

During the second half of the conference session [Feeding America](#) presented at the 2019 meeting of the Association for Rural & Small Libraries, participants were invited to collectively brainstorm around three questions: 1) What's worked for you? 2) What concerns do you have about this topic? And 3) How can we work together? What will you try at your library?

This document contains a partial transcription, recorded in real-time, of that discussion.

## 1. What's worked for you?

1. Lunch at the Library – California – CHECK IT OUT! - <https://lunchatthelibrary.org/>
2. Farm to Library initiative – Check it out! - <https://gralib.sals.edu/fresh-food-collective/>
3. Vermont librarian said library received money from town to include kids in meal/snack program targeted at ages 0-6, but were able to offer food to others, including caregivers
4. One library has a food shelf at the library in the back – donations dropped off all the time – discreet for people to take from without stigma
5. Seed library -> town administrator got grant through realtor to set up garden
6. Vermont librarian said Master Gardens required to do outreach – library perfect place for that
7. Checking out garden tools -> reported to be very successful
8. Office of the aging partnering w/ meals on wheels – Library distributes books along with the meals
9. Small little free library of cookbooks at the food pantry working well
10. Charlie Cart – cleaned three times – They clean it / state library cleans – how do we ensure things involving food stay cleaned – you can't clean things enough!
11. Garden Club – teens encouraged to participate – church had under-used plots – told teens they could garden in the plot, and if they raised extra produce they could sell it – gave them a free table at the farmers market
12. Cooking without a kitchen – doing Master Preservers class “Yes you Can, Can” w/ a hot plate / instant pot class – participants watch but don't have their own hot plate/ instant pot to use
13. Partner w/ culinary arts instructor – she brings her assistant with her -> they make pasta at the library – person who went to school for cooking
14. Friends of the Library – can be extremely supportive and write grants to support
15. Heirloom seed companies – give you seeds, even “expired” ones that are still totally good
16. Non-profits can be great partners – buy books on gardening for the library
17. Preschools and Schools can be great partners – the library can help out with school gardening initiatives, particularly in summer months when school is not in session – find out what gardening groups are involved in your community and network with them – one librarian reported networking w/ garden teacher at the school for this successful partnership
18. Start a garden club at the library
19. Start a healthy cooking book club
20. American Legion – has been a great partner – the men's group built the raised beds/little free pantry and the women's auxiliary stocks it – all the library has to do is run some quality control
21. High School construction class – great partner for building things like gardens
22. At one community, the Church hosts WIC clinic next to the library -> librarians do programs there and now started a little free library with cookbooks
23. Rochester – Food Link – good partner in New York State
24. Accept food pantry items at the library
25. Neighbor Works – non-profits focused on affordable home ownership could be good partners

26. Start w/ seedlings – one library has seedlings available for people to take – has taken off over the years – people bring in extra seedlings to make available - > it's grown so much that now the library uses a shed to make space for all the seedlings that come and go through this community offering
27. One librarian mentioned that she has a 0.5 acre garden that she does it herself -> so she just always brings in extra produce from her own garden and whoever wants it can take it – make sharing food part of your institutional/community culture!

## Concerns?

1. Only children can get food through USDA program => Collaborate with food banks to bring produce and grains for parents
2. Put in raised bed around the library -> How can we engage community more continuously in a way that is more immersive and participatory -> one idea offered was to partner w/ orgs where students need to earn credit (national honor, scouts, home ec, 4-h) [e.g. high school Seniors & older adult Seniors partnering to raise a garden plot] [focus on educational dimensions of gardening to make it more intentional and with specific outcomes]
3. Is there going to be a stigma for ppl who have plots if it is targeted at low income – make it open to everybody to alleviate stigma – make food distribution discreet
4. Sharing seedlings/gardening supplies can cause spread of soil-borne diseases => Let's think more about it! => Check out cook ware – tell ppl to clean it when they bring it back AND tell ppl to clean it when they check it out
5. Liability and allergen for cooking -> Best practices are to let people know in advance what foods will be involved and to have alternatives for common allergens such as nuts and dairy

## How can we work together? What will you try at your library?

1. Support completion of food handler certificate – within reach of librarians – some in the audience reported that they had already gone through this process
2. School has young tweens -> school trying to keep them engaged w/ sports – contact the coaches – not getting well fed despite doing all these sports – athletics departments and coaches could be good partner
3. Get in contact w/ local rec department -> partner w/ the town – They may have trained staff and supportive people there – use your local ties!
4. patrons are also wonderful source of knowledge and resources – invite them to share their knowledge and expertise relating to food, gardening, food preparation, etc.
5. FFA – perfect Future Farmers of America – could be a great partner
6. Local community colleges – could be great partner – they can help w/ gardens as well – or just to speak about it – students so into it, and have to, or want to, do community service – community-oriented institution, so perfect partner
7. Friends of Kansas Libraries / State-wide Friends organizations – can be very supportive – in Kansas they have challenge grants that would be great for these types of initiatives