



Overview & Toolkit



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Introduction

The goals of the New Hampshire (NH) Food Solutions Forum were to learn how non-partisan, 501(C)(3) nonprofit organizations can leverage the civic profile of New Hampshire's presidential primary and to raise awareness around family farming, fishing, ranching, food worker, food system, and food access issues. Food impacts much of our lives, offers solutions to many crises, and bridges political divides, yet is mostly ignored in electoral discourse. Furthermore, most 501(C)(3) groups limit themselves in what they can do because of what appear to be complicated rules around their involvement in civic discourse and education during election cycles.

We believe that long after the NH Food Solutions Forum on November 5, 2019, the skills discussed in this Toolkit will lift the voices of the family food movement with an ongoing capacity to educate and inform the public, elected officials, at all levels of government, and the press and advance long-term policy changes that mirror our vision for a different future. A series of forums nationwide could multiply exponentially the chances that some or all candidates, as well as the public and government officials on all levels, implement revolutionary ideas to transform our food systems beyond any one election or election cycle.

We hope that organizations elsewhere continue to elevate these issues in national conversations and create continuity and momentum. This Forum is just the beginning, and this approach can guide us not only through this election cycle, but also train us to hold our public officials accountable around much needed transformative food policies in an ongoing and creative way. The food movement has been hard at work for decades, and it is vital that we not cede the unique power and leadership of food providers.

Project Overview

In August 2019, three nonprofit organizations in the Northeast US decided to hold a Forum to focus on the food systems of New Hampshire within the context of the 2020 Presidential election without overstepping the boundaries of their 501(c)(3) non-profit status. Eventually, the collaborative grew to include sixteen groups ranging from family farmers and fishermen, climate justice leaders, public health sector staff, and sustainable business advocates.

Food as a significant sector of the economy that employs many people was always our leading rationale. Knowing that our Forum - among the many held in Iowa and New Hampshire - could attract one candidate, ten, or zero, we decided to build a Forum that would advance our core advocacy priorities regardless of candidate response through panel discussions that tapped the expertise of our partners and other experts. We also commissioned a state food system analysis by Ken Meter of [Crossroads Resource Center](#) to release at the Forum as the most current snapshot of New Hampshire's food system.

The affiliated groups hired two people to shepherd this process: Roger Fisk, a presidential campaign veteran who helps causes raise their issues in public dialogue; and Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt, a New Hampshire goat cheese producer active in the New England organic farming movement.

Under the umbrella of the National Family Farm Coalition, Sarah and Roger began corralling the organizations. Due to the our partners 501(c)(3) status, we consulted with [Bolder Advocacy](#) to help us navigate between presenting public forums and the tax-exempt status that prohibits us from endorsing or opposing candidates.



Goals of the Food Solution Forum

- **Elevate** the importance of our rural communities and food providers and producers
- **Recognize** the central place of the food system in solutions to problems facing all aspects of our lives
- **Impress** upon the candidates that the answers to these problems have been worked out and civil society is vibrant, engaged, and demanding!
- **Celebrate** the amazing work that has been done by many grassroots organizations - organic farming organizations, indigenous peoples' networks, fishing communities, and family farm groups
- **Amplify** the voices of people of color
- **Illustrate** common grounds beyond political divides
- **Frame** smart agricultural policies in ways that resonate with people throughout the country
- **Strengthen** public discourse around the presidential campaigns to include our food system
- **Model** a dialogue methodology that engenders deep systemic thinking and learning

This Toolkit

Given the fast news cycle and tremendous demands on peoples' attention, we quickly realized that one forum in one state would have limited impact, and that what's truly needed is an on-going national conversation around these issues. We prepared this toolkit to share our approaches, lessons, and materials created in planning this forum with other 501(C)(3) non-profit organizations. We hope this encourages other such projects, and are happy to speak with anyone interested or to help in any way, even by being part of organizing future events.

Timeline

Ideally, there would be five months to do a project like this. In our case, securing the funding took longer than hoped, and so our time frame was greatly truncated. It was important to do the forum in the fall as we expected candidates would be more focused on Iowa after that.

