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2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
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New Hampshire State Plan
Final Report
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Submitted by the
New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
In cooperation with selected Project Partners

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New Hampshire State Plan Annual Report 2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Activities Performed:

The New Hampshire Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food received funding under the 2013 Special Crop Block Grant Program in October 2013. Nine projects were approved for funding. Contracts have been implemented and approved by state authorities and projects are in various stages of completion. Individual project reports follow.

Project 1

Project Title: North Country Specialty Crop Promotion and Marketing

Applicant: Northern Community Investment Corporation

Final Report (previously submitted)

Project Summary

When Julie Moran, now CEO of the North Country Farmers Cooperative, moved to Colebrook, New Hampshire, she soon identified a gap in the food system of the North Country. The issue was that restaurants, institutions, and retail customers wanted to source local foods but didn't know how to find the farmers, and the farmers wanted to be selling into these markets, but had no idea where to begin and how to connect with customers.

Julie began initiating conversations with local farms and restaurants and realized that an intermediary was needed between the two groups. After years of informal collaboration, twenty farms came together to celebrate the incorporation of the North Country Farmers Cooperative in March of 2013.

The goal of the Co-op is to fuel economic development in the North Country from quite literally the ground up. By increasing locally grown and consumed foods, the farmers hope to preserve local farms; boost agriculture, hospitality and tourism in the region; increase access to healthy local foods; and create jobs in the agricultural sector.

As a newly established food hub—the first registered food hub in New Hampshire in fact—the Cooperative sought Specialty Crop funding to help market specialty crops in the region and build relationships with the restaurant and institutional buyers.

Project Approach

The second official year of the Co-op was characterized by expansion of the board of directors, staff, markets, members, and sales. Through its membership, the Co-op funded and bought its own refrigerated truck and dealt with an improved but still inadequate website. It was a year of building infrastructure to create a profitable food hub that will support the local farms so that they can make a livable wage.

The Board of Directors expanded from six founding members to nine, including two non-farm members. The Co-op amended its Bylaws to have the capacity to include board members from the regions where the Co-op expects to expand.

Regional Expansion: The NH Specialty Crop grant allowed the Co-op to hire staff to work on expanding the Co-op and relieve the CEO of some duties that had been entirely reliant on her. Hiring additional staff to grow the Co-op would not have been possible without grant funding. This push was successful, and has put the Co-op in a position to capitalize on the expansion of the markets, farm members, and products offered, in order to work towards self-sustainability. Sustainability of the Co-op will fuel economic development of the agricultural sector in the North Country while providing healthy food for the New England region.

The biggest success of the 2014 expansion was in the Littleton region where the Co-op added several new customers. The Co-op's top producing farm of 2014 also came from this region. Several more farms from Dalton to North Haverhill are poised to join the Co-op in 2015.

The Carroll County region proved more difficult as many of the farms were either well-established already and not interested in joining the Co-op, or had not established themselves to a point where they were willing or able to join anything. With that said, there is material interest from the restaurants and institutions in Carroll county in seeing the Co-op expand to this area. The Carroll county region will continue to be assessed in 2015.

Staff Expansion: Staff went from a total of one, to six, including two part time delivery drivers and two part time marketing managers. This was a huge leap that brought new responsibilities for the Co-op including employment issues, employment tax issues, Workman's Compensation payments, bookkeeping and the management of grant funds. However, it also brought big rewards, as the staffing bottleneck was opened wide. While Matt Houghton broke open the markets and sourcing in the Littleton area, Sandy Brocaar worked on the website corrections and development. Julie Moran was able to train two drivers (Co-op members) to do the deliveries, thus freeing up her time to spend more efforts on customer service, sales, and resolving website issues. Late in the year, Matt Houghton brought on Daryl Brown from Sugar Hill, who has much experience with logistics, along with her many farm contacts in that area who are looking for new markets for their goods.

