

Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems Certifications Evaluation Report

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm, Food, and Enterprise Development

This report details the aggregated results from the Local Food Leader and Community Food Systems certifications hub workshops conducted in Fall of 2019 as part of the Food Systems team plan of work within the Farm, Food and Enterprise Development Unit with Iowa State University Extension. This includes quantitative and qualitative results from four states: Iowa, Nebraska, Massachusetts, and Oregon. These workshops were funded through an Agriculture Marketing Center grant and support from community partners for meals and meeting space.

Food Systems Team

The Food Systems Team offers many different programs assisting communities in their place-based food systems development. This includes Farm-to-School programming, one-on-one technical assistance, and the Community Food Systems Program which assists in the design and development of local and regional food systems through research, certifications, and a community process.

Certifications

Each certification requires an in-person workshop, after which, participants have the opportunity to become fully certified and complete online modules.

Local Food Leader

The Local Food Leader (LFL) is an individual skill development program for beginning local food practitioners and local food supporters. Local Food Leader teaches several foundation competencies critical to successful involvement in community food systems development. The goal of the certification is to increase capacity for local food practitioners working on food systems programs around the United States. This certification consists of a one-day workshop followed by four online modules.

Community Food Systems

The Community Food Systems (CFS) certification is intended for intermediate levels of food system practitioners. It is a process-based certification that increases capacity for food system practitioners to work within community and develop food systems. This certification involves visioning techniques, research and community food systems assessments, and strategic development of projects. Participants will gain new skill sets for decision-making, facilitation, and team-building techniques, and will learn to bring projects from visioning to implementation for reaching systems-based goals. This certification consists of a two-day workshop followed by 7 online modules.

Evaluation Methods

The following includes analysis of quantitative and qualitative results collected through anonymous surveys completed by participants after participating in the workshop (each consisting of end of day surveys, LFL participants completed one survey; CFS participants completed two surveys). Surveys included pre and post knowledge change questions, ranking on level of helpfulness and open-ended questions.

Quantitative: The quantitative results were collected by rank of one to five; from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These results are organized by an aggregated total of agree and strongly agree averages.

Qualitative: The qualitative results were collected through open-ended questions and analyzed using NVivo. The codes and results indicate the most discussed topics from the survey.

The following report shows the aggregated and individual state results for usefulness and knowledge change. There was a total of 176 participants across both workshops and all four states (99 in LFL, and 77 in CFS), with an 87% survey response rate in total.

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**COMMUNITY
FOOD SYSTEMS**
Planning, Consulting & Design