- **Late Spring 2019:** Initial conversations between three organizations envisioning the project
- **July:** Hired Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt to coordinate the project
- **August of 2019:** A loose consortium of activist groups in Northeastern states decided to put together a forum to focus on the food systems of New Hampshire
- **August 6:** First weekly planning call
- **August 10:** Hired Roger Fisk



- **September 11:** Began construction of foodsolutionsforum.com
- **September 16:** Secured the venue for our date of November 5th with UNH
- **Early October:** We brought on Samantha Cave of the NH Food Alliance part-time, and her focus was on social media, our web presence, and design of materials.
- **October 4:** Contracted with Ken Meter to do an economic analysis of NH's food system
- **October 16 -17:** Initial candidate invites which took the form of submitting a scheduling request/invite through the candidate's web page. We followed Bolder Advocacy's guidance and used the same language to invite Democratic, Republic, Green and Independent/non-affiliated candidates to our forum. To abide by the guidance provided we invited all candidates with the exact same language in the same 24-hour period.
- **October 17:** Event went live on Facebook and Website with Eventbrite as our RSVP and crowd building tracker.
- **October 20:** First Press Advisory, which was essentially a Save the Date message to the Press
- **October 14 - 18:** Construction of the program: Micro Panel, Macro Panel, Economic Impact Study, Candidate Slots, Opening and Closing Remarks
- **October 21 - November 1:** Promotional Drumbeat: local publications, letters to the editor, community event listings, activating each group's social media, visiting candidates as they campaigned in New Hampshire to establish multiple touch points with our invite, as well as stopping by campaign offices to establish a third touch.
- **October 29:** Second Press Advisory went out
- **October 29:** Bolder Advocacy custom webinar for all partners
- **November 4:** We had 189 RSVPs, one Democratic candidate, Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, and a Green Party candidate (also one of their founders), Mr. Howie Hawkins
- **November 5:** Roughly 125 attendees showed up for the forum. Our panelists told their stories, Ken's study was released, Congresswoman Gabbard addressed the audience directly and Mr. Hawkins did so by live video. In terms of press, we had ABC, NBC, FOX, and the Manchester Union Leader attending and multiple outlets streamed portions of our program. Our press release was picked up as far as San Francisco and Washington, DC as well as multiple outlets in New Hampshire. See Post-Event Amplification for examples of clips (page 20).





Budget

The budget for the project was \$75,000. This would be more for a project with more time. The bulk of the costs were for labor for coordination, videography, communications support, and the economic study. An additional \$1,000 for Facebook ads and radio and newspaper ads would have been very helpful. (Facebook ads in particular do a lot for relatively low cost.) The most challenging part of budgeting is not knowing what security costs will be until you know if and how many candidates end up attending, and if they are upper tier candidates -- this you often don't know until very late.

The 501(c)(3) Compliance Rules:

What 501(c)3 Organizations Can & Cannot Do

There are many things 501 (c)(3) organizations can and can't do. Although compliance rules may appear daunting and even scary, there is something extremely positive that results from the requisite non-partisanship. In these polarized times, focusing on facts in non-divisive ways that bring people together around a vision can be very powerful. In not taking sides, one may also be maligned by all sides, but staying the course is one of the most essential and effective ways of advocacy in our troubled, chaotic times.

501(c)(3) rules do allow for considerable advocacy during election cycles. It is vital that everyone in a collaboration fully understands the rules, as just one not following guidelines can impact the entire effort. For this reason, trainings and materials must be available to all engaged. If rules aren't followed, repercussions may include a warning letter, an excise tax, or revocation of tax exemption. More likely is the organization's reputation being questioned, which can impact its funding. Organizations should adhere strictly to the rules and keep good records around their practices, in case anyone raises concerns. It is also not enough to show honest intent to not influence an election - bad optics are problematic, even when complaints have no justification.



501(c)(3) organizations are tax-exempt recipients of tax-deductible donations, and therefore cannot support or oppose any candidate in any way, and must be non-partisan. Putting on candidate debates and forums are clearly allowed by the IRS, constituting a "safe harbor." 501(c)(4)'s can co-sponsor such an event, but it must be on the 501(c)(3) terms, and all (c)(4) outreach and activity done in connection with the event must abide by the same rules. An [in-depth guide](#) on creating and operating 501(c)(3)s, 501(c)(4)s and political organizations, as well as a [Coalition Checklist](#) may be found on the [Bolder Advocacy website here](#).