Sales Expansion: New members brought a much needed increase in product availability. This year, Farmer Brown from Vermont came to us with a need to sell his certified grass-fed beef. Our signature customer, Mountain View Grand Resort, caught the "buy local" vision and ordered his meat every month from June through December, resulting in a substantial boost to the Co-op's sales. A major disappointment in sales this year was a 25% reduction in prices compared to last year. This was due to increased competition from other New England competitors coming into this emerging market. The meat sales helped to recover this loss and did not take much effort on the part of Co-op staff. No Specialty Crop funds were used for this portion of the sales. This non-specialty crop was critical to the success of the Co-op this year.

Truck Purchase: The Co-op purchased a used refrigerated truck from a local business for \$10,000. The refrigerated truck is 26 feet and the refrigerated unit was recently overhauled prior to the Co-op's purchase. The \$10,000 was raised from members in the form of loans, and also from Co-op fundraising that has been ongoing since 2013. In late August the truck was put into service. To date, the member loans have been 60% repaid. Fundraising continues to help cover the cost of the truck for general maintenance as well as expenses like insurance. Match funds from NCIC's Jobs Accelerator allow the truck to be a key marketing point for the Co-op and its supporters.

Website: Early in 2014, the Co-op began working with a new web designer on a site that would market the Co-op much better than the glorified spreadsheet that it used in 2013. The site was pieced together by July, but was unreliable and caused significant loss in sales for many reasons. The CEO spent a large portion of her time over the summer and fall dealing with the errors and issues. Because of the issues with the site and the fact that it was taking so much time and leading to loss of sales, it was recommended to the Co-op's Board of Directors that a new site be established. It is estimated that the Co-op lost \$2000-\$6000 in sales because of the inadequate website. The Co-op formed a committee and replaced the ecommerce function with established and proven software from Local Food Marketplace which already services over 80 Food Hubs across the country. The new ecommerce section went live on April 29, 2015, about 2 weeks earlier than anticipated.

Progress Made on Work Plan

March 2014:

Marketing Managers— By March two marketing managers had been identified and both agreed to join the Co-op. They were brought on in late April once Workman's Comp, Unemployment Insurance, and Employment Eligibility were set up.

Develop Route—Website issues were a top priority for the Co-op. As such, the Carroll County manager got sequestered to work on the issues because of her relevant past work history and skills. However, the website development did not get resolved with that new system. Because of this, in addition to the fact that farms were simply not ready to sign on, the Carroll County route was not ready for development in 2014. However, the foundation has been laid and it is likely that several new farms and customers will get on board in the coming year.

Grafton County development was much more effective, finding a large new farm that needed a big market, and several customers that ordered weekly. However, because of website issues early on in the season, these customers were not willing to use the website. The Grafton County manager had to nurture them with weekly sales calls, thus hampering efforts to source more farms. This took all season (through September) to develop. The search did yield another part-time manager who is now working on getting more farms in lower Grafton to join the Co-op. The malfunctioning website continued to hamper those efforts through 2014, but that should be resolved now that the new site is operational and has been found to be more user-friendly, reliable, and capable of doing more automated functions for the Co-op.

April-June 2014:

Farmers online—By late July all farms were listed on the website and had received preliminary training on uploading products. Yet not all farmers took the time to update their inventory weekly. As a result managers had to load most of the products, manage many inventories, and tell some of the vendors what their orders were every week. This was partially due to the poor website design, but malfunctioning farm computers, faulty internet service in the rural area, and user error contributed as well. Farmers have updated their computers and learned how to better use them, and vendor training is ongoing. Rural internet service is being improved annually, but continues to be an issue at crucial times (during the ordering cycle). Typically we handle those issues by working on the phone to overcome the immediate issue.

Marketing—Direct customer contact was the primary method for marketing this year due to the time consumed dealing with the abundance of website issues (taking approximately 30-40 hours per week for 18 straight weeks). Informational brochures were designed and printed in late March 2014 but the Co-op had hoped to print more marketing materials. By March 2015, signs for the Co-op truck were ordered (see appendix), customer appreciation plaques were made and given out (see appendix), and apparel with the Co-op's logo was ordered for the drivers and managers, using the match funding from Jobs Accelerator.