LOCAL FOOD LEADER

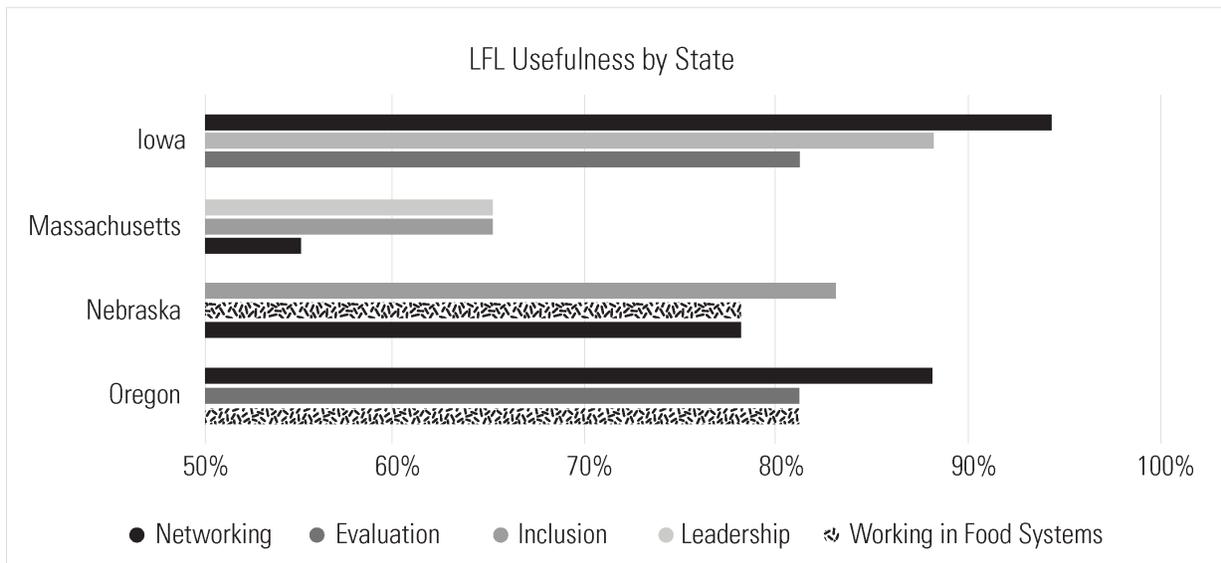
Usefulness

The Local Food Leader workshop consists of seven sections: Networking; Working in Food Systems; Inclusion; Leadership; Evaluation; Facilitation; and Professional Development.

What was the most useful section of the Local Food Leader Workshop?

Aggregated Results: **Networking** and **Inclusion** were ranked as the most useful sections with 77%; followed by **Evaluation** (73%), **Working in Food Systems** (67%), and **Leadership** (65%).

State Breakdowns: The following chart shows the top three usefulness sections for each individual state. ¹



While both **Networking** and **Inclusion** were rated 77% in the aggregated results, **Networking** was included in each of the four individual states' results, while **Inclusion** was only included in the top results for three of the four states (Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska). **Networking** from the Iowa workshop was the highest of all the other results, including the aggregated totals, with 94%. It could be inferred, then, that **Networking** was found more useful than **Inclusion**.

What was the most helpful piece of the LFL workshop?

Aggregated Results: **Activities** and **Discussions** were the two major components of the workshop that participants shared in the survey.

Common themes that emerged included: small-group discussions and activities; conversations around difficult topics, such as inclusion and equity; and interactive, hands-on activities as most helpful. Some participants articulated that the small-group discussions made them feel, "more comfortable." Others shared the most helpful piece of the LFL

¹ Massachusetts completed a condensed half-day workshop, with only content on Working in Food Systems, Inclusion, Leadership, and Networking.

workshop was, “The activities, which brought ideas alive,” “Specific exercises to generate conversation,” and, “Getting to know who is interested in this work through all the activities and discussions.”

Knowledge Change

The Local Food Leader workshop consists of 13 objectives:

- Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader
- Supporting partners in food systems development
- Having skills for coalition development
- Having confidence in their work with communities to develop food systems
- Understanding how to create and use a logic model
- Understanding what is involved in a community food system
- Developing skills for facilitating conversations around topics of food systems
- Creating a professional development plan
- Understanding how to create and use a plan of work
- Having tools to conduct evaluation for programs, projects, and systems change
- Understanding how personal values connect to work
- Being equipped with skills to facilitate conversations effectively
- Understanding the importance of inclusion and building trust

Participants were asked to identify existing knowledge of key objectives of the LFL workshop prior to participating in the workshop and after completing the workshop.

Aggregated Results: Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader was rated highest; followed by Supporting partners in food systems development; and Developing skills for coalition development. The following table shares the detailed percentages of the aggregated results:

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader	68%	13%	81%
Supporting partners in food systems development	42%	41%	83%
Developing skills for coalition development	36%	23%	59%

State Breakdowns: The following tables show the top three results of the percent of change from each individual state; as well as the pre and post workshop results.