Such forums must:

- Invite all viable candidates. The IRS has a definition of viable, but you can create your own criteria. We decided that all declared candidates who were actively campaigning in NH were viable.
- Invite all candidates with the exact same language in the same 24-hour period. If only a few could attend, it was important to prove that all were invited and contacted in a similar manner.
- Provide each candidate an equal opportunity to speak.
- Discuss a broad range of issues to avoid the forum appearing too limited in focus, thereby favoring those with fuller platforms on that issue.
- Ask open-ended questions that are not leading.
- Have a neutral moderator who does not editorialize on responses.
- Avoid asking candidates to make pledges or commit to certain platforms.
- While candidates are allowed to point people to their websites or to further information, they may not do any fundraising.
- Be broad and non-partisan in outreach and publicity.

Although candidate forums are safe harbors, election-related activities may be murky. If challenged, 'facts and circumstances' tests may be applied, judging and considering many factors as a whole. For example, the following questions would be relevant: Is it a wedge issue? Why are you advocating for something in particular now? Why to this audience? It is also important to have disclaimers on your materials such as, "Neither [organization name] nor any of its partners expresses any preference for or against any of the candidates displayed on this site. [Organization name] does not support or oppose candidates or political parties." It also helps to show that the organizations have been working on the issues they are addressing for a long time, not just during an election.





Additional Resources On Allowable Activities:

- [Election checklist](#) by Bolder Advocacy:
- [The Rules of the Game](#): an in-depth guide on what 501(c)(3)s can do during an election cycle (pages 31-36 for discussion on candidate questionnaires, debates, and forums).
- [Nonpartisan Candidate Education](#): 501(c)(3)'s are allowed to educate candidates as long as the same materials are sent to each candidate.
- [Candidate questionnaires and voter guides](#) : 501(c)(3)'s are also allowed to produce Voter Guides. If candidates are asked to respond in writing to questions, they should be given a word limit, so that one is not privileged over another, and their responses should be printed verbatim.

Additional Resources On What Constitutes Lobbying:

- [Being a Player](#): an in-depth guide on lobbying and the 501(h) election.
- [Form 5768](#): to make the 501(h) election with the IRS.
- [501\(h\) lobbying limit calculator](#)

There are many good resources available to guide nonprofits in these issues. While they cannot provide legal representation, Bolder Advocacy and the Alliance for Justice offer many webinars and have a free technical assistance hotline for questions (866-675-6229 or advocacy@afj.org).

Coordination & Teams

This project grew to include sixteen nonprofit organizations. This collaboration is what excited us most - a varied group with similar commitment and determination to lead on these issues. We know it is only with such broad coalitions, and the resulting reach, synergy, and power, that our vision has a prayer against the moneyed dominant system with its powerful lobby.

We began as a larger group on weekly planning calls, then created teams. Each group completed a [Partnership Agreement](#) to formalize the relationship and to understand what each group would be able to contribute. We also mapped the reach of each organization: social media platforms, their likes, and followers; as well as member numbers in the state, region and nation. The coordinators sent out a weekly update and held weekly phone meetings with agendas sent in advance and notes soon after meetings, so people could loop in via email with the coordinators (limiting emails as much as possible).

At the outset, the coordinators made a [Coordination Checklist](#) – a spreadsheet with the project's overview and a worksheet for each team's tasks, deadlines, and a place for comments.



Teams were created to ensure all aspects of organizing the Forum were covered and to build on the power of working in a coordination with such an array of organizations and networks.

1. **Coordinating:** Informing and empowering partner organizations and coordinating their efforts to maximize awareness raising, outreach.
2. **Content:** Focused on the actual nuts and bolts of program panels, speakers, study, candidate questions.
3. **Funding:** Fine tune budget and outreach to sources who could provide funding.
4. **Logistics:** Details of venue, from sound and lighting to parking and broadband, plus volunteers and staffing.
5. **Candidate Outreach:** Initial invite to candidates with follow-up in person and online.
6. **Crowd:** Generating and tracking attendees.
7. **Media:** Outreach to print, radio and TV, and coordinating partner promotion through free press.
8. **Videography:** Promotional/educational videos leading into the Forum, as well as capturing and distributing day-of content.