Co-marketing and Chefs Challenge—Hyperlinks from the Co-ops' website to patrons' and vice-versa were established as soon as we got a new customer. This co-marketing helps get the Co-op's name out there and is free!

We anticipated the Chef's Challenge fundraising and marketing event would raise \$10,000 to support the purchase of our new delivery truck. Though not as successful as we had hoped, the event still managed to raise \$6,000. While three of the events went well, one of the four events had to be cancelled due to lack of interest from chefs. If more time could have been devoted to the early development and marketing of the event, we believe it could have been successful. Again time was an issue caused by the poorly functioning website. The three events were successful even though the main event competed with an election, a major football game, and poor weather reports.

July 2014-March 2015:

Website Revision - The most exciting work accomplished from December 2014 through the end of March 2015, was the development of an established, customized ordering website that easily integrates with our current Word Press marketing website. The Carroll County manager, Sandy, spent well over 40 hours per week for about 4 months, working on every customizing detail to make this site a very useful and user-friendly tool for customers, vendors, managers and the bookkeeper. Board members and managers also spent time in training sessions and testing the site as well. It has been well received by all, and Sandy's extensive experience in web development, bookkeeping, and business in general, have made the managers and the board very excited about the potential that we can realize with easy access to sales, invoicing, and billing.

Delivery Logistics—Route establishment changed every week according to which customers ordered. This was relatively easy to manage, as most customer development was down Route 3 and Interstate 93. The orders from the Mount Washington Valley were very few, as fierce competition from Maine undercut our customer base there. Instead of competing, the Co-op focused on developing the Route 3/Interstate 93 deliveries and it proved effective and efficient.

Another big development was the purchase of a refrigerated delivery truck. This purchase required much of the managers' and board's time, and was initially complicated by unanticipated repair needs. However, we found a local mechanic who diagnosed and fixed the issues quickly and less expensively than what we could have had done elsewhere. The purchase of a used refrigerated truck was a very positive advancement for the Co-op and has increased our capacity to delivery quality produce and meats. The old delivery truck could carry approximately \$2000 worth of product (up to 1000 lbs) in one trip while the new truck can accommodate around \$10,000 (20,000 lbs) in one trip. Having this capacity in the future can drastically increase profitability.

Coordinating Orders and Customer Service—Managers spent much of their time coordinating orders and loading them online for patrons who preferred not to use the online ordering system. With this direct sales approach, the managers salvaged the season and were able to increase sales from a likely \$10,000 to \$41,500. However, the website malfunctions cost the Co-op approximately \$2000-\$6000 in lost sales that the managers did not find out about until after the fact when a handful of customers called to find out where their orders were. The managers did subsequently get orders from these customers but it was not as robust as the previous year's orders from them. The new website will correct this because it is not only easy to use and accurate, but also shows when carts have been abandoned. This feature will allow the managers to make a quick call to the customer to ask if he or she intended to close the cart. If not, the order can be corrected and submitted before it becomes a real issue.

With the Specialty Crop funding the Co-op hoped to increase the number of Specialty Products available to our customers. The Co-op achieved this goal but it is not readily seen as competition forced the Co-op to cut prices by 25%.

\$30,000 in Produce sales for 2013 (25% reduction in price would be \$22,500)
\$23,700 in Produce sales for 2014 (volume of sales increased slightly but prices decreased)

There were additional issues that slowed co-op sales as well:

- The website issues discouraged or lost orders (approximately \$2000-\$6000). The new site should avoid these losses in the coming year.
- Other competitors made local produce from NH and Maine available to our customers for lower prices or offered daily service. The Co-op has been addressing this by building relationships with chefs (visiting them, offering farm tours, sending a farmer on deliveries, offering free marketing on our website, giving free publicity in our Press Releases, and offering the Chefs Challenge).
- Co-op members found better prices at retail markets, and decreased the amount of produce available for Co-op customers (which is sold wholesale). Although this reduced Co-op sales, this is ultimately viewed as a success as we want to see farming as a viable career option for folks. Having diversified markets and new or stronger relationships with retailers is a success for the agricultural economy here in the North Country.