Iowa

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader	56%	21%	77%
Understanding how to create and use a logic model	41%	21%	62%
Creating a professional development plan	33%	36%	69%

Massachusetts²

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader	70%	12%	82%
Understanding how personal values connect to work	37%	63%	100%
Developing skills for coalition development	33%	11%	44%

Nebraska

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader	63%	18%	81%
Having confidence in their work to develop food systems	59%	6%	65%
Understanding what is involved in a community food system	47%	24%	71%

Oregon

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader	81%	0%	81%
Developing skills for coalition development	40%	29%	69%
Understanding how to create and use a logic model	33%	36%	69%

While “supporting partners in food systems development” was found as the second highest change in knowledge in the qualitative aggregate results, this objective was not found in any of the individual state results. Similarly, partnerships did not result as a most-discussed category in the open-ended section, although coalition development can be seen as a partnership category. However, there are some note-worthy comments related to Partnerships from the qualitative data in reference to:

What is one thing you will change in your work due to today’s training?

- “Work on collaborating more with other local food system project and programs.”
- “Look more at the big picture and be creative and collaborative.”
- “I will reach out to local food leaders I was made aware of today.”

² Massachusetts was only able to complete six of the ten workshop objectives due to travel circumstances. These included: Understanding the process of becoming certified as a Local Food Leader, Understanding how personal goals connect to work, Developing skills for coalition development, Being confident in their work with communities to develop food systems, Supporting partners in food systems development, Understanding what is involved in a community food system, and Understanding the importance of inclusion and building trust.

- “Seek to see what our local partners may be needing and help with what we can provide.”
- “Connecting more often with other sector leaders.”

What is one thing you will change in your work due to today's training?

Aggregated Results: **Food Systems** and **Professional Development** were the two main topics discussed by participants after completing the workshop.

Common themes within those topics include: coalition or council development, policy, and food systems webs and diagrams, which included information on food systems sectors and assets. Incorporating workshop components regarding food systems development, coalitions, policy, and council were key areas participants shared. One participant stated, “I will be better prepared to initiate the conversation to develop a food policy council.” Another shared, “Recruiting, facilitating, and building our coalition (advisory group),” while a third expressed, “I will think more about policies in my county and integrate that [information] into my work I am doing.”

There were underlying aspects of leadership in many participants’ comments, expressing their intent to include colleagues, in addition to themselves, on professional development-related plans and goals. One participant stated, “I will have participants in my program and organization identify who we are and what role we play (as an organization and individuals) in the food system web.” Another participant shared, “Prioritize the importance of incorporating [the workshop] concepts into my current program” as a desired change in their work. “Relate evaluation, facilitation and leadership back to food systems,” was an additional plan of one participant.

Overall, **Food Systems**, **Networking** and **Professional Development** were the top three discussed topics from the survey. Many participants expressed that “networking,” “connecting with others,” “connecting with the community,” and, “learning about the other programs” were helpful components of the workshop. The survey also reflected participants enhancing their skills for coalition development; articulating coalition, council, and policy-related professional development components as a desired change in their personal work.

COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

Day 1

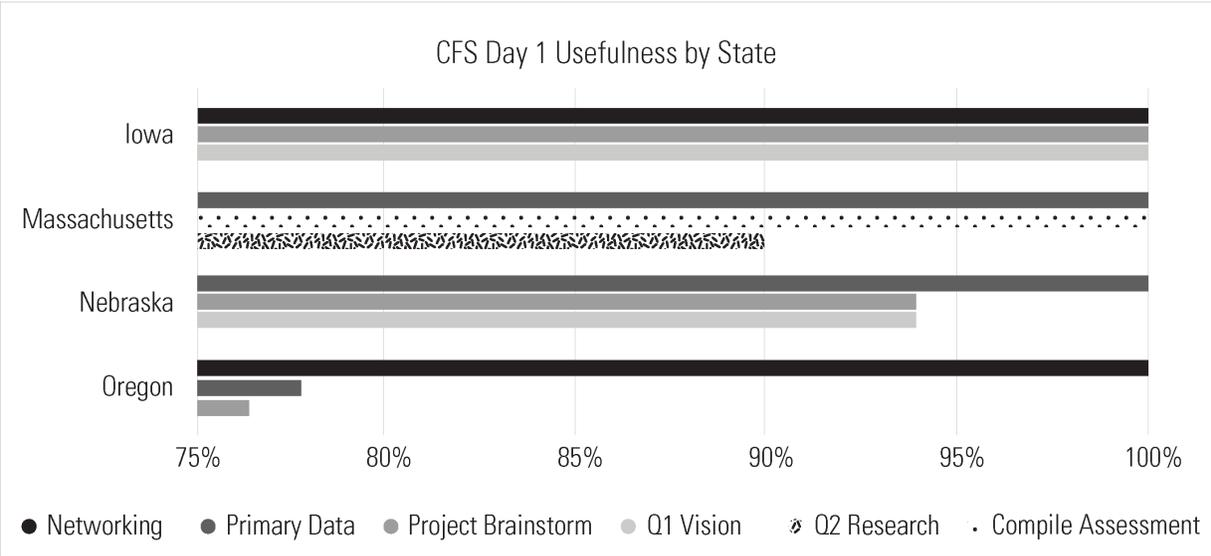
Usefulness

The day 1 Community Food Systems workshop consists of ten sections: Networking; CFS Framework; Q1 Vision; Individual Engagement; Q2 Research; Secondary Data; Q3 Input; Primary Data; Compile Assessment; and Project Brainstorm.

What was the most useful section of the day 1 Community Food Systems (CFS) workshop?

Aggregated Results: **Primary Data** was rated as the most useful section of the day 1 workshop with 91%; followed by **Networking** (88%), and **Project Brainstorm** (87%).³

State Breakdowns: The following chart shows the top three usefulness sections for each individual state.^{4 5}



It’s interesting to note that each of the six sections (Networking, Primary Data, Project Brainstorm, Q1 Vision, Q2 Research and Compile Assessment) were rated 100% at least once in each of the state results. These percentages are relatively high in comparison to the usefulness sections from the Local Food Leader workshop findings.

What was the most helpful piece of the day 1 CFS workshop?

Food Systems and **Networking** were the most discussed categories in this portion of the survey, followed by **Activities**; **Project Brainstorm**; and **Vision, Mission, and Core Values**.

³ All ten sections of the day 1 CFS workshop were rated equal to or greater than 75% agreement.

⁴ Nebraska: Compile Assessment, Secondary Data, Q3 Input, CFS Framework, Individual Engagement, and Q2 Research also resulted in 94% agreement.

⁵ Oregon: Compile Assessment also resulted in 75% agreement.

The major theme that emerged within the Food Systems category was an overarching understanding of the various components of a community food system; including common language, terms, timing, structure, and the various players involved. One participant wrote, “The framework helped me realize in more depth of all the players in community food systems.” Another shared, “[The] overall view of community food systems and how they can look,” most likely in reference to the food systems webs and diagrams presented in the workshop.

Another common theme apparent was connecting with others and listening to various perspectives. Many participants indicated they valued the opportunity to both share and listen to local projects. One person stated, “The most helpful piece was listening to the perspectives of community leaders through networking during the day.” Similarly, participants valued the time allotted for small-group discussion and activities, “Large group discussions [were the most helpful]; I appreciated different perspectives to help me see a bigger picture.”

Knowledge Change

The day 1 Community Food Systems workshop consists of 13 objectives:

- Having confidence in working with communities to develop food systems
- Understanding what is involved in a community food system
- Understanding ways of creating a menu of services
- Developing skills for facilitating conversations around topics of food systems
- Developing skills for coalition development
- Having confidence in strategic planning processes
- Understanding how to identify assets and opportunities in community
- Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values
- Understanding how to conduct a community food systems assessment
- Having tools for showcasing community research
- Having confidence in qualitative research practices
- Having tools to help communities prioritize their goals
- Understanding where to find data for community research

Participants were asked to identify existing knowledge of key objectives of the CFS workshop prior to participating in the workshop and after completing the workshop.