Our Partners Were...



Content Team

This team holds the overview of a coherent narrative coming from all the materials, such as promotional content, website language, press releases and talking points for the press, social media posts, letter-to-the editor and op-eds. It can also gather the initial economic and job figure data to be included on all materials (from the National Agricultural Statistics Service website).



The Content Team had ongoing conversations about the candidate questions. They polled national food organizations and gathered approximately 60 questions, which were reduced to six - three to ask candidates in the public forum, and three to ask them on video, individually. [Questions](#) must be open-ended without hinting to “correct” answers. These questions mirror the overall narrative of the project.



Forum Venue

There are several elements to consider for choosing a venue - some practical and others ideological. For our Forum, the University of New Hampshire (UNH) was a good match, as it is a land and sea grant university. They were happy to host us. It also houses core partners - the Sustainability Institute, the NH Food Alliance, and Food Solutions New England. Holding the forum at such an esteemed university also lent gravitas and credibility to our message. Availability of a variety of rooms with excellent AV systems, a caterer accustomed to sourcing locally, ample parking, and a commitment on the part of the university’s Events Team to make the event a success all made this a good choice for us. Lastly, the room we ultimately chose was very large (maximum capacity of 680), but also adjustable with pipe and draping, so it wouldn’t look empty if turnout was low. Ultimately, we didn’t need pipe and draping as the chair set-up, tabling, and the media setup used empty space. Another aspect of this space was that there was only one entrance, which would have kept security costs down had we hosted high profile candidates.

One consideration to holding a forum at a different location might be a desire to avoid ‘town and gown’ issues, and appear less elite. A shortcoming of our event was that the crowd was comprised of the usual suspects, and not as bi-partisan as we’d hoped for. A different venue choice could impact this.

Once a venue is chosen, you will need a [Contract](#) with your venue. Then, meet their Events Coordinator (any large venue has one). Visit the various rooms that are available, and discuss the details, including costs, set up, AV, and catering. Then about 10 days out, meet with them again to review the plans and preparations.

Evaluate your needs. A large and small room may be required - one large room for the Forum and a smaller private room for any videotaping, interviews, or candidate prep room. For example, the smaller room served as a



green room for Tulsi Gabbard. The small room is useful for the day before the event to unload and store materials and supplies. If you are going to film individual candidates and/or panelists, a small room can be useful for that as well.

Refreshments:

Depending on the time of your event, consider coffee, tea, and snacks for attendees. Discuss this with the venue's Event Coordinators. Many venues will have separate caterers who source locally. For example, the UNH caterers sourced as much as possible locally and offered leftovers to a local food bank.

Audio/Visual:

Discuss your AV needs with the venue's Events Coordinators for on-site support. You also will need to pre-plan details of recording the event, live streaming, internet, and zooming in on remote candidates. (See page 18 for more details.)

Set-Up:

Discuss needs with the Event Coordinators well in advance for the room, including the number of chairs; tables for tabling; rules (e.g., not affixing items to the walls); stands with signage guiding people to the room; maps and directions for our website and to send to all who registered on EventBrite, candidates drop off instructions; restrooms; and, parking details.

Security:

It is difficult to estimate costs without knowing which candidates are attending. This is something to discuss with the venue Events Coordinators, as high profile candidates may require local police department involvement. The cost to cover that level of security is upwards of \$15,000.

Candidate Outreach

We were fully cognizant of the fact that our endeavor was a fishing expedition - we really didn't know if candidates would commit to attending our event. We also understood that candidates might likely not decide until a few days prior to the forum, as they needed to watch events on the ground in other key states, namely Iowa. It's important to be flexible and persistent!

By law, you must be completely non-partisan and explicit in your criteria for who you



Photo by Keith McShea for the Buffalo News.



are inviting. In our situation, we invited all declared candidates who were actively campaigning in NH with a web presence and visits to the state.

You must reach out to them within the same 24-hour period with the same [Invitation](#) language (to avoid giving advantage to any one candidate over another), which can initially be done through their web-sites. Follow up with emails to state directors. Contact info can be secured through party headquarter offices.