In general, specialty crops, especially produce, was more readily available to many more customers this season through the Co-op and other local retail outlets (members' farm stands, farmers markets, and other retail stores). We do not have accurate numbers on those sales, but based on verbal accounts, members' retail sales were roughly equal to or even double the Co-op sales. This is a big improvement over the last two seasons. The work of the Co-op has greatly increased visibility of farm produce sales.

Increased Profitability for member farms— Through the Co-op's plan to help farms increase profitability (using the book, "Wholesale Success" by Jim Slama and Atina Diffley) current farms learned to cut crops that were less profitable, while increasing production and sales of those that were more profitable. However, those sales did not increase Co-op sales enough to increase the Co-op's profitability significantly. The Co-op would need to sell over \$300,000 in products to become profitable. This will come with time. Many of those products were sold through other more profitable (retail) markets; thus benefitting the farms' profitability, but not the Co-op's profitability. This is technically a success, although it did not contribute directly to the viability of the Co-op this year. There is much more room to develop the profitable crops for both the co-op and other markets. The co-op is exploring several retail and large wholesale options to address this issue and regain the sales of those crops at better prices for its members.

Non-Specialty Crop Commodities

While this funding focused solely on Specialty Crops, a portion of the Co-op's sales were for non-specialty items, specifically small, local, farm-raised meat. Though an unanticipated source of income that required little coordination on the part of the Managers, the sale of meat has been a very positive and profitable venture for the Co-op.

Collectively the managers have spent approximately 3000 hours on the development of the co-op, focusing on finding specialty crops and markets for them. The sales of local meat was a surprise development and only took approximately 100 hours total of the managers' time.

Of the 3000 hours worked, approximately 500 hours have been billed to the Specialty Crop Block Grant. The Managers have donated 6 hours to every 1 hour paid by this grant. The additional hours spent mainly represent development of specialty crops, yet a portion support the relatively small amount of time spent coordinating the sale of non-specialty crop items.

Though a portion of the project income was generated through the sale of meat products, no Specialty Crop Block Grant funds were used for this portion of the project. As previously described, the Managers worked far more hours than what they were actually paid for through this grant. In addition, the Co-op did receive other grant funds through two NH Charitable Foundation grants. In 2014, \$13,864 from these Charitable awards was used to fund the Co-op, which covers the non-specialty crop portion of sales.

Partner Contributions

NCIC has been the co-op's backbone for the past 3 years, and this year was no exception. Katelyn Robinson and Barb Candar especially, provided amazingly patient expertise on dealing with grant funds, tax issues, employment issues, and other business and financial issues that the Co-op was not aware of. Molly White worked diligently with us to make financial projections that were realistic. Stewart Gates helped with specific questions throughout the year.

The Co-op also got help from tax accountants Brazee and Huban whom we found through Erbin Crowell of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association. We continue to consult with the Co-op attorney, Patrick Deluhery who contracted with us to incorporate in 2013.

The Mountain View Grand Resort and Spa continues to be our largest customer and supporter, providing thousands of dollars of in-kind support by donating their grand ballroom, food, and service for our Chefs Challenge and Annual Meeting (and any other meetings we need to have there). The Colebrook Country Club also donates their space for the Chefs Challenge every year. The money raised from these events goes to help fund our truck (and future cold storage space) expenses.