Aggregated Results: **Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values** was rated the highest; followed by, **Understanding how to identify assets and opportunities in community** and, **Having tools to help communities prioritize their goals**. The following table discusses the detailed percentages of the aggregated results:

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values	59%	23%	82%
Understanding how to identify assets and opportunities in community	53%	34%	87%
Having tools to help communities prioritize their goals	53%	20%	73%

State Breakdowns: The following tables show the top three results of the percent of change from each individual state; as well as the pre and post workshop results.

Iowa

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Having skills for facilitating conversations around topics of food systems	50%	25%	75%
Understanding how to conduct a community food systems assessment	39%	25%	64%
Having skills for coalition development	34%	33%	67%

Massachusetts

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values	65%	17%	79%
Understanding how to identify assets and opportunities in community	57%	29%	86%
Being confident in strategic planning processes	55%	14%	69%

Nebraska

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Having confidence in their work with communities to develop food systems	82%	6%	88%
Having skills for facilitating conversations around topics of food systems	82%	12%	94%
Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values	82%	12%	94%

Oregon

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding how to identify assets and opportunities in community	69%	23%	92%
Understanding how to conduct a community food systems assessment	69%	23%	92%
Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values	62%	23%	85%

What is one thing you will change in your work due to today's training?

Vision, Mission, and Core Values was the most discussed topic; followed by Activities, Coalitions, as well as Data and Research.

Analysis:

Other comments in this section included: I will...

- “[Incorporate] more collaborative strategic planning” in reference to Activities.
- “Spend more time outside of coalition meetings collecting qualitative data.”
- “[Create] a snapshot and assessment binder as a quicker look at data and landscape.”
- “Do more research on existing programs.”

Day 2

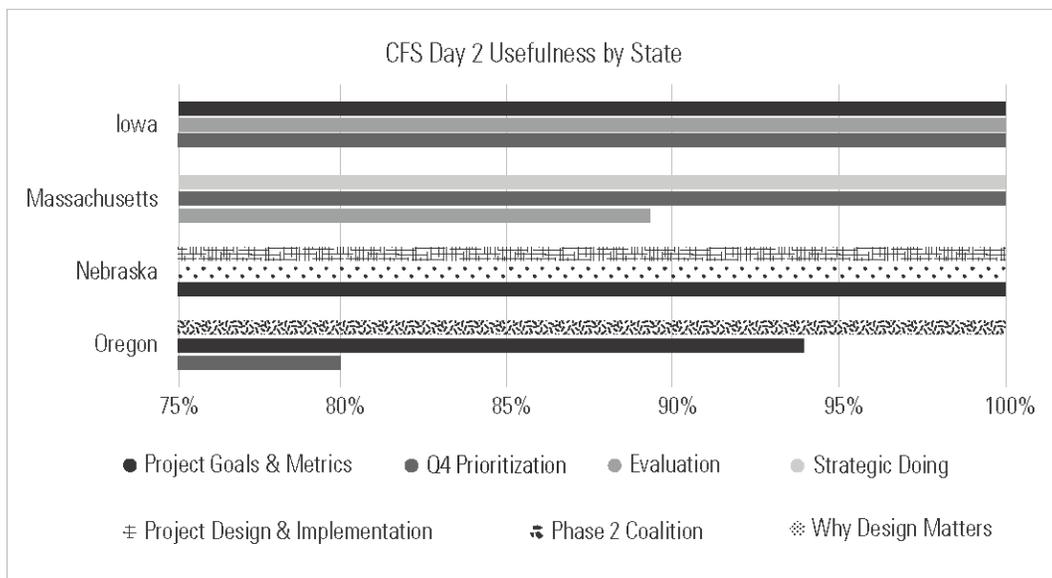
Usefulness

The day 2 Community Food Systems workshop consists of ten sections: Community Leadership; Strategic Doing; Quarter 4 Prioritization; Evaluation; Project Goals and Metrics; Why Design Matters; Project Design and Implementation; Phase 2 Coalition; and Transition.

What was the most useful section of the day 2 Community Food Systems workshop?