Invite Follow-up

Keep an eye out for candidate events in your area, which are full of outreach opportunities. A good resource for us was the Union of Concerned Scientists, which tracks candidate events in New Hampshire. By subscribing to their email list, we received these schedules. (Your local public radio station may also post these events.) During weekly updates and calls, enlist people to attend local events and pass out flyers and personal invitations to the event. (More on this in the Outreach and Promotion Plan below).

Often there will be a press area defined, so look over to see which reporters are there typing away on laptops while they wait for the show to start. It's a perfect opportunity to approach and hand them a flyer, because reporters like to know what's up.

Look for campaign staff (usually standing off to the side). Approach them, have a brief interaction, and let the document hammer home the meaning and value of the forum. For example, "We represent almost 100k jobs in NH and your candidate should know this is happening," is succinct and memorable. Also look for event organizers. If a house party, whose house? If a community center or veterans post, who runs it? Those are interested people who should get a flyer. In short: all of these chores are easy if your schedule allows you to show up early.

Make sure every conversation includes an invite!

Programming Elements

With or without candidate commitment, there can still be a meaningful program for both candidates and the general public that includes human stories. Include in the program moving personal testimony - this would make it all but impossible for candidates to speak with ordinary stump speeches. You can also include a human story followed by a related policy question.

Preparation

This includes initial conversations with each panelist, the moderators, and the emcee. One week or more prior to the event, schedule briefing calls for each panel. Following the panelists' interests, and in communication with the moderators, develop questions for the presenters to guide and bring coherence to the panels



Elements of the Program

- The [Program](#) for the forum was designed by Samantha Cave.
- Introduction: Ideally, invite a key partner and consider a Native American welcome, blessing, and acknowledgement of the land.
- Panel One: “Providers”
- A food systems study by Ken Meter
- Opening remarks by presidential candidates, followed by questions from the emcee.
- Panel Two: “Regional Advocates”
- Opening remarks by presidential candidates, followed by questions from the emcee.
- Closing Remarks
- Press Interviews [Comment: this wasn’t part of the public program]

After the Event

We often asked ourselves, “What are three things we want people to do after they leave this event?” Certainly one was to buy more food locally. Other ideas included setting up a “how to do policy work workshop” in one’s community after the event (the local organization New Futures offers these for free); sign up for a bird dogging workshop; share the resources from the event with five friends; write a letter to presidential candidates encouraging them to have a thorough platform on these issues. share the resources from the event with five friends; write a letter to presidential candidates encouraging them to have well-thought out food platforms; and, write a letter to the editor.

Outreach & Promotion Plan

Here are the steps and tools we asked our members to implement as we engaged people across New Hampshire in our forum. Importantly, many of these steps do not include the Forum promoting the Forum, they depend more on individual voices already rooted in communities reaching out to their neighbors and peers with information about the event.

Student Outreach

Partner groups at UNH fulfilled this responsibility through like-minded faculty members, departments, and student groups; as well as posting flyers and using campus communications.

The Logo

[The Logo](#) was designed by Samantha Cave for anyone to use to promote continuity and build community.

Emails and Listservs

Almost weekly, send [Promotional Emails](#) to partners to share with their listservs. In our case, they included the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, New Economy Coalition, COMFOOD, Food Policy Councils, et al.



create a final one after the forum with clips and photos from the event.

Gregg's process often involved whittling down interviews first into a longer video, which we would then cut short enough for social media. In a few cases we also had longer videos that went into more depth and were appropriate for the website and YouTube, if not for social media, where the focus is always on brevity. This was particularly helpful for the dairy video as it is very hard to put dairy issues into short sound bites!

We reached out to local partners to find knowledgeable people to interview, then scheduled five days of filming, setting up daily routes through NH visiting farmers, fishermen, and advocates. We made four 2-3 minute videos about the couples, their farms, the businesses, the community, the boats, etc. We wanted stories to tell and to reflect demographic priorities, geographic regions, and media markets throughout NH and New England. You will need to secure [Video Release Forms](#).

