
INFAS Annual Report Year 1, March, 2011**Project Summary:**

Use the goals below (as stated in your proposal) to provide a brief summary of the strategies you have undertaken to achieve the goals and the methods by which you are evaluating these efforts. Weave into your summary, high level, brief responses related to the key evaluation questions listed below. Note if changes have been made to any goals.

The Inter-institutional Network for Food, Agriculture and Sustainability (INFAS) is a national network of scholars with an overall purpose of science, outreach and education to ensure resilience in the US food system. The Network has been created to identify, assess and make visible critical trends and vulnerabilities in agriculture and food system sustainability, and to engage resources and capabilities to forge collaborative solutions.

Overarching goals include:

- A corps of diverse, well trained individuals prepared to lead initiatives to address agriculture and food system challenges
- A stronger, broader consensus on priorities for research, education and outreach in food and agriculture which are relevant to society
- Science-based evidence in support of food system sustainability—including improved access to healthy food for all US children, with particular emphasis on improved outcomes for our most vulnerable children —available to community advocates and policy makers.
- Increased media attention on the issues of agriculture and the food system
- Policy makers at all levels are better informed about farm and food policy choices and their consequences, particularly those which affect child hunger and malnutrition in the US.

Objectives to achieve these overarching goals include:

- Identify and engage potential new INFAS members and young scholars who would benefit from networking with the group.
- Develop scholars who engage effectively with local communities, advocacy groups, policy makers and others in developing and conducting research, education and outreach projects
- Build INFAS as a supportive community representing institutions and organizations committed to the development and support of food and agricultural systems that sustain the health of people, society and the natural environment.
- Design projects and secure additional funding for a series of major collaborative initiatives that will increase awareness and understanding of trends and interactions that affect health and resilience of vulnerable communities and populations.
- Develop methods to allow communication among group members and between group members and society

- Create permanent capacity for collaborative, critical analyses of programs and policies to accelerate the transition to food system sustainability and social justice.

INFAS members recognize that needs will shift over time and the Network will need to be flexible to remain relevant. Endowed support will provide the consistent funding needed to ensure long term commitment to the Network which will leverage past WKKF investment at institutions across the United States.

Progress Toward Goals (2-8 pages)

Use this section to detail the progress made toward goals during the grant year just completed.

We have made progress toward several of our objectives.

At the November 2010 meeting we agreed to establish an executive committee of INFAS. The first task of the executive committee will be to recruit at least one graduate student and one member of Real Food Challenge to serve on the committee. This helps achieve our first objective of engaging new members and young scholars in INFAS.

Regarding the design of new projects and major collaborative initiatives, the group identified two initial concepts: a national assessment of food systems sustainability and a literature review. Subsequently we decided to focus on the national food system assessment and have been exploring funding possibilities for this effort.

Toward our objective of building methods of communication, the group agreed to use some funds to hire a part time Network Coordinator.

Respond to the specific evaluation questions for your project as outlined below:

1. Was an effective governance structure established?

INFAS members are building a process of shared governance that includes all members. We anticipate the executive committee being an effective management structure for INFAS.

2. How were issues identified for the network to address or coordinate joint activities and responses?

Through discussion by members present at the November 2010 meeting we reached consensus on using the current gift to hire the coordinator. Since the meeting we've also agreed on the food system assessment as our first, major joint project.

3. Is there evidence that providing for the endowed chairs to function as a network has raised the national profile of the science of sustainability?

It is too soon to tell.

In addition, if not already addressed, please consider the following:

1. Activities: Describe activities undertaken this year, including the outcomes and lessons you have learned from this year's experiences. If some intended activities were not undertaken, please note them and explain why they were not pursued. Describe any new activities or modifications and why they were added.

During the past year, planning has been the primary activity as we have not yet received the first endowment payout and the current use money arrived midway through the year. INFAS members met at the Symposium meeting in November 2010 and had a full day of discussion about how INFAS will function. The group agreed that the first priority was a support staff person to focus on INFAS keeping the group in regular communication and moving ahead with the goals described above. As of March 2011 a hiring process is beginning for a half time "Network Coordinator" who will be employed by ASI at UC Davis on behalf of INFAS and who will report to Tom Tomich. We anticipate the hiring process for this newly developed position will take 3 months based on experience with similar hires.

Hiring the coordinator is the key step in taking action on the remaining goals and objectives described above.

2. Outcomes: If you have modified your intended outcomes, indicate the changes. Please describe any unanticipated outcomes. Does your experience to date suggest that original expectations for achieving these outcomes were realistic? If not, why not? How are you dealing with unrealistic expectations?

While we have not modified our goals or objectives we have recognized that getting things accomplished with such a large, geographically dispersed group of participants takes longer than we anticipated. We expect the Network Coordinator will help overcome this challenge in the immediate future.

3. Environment/Challenges/Opportunities: Describe factors or circumstances (positive and/or negative) within your environment affecting progress toward achieving goals either generally or as they relate to specific activities. What challenges and opportunities have developed and how are they being approached?

As described above, we realized we need a staff member focused on network functions so we view recruitment of the half time position as the key step to building and sustaining momentum.

4. Collaboration: If your project is collaborating with other organizations or institutions, describe how these relationships are helping or hindering your progress toward addressing needs.

This is fundamentally a collaborative project and it integral to the success.

5. Observations: Please share any other observations not noted above.

n/a

Future Plans (1-2 pages)

1. List the project and evaluation activities you intend to pursue during the next reporting period for each intended goal/outcome and note whether and how they involve modifications. (This list is what you will report on next year.)

We anticipate no modifications and will move forward on all listed goals.

2. What will be done this coming year to increase the likelihood that the project will be self-sustaining by the end of the grant period?

As an endowment, the project already has sustainable funding. Additionally, many INFAS members hold endowed faculty positions ensuring continuity of representation from many of the member institutions. We are confident INFAS will continue to strengthen and grow.

3. What indications are there that this project can (or cannot) be adopted elsewhere?

There is no clear indication if this project can (or should) be adopted elsewhere but since it is national in scope and open to new members it would not make sense to recreate INFAS domestically.

Dissemination (1/2 page)

1. What information or evaluation findings from your project have been made available to the field and how?

To date, little if anything has been done to disseminate information about the project beyond the INFAS members. This is an area we'll develop in the future.

2. What plans do you have, if any, at this time for disseminating information about your project during the next year and at the conclusion of Foundation funding?

The food system evaluation project will have a strong element of communication and dissemination of information.

Other (1/2 page)

1. Please list issues that you would like to discuss with your Foundation program officer.
n/a
2. If helpful, attach any "selective" electronic appendices which help to clarify information contained in the body of the report – please be selective. Please do not include copies of newspaper articles, brochure, or detailed statistical reports related to the project or hard copies, videos or films unless significant and discussed/requested by your program officer.
n/a
3. If you are required by your grant commitment agreement to submit a separate evaluation report, please upload it into the web form as indicated in the Evaluation section.
n/a