Aggregated Results: **Project Goals and Metrics** was rated as the most useful section of the day 2 portion of the workshop with 96%; followed by **Q4 Prioritization** (92%) and **Phase 2 Coalition** (88%).

State Breakdowns: The following chart shows the top three usefulness sections for each individual state.



Similar to the day 1 CFS usefulness results, the individual state results were relatively high and each of the above seven sections (Project Goals & Metrics, Q4 Prioritization, Evaluation, Strategic Doing, Project Design & Implementation, Phase 2 Coalition, and Why Design Matters) were rated 100% at least once in the state results.

What was the most helpful piece of the day 2 CFS workshop?

Projects and **Activities** were the most discussed topics as some of the most helpful pieces of the day 2 workshop.

Almost all of the comments related to Projects in this section of the survey were in reference to the Q4 Prioritization section of the day 2 CFS workshop. One participant shared, "Prioritization of projects tied everything together well;" another shared, "The magic of making the project come together." Other comments in this section related to the Project Design and Implementation section of the workshop, "Working through the project process and voting through the projects" was the most useful piece; while another participant expressed, "I loved learning about prioritization and design!" Each of these sections discussed were both found in the quantitative data (above) as some of the most useful sections of the day 2 workshop.

Knowledge Change

The day 2 Community Food System workshop consists of 15 objectives:

- Consideration of multiple individuals and organizations as leaders in the food system
- Understanding principle of strategic doing
- Understanding how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes
- Understanding the Phase 1 process for the Community Food Systems Program
- Understanding the difference between program, project, and systems evaluation
- Having confidence in creating an evaluation logic model
- Understanding how evaluation relates to projects in community food systems
- Being equipped to help create project team goals, objectives, and output statements
- Supporting project team development for food systems work
- Understanding how design relates to food systems development
- Ability to think creatively about project development
- Being comfortable giving and receiving critique on project development
- Understanding how individual or organizational projects can relate to overall coalition goals
- Understanding how project management transition can occur
- Understanding the full scope of the Community Food Systems Program

Participants were asked to identify existing knowledge of key objectives of the CFS workshop prior to participating in the workshop and after completing the workshop.

Aggregated Results: Understanding the full scope of the Community Food Systems Program had the highest increase of change in knowledge; followed by, Understanding the Phase 1 Process for the Community Food Systems Program, and Understanding how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes. The following table discusses the detailed percentages of the aggregated results:

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the full scope of the Community Food Systems Program	55%	32%	87%
Understanding the Phase 1 process for the Community Food Systems Program	54%	19%	73%
Understanding how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes	51%	36%	87%

State Breakdowns: The following tables show the top three results of the percent of change from each individual state; as well as the pre and post workshop results.

Iowa

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the full scope of the Community Food Systems Program	90%	0%	90%
Understanding of how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes	70%	0%	60%
Understanding the difference between program, project, and systems evaluation	70%	10%	80%

Massachusetts

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
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Understanding the Phase 1 process for the Community Food Systems Program	80%	0%	80%
Understanding the principles of strategic doing	78%	0%	78%
Being equipped to help create project team goals, objectives, and output statements	60%	30%	90%

Nebraska⁶

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding the principles of strategic doing	77%	8%	85%
Understanding how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes	77%	23%	100%
Understanding how design relates to food systems development	77%	23%	100%

Oregon

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Understanding how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes	87%	0%	87%
Understanding the Phase 1 process for the Community Food Systems Program	80%	0%	80%
Being equipped to help create project team goals, objectives, and output statements	80%	20%	100%

There was a relatively large amount of results with 0% for the pre workshop knowledge. Iowa, Massachusetts, and Oregon all had multiple objectives from the workshop that follow this pattern. There were two objectives that occurred multiple times in this manner: Understanding the Phase 1 process for the Community Food Systems Program and Understanding how to evaluate priority projects for collective community processes. It could be inferred that these objectives were rated low for the pre workshop section of the survey because they are so specific to the learning and skills that occur during the workshop.

What is one thing you will change in your work due to today's training?