The Flyer

Samantha Cave finalized the [Flyer](#) two weeks out and printed a handful of copies - black and white is cheap and useful - to have handy. She also created smaller, [Postcard Flyers](#) to save money, ink, and paper. Here are some ways to get the word out:

- Kiosks on the town square or highly trafficked footpaths, bulletin boards in local coffee shop, town hall, veterans post, community center, etc.
- Farmers markets and festivals are great places to distribute flyers. Follow the rules, and ask permission. Leave a small stack at booths and stands managed by people you know.
- Civic groups and local committees often have open comment periods in meetings. As this is a nonpartisan exercise, it should be completely appropriate to share information about the Forum with other attendees.

The Short Promotional Videos

Several short videos were created to promote the forum, initially to post one per week online in the month leading up to the forum to help build buzz. You can find them on the website. We hired Gregg Stevens from NOFA-VT, who also produces the Real Organic Project videos. You will need a [Videographer Contract](#). Be sure you cover the array of faces in the local food system. For example, include a fishing representative, food worker, dairy farmer, vegetable farmer, and others from the local food system. You can



The Website

Samantha Cave developed the project [Website](#) where people also registered for the forum online through Eventbrite. All promotional activities sought to drive people to the website to register early, explaining that the higher the number of attendees, the more attractive the event would be to candidates. The website also invites the public to submit questions for candidates. (This could provide a sense of the public's interest in these issues, and insights about targeting your message going forward.) Should your organization want to host a similar event, use the existing webpage to avoid re-inventing the wheel. As stated earlier, our goal is to build this conversation and work on itself!

Facebook

Samantha Cave was the administrator for the [Facebook page](#). We considered adding all partner groups as Admins on the Facebook page, but in the end decided to have just one admin to avoid any confusion in posts or editing the event. Your organization could be added as an Admin to build on what Sam created.

Basic FB "Rules of the Road" include keeping posts concise and meaningful, using language that offers your audience a clear action to take (etc. Watch now, Register online at...), and using tags for other partners and hashtags where appropriate. Every Facebook post should also have a photo or video - we cannot stress that enough.

Also post and roll out new videos during times of the day when most people are online, such as weekdays from 9am-5pm. Weekends and evenings are great for re-posts, shares from other groups, and interesting articles. Posting at least once a day about the forum should be the baseline - and we encourage posting more often using different formats.

Every time you mention the Food Solutions Forum, tag the page (@foodsolutionsforum), include a link to the website, and use the hashtag #FoodSolutionsForum.

Maximize engagement to the page and event by inviting everyone who might have a glimmer of interest, and share the event page periodically to your personal Facebook page while asking for support.

When something is posted to the Forum Facebook page, your organization can like and share the post. Everyone sharing from the original post (instead of making new posts) keeps analytics nice and neat and engages us in the Facebook algorithm game so that Facebook will begin to show our page to new audiences. It also keeps messaging consistent.





Rough Timeline:

- **Every Week from One Month Out:** Post videos (farming, fishing, food worker, etc.)
- **Two Weeks Out:** Share, like, comment, etc. on the page. Add link to the website, maybe tag some specific partners either in the comments or in the post itself and ask them to share.
- **For the Entire Preceding Two Weeks:** Before the event, maximize registration by driving people to the website and the Facebook event. Forum posts should include a push to register - for example, at the bottom of every post, put "Register online at www.foodsolutionsforum.com." Create a sense of urgency: "Have you registered yet?"
- **Day of and Following Event:** Everyone should share images, quotes, short clips, etc. from the event to their Facebook pages using tag #FoodSolutionsForum. Keep these posts exciting and positive. Use Facebook stories, Instagram, and Twitter.



Grassroots Media Outreach

Two weeks prior: reach out to local media. Every newspaper, radio station and TV station has community event calendars where people get information on everything from town festivals to monthly Rotary meetings. At your local newspaper's website, find 'community events' or 'community calendar' and the link or email address for submitting an event. For example, the Concord Monitor's portal is calendar@cmonitor.com. There usually is a 3-5 day lag from submission to posting, so do this soon, but this is valuable, as it creates another touch point that raises awareness about the Forum. While on your newspaper's web page, it doesn't hurt to send it through other portals as well, for example on the Concord Monitor sharing news tips at news@cmonitor.com. (It

can be very helpful for partner groups if the Coordinator gathers the basic info from the leading papers - contact person and email for calendars, letters to the editor, and op eds, with word counts, deadlines, and such.)

