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Information Sheet 3

GOOD FOOD GROUP – WORKING TOGETHER SUCCESSFULLY

This information sheet discusses some of the underlying principles of working together and identifies some practical strategies for helping the Good Food Group work well together.

RESPECT

It is important to **respect all people and their experiences, and what they can bring to the group.** Making decisions together relies on everyone in the Good Food Group being respectful of each other so that **all members feel that their opinions are being listened to and that their voice can be heard.** Taking time to help people to get to know each other can help foster respect.

It can be challenging to work in an environment where different cultures come together and where more than one language is spoken. In order to help all members to really listen to all people and understand their input it might be useful for a group member to act as translator, or for the group to bring in someone who can perform this role.

STRENGTHS BASED APPROACH

It is motivating to hear about the positive things that are already in place within a community, and the things that have already been successfully achieved. **Positive stories encourage people to take more action and to continue working together.** Many times successes can be overlooked and quickly forgotten.

It is important that the group not only looks at things that aren't working well, but also focusses on success. **Celebrating the positives can give positive energy and a 'can-do' feeling.** Remember that **change comes in small steps,** and that each small step can make a difference. Take time to celebrate!

RESPONSIBILITY

It is important to note that the **Good Food Group itself is not responsible for undertaking all the actions** that are identified and prioritised by the group. **Many actions are already being undertaken by different organisations, groups and people in the community**. It is the role of the Good Food Group to **support the work** of these organisations and people.

Some members of the group may also be employed by these organisations and can therefore support the implementation of the relevant actions as part of their work. For example, in one community Good Food Group, the group were concerned about the increasing sales of confectionery. The store manager who was a member of the group elected to make the store counter confectionery free and placed the confectionery above eye level on the shelves. He successfully implemented this and reported back to the Good Food Group.

Another role of the Good Food Group is to **encourage and advocate for areas that could improve the food system**. One way to do this is to report recommendations from the Good Food Group to higher governance groups in the community.

DOCUMENTATION

To see successes and improvements in the food system over time, it is important to take meeting minutes. This may include information such as the people attending, actions agreed on, and who will be acting on each action agreed action and when.

In follow-up meetings it is important to consider these agreed actions and record the things that have and have not been done.

To continue monitoring, learning and improving, it is helpful to **use plain English** in all forms of documentation and **include photos.**

Presenting the information in an interesting story format can help people recall the information, assist people who do not have English as a first language, and help share information with others. Minutes and reports **should be returned to participants as soon as possible after the meeting**. To make sure everything is kept and everybody has access to the documents, it is good to **keep a central record of all material** like agendas, minutes, action plans and information collected. The Community Coordinator might keep the documents, or the group may agree for another member to manage this.
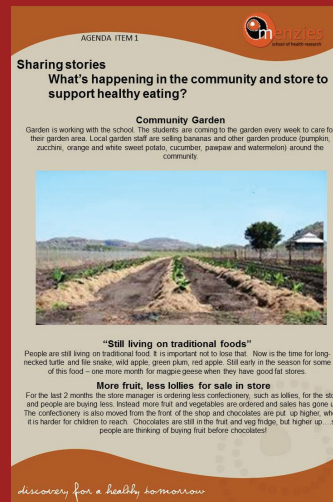
MEETINGS

It needs to be decided when, where and how often the Good Food Group would like to meet. Distributing invitations, publicly displaying the meeting date and time, preparing an agenda, and deciding who is going to facilitate and take notes is required before the meeting.

People living in communities often have competing demands. **Consider what else is going on** in the community (other meetings and cultural business), time of year, time of day and the potential impact of the weather.

Ideally the group should meet in **a place where everybody feels comfortable and safe** – a neutral place where people from all clans and organisations are able to go to. The experience of Good Food Groups has shown that it is preferable to meet in an open space so all community people can see what is going on, and people have the feeling that the meeting is open to everybody.

Each Good Food Group can decide on how often it will meet and what suits the community, **noting that groups that meet more regularly achieve more**. A group may choose to meet every three months, four months, every six months or once a year. A large group meeting once a year may be feasible, if actions are effectively reported to the relevant organisations/ governance bodies and progressed between meetings.

"The way of engaging participants is the really strong part; the way of working...... [The Good Food Group members] had taken on board the meeting discussions, understood the actions required of them and were focused."
Nutritionist (mid-term review, Good Food Systems Project)

More Information

This information sheet is the 3rd in a series titled 'Developing a Good Food System in your community'. It is based on the work of the Good Food Systems Project led by researchers from Menzies School of Health Research. Information sheets developed at this stage in this series include:

1. Good Food Systems Overview.
2. Good Food Group - Formation.
3. **Good Food Group - Working together successfully.**
4. PLAN-DO-COLLECT-LEARN cycle.
5. Tools.
6. The Project.

For more information about the project and the associated tools please click here or visit: http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Research/ Projects/Nutrition/Good_Food_Systems_ Project/