Projects, followed by Evaluation, Coalitions, and Food Systems were the most discussed topics.

Many of the comments related to prioritization of projects. Participants shared their plans to use methodology learned in this workshop to better develop and select future projects and programming in their individual work. One participant wrote, "I have a whole new toolkit for project development, which is great;" while another shared, "Better process for prioritizing projects." Additional comments included:

- "Prioritization method."
- "Priorities—how to say 'no' when needed."
- "My process for creating and developing projects and programs."

Comments related to evaluation mainly discussed logic models as a change in work. One participant shared, "Revisit evaluation methods with coalition working groups;" and another stated, "Use quick wins, medium, and long [term goals] more intentionally." Comments related to coalitions included, "[Incorporate] more written templates and best practices on the steps for facilitating coalition meetings." Another participant shared they plan to, "Go to government subsidy

⁶ Nebraska: Understanding the full scope of the Community Food Systems Program also resulted in a 77% increase, with 8% pre workshop and 85% post workshop.

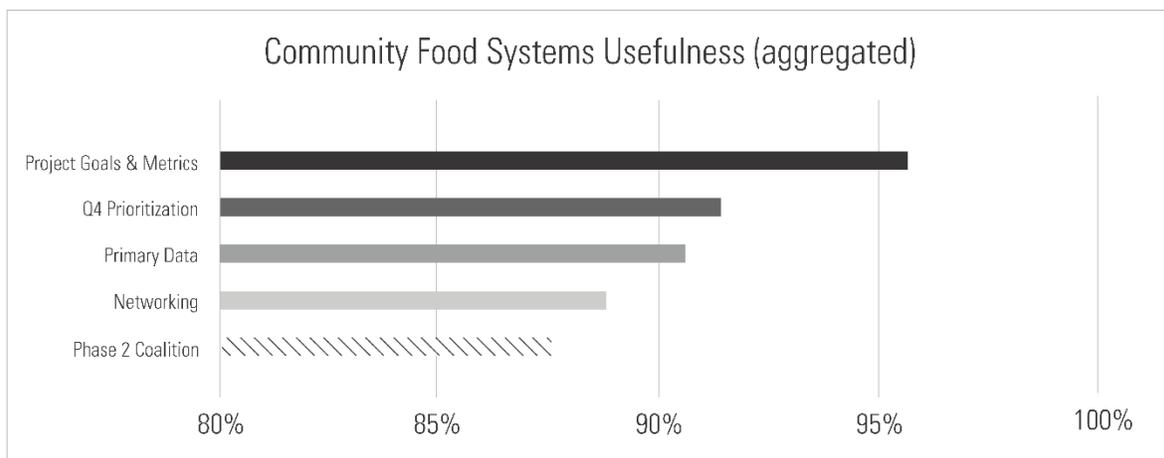
users instead of trying to invite [them] to meetings initially.” One participant shared in reference to Food Systems their plan to, “[Use] more design mapping in our planning processes for local food systems!”

Compiled Findings:

The following section details the compiled day 1 and day 2 aggregated results for the Community Food Systems workshops.

Usefulness

Aggregated Results: **Project Goals & Metrics** was rated the highest section of the entire Community Food Systems workshops with 96%; followed by **Q4 Prioritization** (92%), **Primary Data** (93%), **Networking** (88%) and **Phase 2 Coalition** (87%).



Knowledge Change

Aggregated Results: Having tools to support coalitions **develop vision, mission, and core values** was rated the highest for the entire Community Food Systems workshops. The following table discusses the detailed percentages of the top 5 aggregated results:

Objective	% of Change	Pre	Post
Having tools to support coalitions develop vision, mission, and core values	59%	23%	82%
Understanding the full scope of the Community Food Systems Program	55%	32%	8%
Understanding the Phase 1 process for the Community Food Systems Program	54%	19%	73%
Understanding how to identify assets and opportunities in community	53%	34%	87%
Having tools to help communities prioritize their goals	53%	20%	73%

CONCLUSION

Local Food Leader

Making connections was an overarching theme within the Local Food Leader workshop findings. Networking was the top result for usefulness—both in the aggregated results and the individual state results—and was apparent in the qualitative data from the survey. Participants shared that the usefulness included hearing of others' projects, roles, and perspectives throughout the workshop. One participant shared, "Being able to introduce [ourselves] and learn about others' work" was the most useful, while another stated the most helpful piece was, "learning more about other food organizations in the area." Another expressed they connected with others through the various activities throughout the workshop; "getting to know who is interested in this work through all the activities and discussions."