Next, within the same paper, look at how to submit a letter to the editor. As many of you know these are wide ranging in content; they can rebut a recent article the paper published, but they also include advocacy pieces for something like our forum.

A suggested framework includes text from the web page to maintain consistency in messaging key points. ALWAYS include job numbers or other relevant details to catch the eyes of campaigns, and the web site link to direct readers to more information. On the next page is an example.



Dear [Newspaper XXX],

My name is _____ and I live in _____, NH. I'm sharing information about an important forum coming up that will focus on the 93,000 jobs in New Hampshire that drive the state's entire food system. Our farmers and fishermen alone contribute over \$230 million annually to the Granite State's economy. On Tuesday, November 5, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities this industry is facing at the NH Food Solutions Forum from 10am – 1pm at the University of New Hampshire. I hope your readers, who are my neighbors, will attend.

Not only should everyone eat three times a day, but our food and our food system impacts each of us in wide-ranging ways. It is vital that presidential candidates hear directly from the NH communities that are providing our food. Representatives of the food economy and the general public will gather with presidential candidates to discuss this vital industry. Through panels, Q&A, candidate comments and the release of an economic impact study, we will explore with a non-partisan group of candidates how the state and federal government can partner with our food industry to foster growth while maintaining the unique character of our state.

More info at foodsolutionsforum.com. I hope some of your readers can join us. Thank you.

Television and radio stations often include event listings during their local newscast commercial breaks, satisfying some public programming requirements. Visit local TV and radio websites and use the steps above to submit an event listing. Once your Forum appears in your local paper, click on the link where it's listed and share it to social media to connect touch points. You may also find local hybrid web sites, such as seacoastonline.com, combining various media outlets. One week out, distribute a [Press Release](#).

Preparing for the Day

In preparation for the day, pay attention to the following:

Tabling: Partner groups had people sign up to table the event, helping the room be full and lively. Logistical details from the Events Coordinators must be conveyed to tablers - supplying table cloths and power strips, table sizes, etc.

Volunteers: Ours required 14 for the day, who were asked to arrive at least one hour before the Forum's start. Tasks included: putting up signage from parking lot to both entrances and to the room; greeting and registering attendees on two laptops/phones (easy if they had already registered on EventBrite); greeting partners and tablers, showing them to their tables; handing out 1-pager of Ken Meter's study; meeting candidates and greeting the press; thanking people while leaving the forum (and getting their feedback).

Bios and Intros: Make sure the emcee and moderators have bios on all panelists.



Filming & Photographing the Event

We suggest having a third person in addition to the videographer and the AV person from the venue, which prevents too many duties from falling on the videographer, especially if filming candidates or panelists in a separate room aside from the public portion. Ask all partners to take photographs throughout the day to compile later on Flickr.

Items to Consider:

- Have the MAC address of each device (phone, computer, live stream unit) and verify that each device needed for filming and streaming is conversant with host facility's broadband and wifi.
- Live stream via ethernet if possible, which is higher quality than over a wifi network.
- Lighting: The most common problems from recording video are from not having enough light or enough consistent light on the subject. Cameras recording on various "automatic" settings may behave unpredictably and undesirably to changes in the amount or type of light, such as when the sun is covered by clouds or when the room lights are turned off during a slide presentation.
- Audio: Ideally, the venue will have a knowledgeable staff person to set up and monitor audio during the event and provide a mixed audio feed via an XLR cable to a recording device. Most phones and consumer cameras do not have built-in microphones adequate for recording audio for video productions or XLR inputs for recording audio from an external source like a soundboard or microphone. The press expect a Mult Box - a multi-plug audio feed that sits on the press riser to plug in for clean audio of the program.
- Room and camera layout: Many venues can provide risers for cameras and a "pipe and drape" backdrop behind the presenters. If these aren't available, consider what will be visible to the camera in the background when the subject is framed. If risers are available, attendees will often sit or stand on them, introducing unwanted vibration to the final video. With or without risers, camera tripods should be positioned to capture events on stage without blocking attendee movement or violating venue fire codes. Venue managers may dictate camera and other equipment locations. Be sure to check battery strength on all devices as well.
- Local PEG station coverage: Public access or PEG (Public, Educational and Government programming) stations that cover the viewing area where the event is located may be willing to offer staff or trained volunteers to record your event using professional equipment and to host the final edited version of the video on their website that can then be embedded into other websites, saving event organizers time and energy for recording, editing, and uploading videos. Some may have equipment to lend if you have volunteers with recording experience or are willing to be trained.





