needed to develop a rich picture of your region's foodways. You will want to learn about regional ecology, cultural history, culinary history, and the ecology, cultivation, harvest, processing, preparation and consumption of wild and domesticated plants and animals used as food and medicines in your region. It can be particularly hard to find credible information on the use of wild plants.

In addition, a lot of good information about local and regional foodways is not available in digital form, so you may have to do some searching in libraries to find it. A great web-based tool for searching library collections and requesting interlibrary loans is WorldCat, a search engine that connects you to more than 10,000 libraries worldwide. <https://www.worldcat.org/>

You can evaluate the resources that you find in your research by answering the list of questions below to determine the purpose, authority, and reliability of each source:

1. What is the purpose or motivation for the source? (e.g., educational, commercial, entertainment, or promotional.)
2. Based on your knowledge, is the information fact, opinion, or propaganda?
3. Who is the intended audience for the information, and how is this fact reflected in the organization and presentation of the material?
4. Is the author identified?
5. What is the author's background? (e.g., experience, credentials, and occupation, and has he or she published anything else on the topic?)
6. Does the author cite his or her sources?
7. How current is the publication?

You can also find examples of useful and credible sources by reviewing the resources used to develop the Foragable Morganton curriculum (listed at the end of each section and at the Resources page of the Foragable Community website).