Other key highlights from the Local Food Leader survey include:

- "Facilitation [was the most helpful piece] being thoughtful and intentional about building groups and working in collaborative environments."
- "I look forward to applying pieces from leadership, inclusion, and professional development [in my work] immediately. Thinking about my strengths in this light was helpful in refocusing my strategy."
- "Start working with immigrant communities on local foods" as a change in work.
- Incorporating "more mindfulness about inclusion."
- "Understanding how personal values, privileges, and experiences influence how we interact with community members and work" as a change in my work.
- "This session was very helpful and informative of the food system model."
- "[I am] looking forward to the certification to dive deeper into these topics."

Community Food Systems

Project and program development was a reoccurring theme within the Community Food Systems workshop findings. This subject was discussed in both usefulness and knowledge change areas of the survey and was also evident in both the quantitative and qualitative data. Many participants shared they are now aware of new processes for prioritization in their work and stated changes will be made in "process for creating and developing projects and programs;" or, "I have a whole new toolkit for project development."

Visioning was also a theme discussed heavily and was one of the top knowledge change areas. Comments about this topic ranged from: "I will continue to dream about my lofty 'vision';" and, "[I will] revisit mission and vision every few years." Another participant wrote, "The mission, vision, and core values exercise should have [been] brainstormed sooner to create a better understanding." The latter examples are items that the Food Systems team will take into consideration for editing the curricular for the next phase.

Other key highlights from the Community Food Systems survey include:

- “Excellent resources [were shared], amazingly compiled and organized.”
- “I was really inspired by the people and by being here.”
- “The presenters were very knowledgeable, I appreciated their efforts.”
- “The amount of tools for visioning are really helpful. Laying out the structure for building these is very helpful.”
- “The visioning process is immediately applicable to my work.”
- “I really appreciated all of the [working] together and conversation. I also liked discussing the process for assessment and developing vision, mission, and values.”
- “The framework for the community process and the structure [were the most helpful pieces of the CFS workshop.”
- “Discussions about [the] purpose of the vision, mission, values.”
- “I most liked the group brainstorming session about opportunities and gaps in [my state]... This was the most tangible piece, and my brain connected with it the most!”

Next Steps

The evaluation and analysis of the hub workshops have been used to inform critical areas of change for the workshops which may include including more activities and opportunities to network and connect on place-based projects within workshops. Considerations have also gone to changes in workshop schedule, and opportunities to incorporate different technology, activities, and program topics based on the community in which workshops are being held. Iowa State will continue to offer hub certifications for national participants to become certified and trainers in either certification with place-based trainers that can effectively coordinate and develop their workshops appropriate for their community. In addition, new marketing and branding of the program will be rolled out in 2020 based on identifying factors shared from participants, such as identifying that these certifications are on “process development”, “unique individual skills”, and “collaboration opportunities”.

Future Workshops

The Food Systems Team will continue to host hub workshop for both Local Food Leader twice a year (fall and spring) and Community Food Systems in collaboration with LFL in the spring. Additionally, communities will continue to be able to provide the trainings for a fee-for-service and agreement with Iowa State Food Systems team or other trainers throughout the nation.

To support the continued development of trainers, there will be two Local Food Leader train-the-trainers and one Community Food Systems train-the-trainer each year. This will allow for trainers to then teach their own place-based curricula across the nation. Trainers will also join a cohort of their respective certification curricula to be able to share best practices and learn from each other in their methods for teaching, and their evaluation from participants in workshops.