- Slides: If a presenter is using a slide show during the event, request that a copy of the file be available for the person editing the final video. Often individual slides can be extracted from a PowerPoint or other presentation file as individual images to embed in the final video. These are often much easier for viewers to read than the recording of the screen.

Post-Event Amplification

The three days following the Forum are crucial! Use opportunities to look outward and broadcast this model, the contents, the study, and the process to affiliates and like-minded people in the other 49 states, territories and Nations - do not rest easy the following day! It's very important to circle back with people who helped, such as community center staff who let you post a flyer with news clips and photos of the Forum.

NH farmers lost \$8M last year feeding us, yet we spent \$4B importing food

By Kimberley Haas Union Leader Correspondent Nov 6, 2019



Democratic presidential candidate Tulsi Gabbard takes questions from moderator Megan Grocki at the Food Solutions Forum at the University of New Hampshire on Tuesday.

Kimberley Haas/Union Leader Correspondent

Buy Now

The Study and The News Coverage of the Forum are the center pieces of Amplification. The study is an academic-level, cutting-edge snapshot of exactly how big a role our broad coalition plays in the state's economy. That study and media about the event, can be used strategically on days following the Forum to hammer home the issues and values. For your website: replace the invite with the economic study, but leave other items available.

You can share the study at candidate events, at Open Comment periods at community meetings, and in your local paper using the link (foodsolutionsforum.com/resources-news) to show that the Forum has an enduring impact and is part of an ongoing conversation about food

providers and workers who are so vital to the state's economy. Also select one or two articles covering the Forum and send them to your e-mail list - a great opportunity to pivot outward with people across the country and keep the conversations about food providers and workers going.



In operational terms, take the three days following the event to set aside 30 minutes daily to help amplify it through a local op-ed (described above) that includes a link to the study. Look for press that covered the Forum as they will be more likely to carry content about it.

Post-Event Tasks

- Debriefing - as mingling and chatter ended, most Forum organizers gathered after the Forum to debrief. This was followed by a conference call and emailed [Debrief Form](#).
- Sending thank you emails and notes.
- Posting video of the event, media coverage, and a “[tell your story](#)” link [on the website](#).

In Gratitude

In conclusion, by far the best aspect of this project was the collaboration between the sixteen nonprofits. It was truly a group effort - skill sets emerged as needed, and everyone found a way to contribute even amid their very busy schedules. To all the partnering groups, we want to express our profound gratitude for their energy, dedication, and inspiration.

We also are very grateful to our funders that made this project possible: the John Merck Fund discussed this project with us early on, while Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, the Lydia B. Stokes Foundation, and Real Food Media provided essential resources to carry through the forum. Thank you!





Resource List

- [Budget](#)
- [Partnership Agreement](#)
- [Coordination Checklist](#)
- [Questions -- short list](#)
- [UNH Contract](#)
- [Candidate Invitation](#)
- [Program](#)
- [Logo](#)
- [Promotion emails & Social Media Posts](#)
- [Videographer Contract](#)
- [Video Release Forms](#)
- [Full Flyer & Postcard Flyer](#)
- [Press Releases](#)
- [Debrief Form](#)

Attributions

Our core partners for the Food Solutions Forum project were:

- The Northeast Organic Farming Association of NH
- New Hampshire Community Seafood
- The NH Food Alliance
- The Agrarian Trust
- The Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance
- The Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council
- Food Solutions New England/UNH Sustainability Institute
- Farm to Institution New England
- American Sustainable Business Council
- The National Family Farm Coalition
- The Climate Justice Alliance
- The Indigenous Environmental Network
- Health Care Without Harm
- The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York

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