University of Vermont Continuing Education: Food Hub Management Course - Through the generosity of several organizational donations, the Co-op was able to send Julie Moran to the newly created Food Hub Management Course, the first of its kind in the country. The course began in January and the initial session was a week long, on-campus course, with 25 students who were running Food Hubs, starting them or supporting them. The course continued online for 16 weeks, covering all aspects of running a Food Hub, including weekly conference calls with teachers and mentors from the industry (including Robin Morris, Michael Rozyne, Kathy Nyquist, Jess Singerman and more). Donors included: NH Community Loan Fund; NH Dept of

Agriculture, Markets, and Food; The Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund; National Good Food Network; and the Co-op itself.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

2013 Baseline	Current	Notes
15 farms	30 farms	100% increase
15 customers	22 customers	The Co-op added 7 new customers this year. Additionally, as of March 2015 the Co-op has a number of interested businesses that are potential future customers. These include a potential new restaurant as well as hotel customers. The Co-op needs to increase supply before these customers join the Co-op. We are also in conversation with 2 large wholesale buyers interested in purchasing produce from the Co-op. We developed relationships with approximately 10 potential customers this year in addition to the 7 new customers we gained
\$30,000	\$23,700	Application projected that 2013 sales would total \$25,000 but actual sales totaled \$30,000; this is the baseline used to measure progress. Volume of Specialty Crop Sales increased slightly but prices dropped 25% as previously described in this report
\$0	\$12,450	Meat sales to date in 2014. As discussed, meat sales were an unexpected boost to the Co-op's bottom line

Beneficiaries

A number of groups benefited from the completion of this project, including farmers, Co-op customers their customers, and the general local population as well.

The Co-op was established to help North Country farms become more viable by increasing markets for locally grown produce. The publicity of the co-op's activity over the past 8 years has already increased awareness of local farm products, and with that increase came the increase in retail sales for all produce farmers in the general area.

With Specialty Crop funding, the Co-op was able to nurture existing relationships and build new ones with area restaurants and institutions. These relationships helped the Co-op understand what products were in demand and which ones weren't. The information the Co-op is able to share with its members helps the farms make better business decision, like cutting less profitable crops and improve food safety practices.

Tourism is a key economic industry in New Hampshire. Traditionally, tourists have been attracted to the striking beauty of the regions' mountains, rivers, lakes, and forests, and the many recreational opportunities the land offers, as well as the relaxation it can bring. This draw will continue to be important, yet another opportunity exists to attract local visitors, as well as tourist from around the country; food tourism. The World Food Travel Association defines food tourism as "the pursuit and enjoyment of unique and memorable food and drink experiences, both far and near." When tourists visit a place, they no longer want to visit the typical tourist destinations and eat at chain restaurants. Instead, they are frequenting the local hangouts to experience the local food (which they are asking for when ordering). And so, restaurants must cater to the demands of the tourist and have local food on the menu.

Restaurant chefs however, are very busy, and cannot take the time to work with many individual farmers making multiple deliveries. With the Co-op acting as the intermediary, restaurants are better able to meet the demands of the tourist and local patrons in one convenient delivery and a single invoice from multiple farms. The restaurants are happy and their customers are happy to have access to local foods. Some of the Co-op's customers, such as the Mountain View Grand, serve thousands of patrons each week, so it is difficult to know exactly how many beneficiaries were affected.

In addition, the Co-op holds a Chefs Challenge every year, increasing the visibility of the restaurants and hotels who serve our local food. This visibility is free marketing for our customers, encouragement to the local chefs (and their upcoming assistants) who patronize the co-op, and encouragement to the 400-500 people who attend these events just to experience and taste the local food professionally prepared.

The Co-op served five schools this year for approximately 30 deliveries. These schools serve approximately 500 meals a day to students. It is anticipated that this number will double annually for 2 more years because the number of deliveries will increase as more product becomes available during the school year. In the past 3 years, the school lunches have changed

drastically for the better, and after a rough start 2 years ago, students are now beginning to eat much healthier.

Lessons Learned

This was a big learning year and the most significant lesson was that it takes dedicated staff with local experience and expertise in several fields to build a food hub that will create an economic impact in the region. The Co-op struggled especially in the former years because of the inability to find experienced and available staffing help. This year, with the help of the Specialty Crop grant and the timing of availability of needed staff, the Co-op feels that we have turned the corner to become a viable organization, even though our breakeven is still a couple of years away. The addition of an established Chef expanded our customer base as much as we could supply because he knew the industry from the customer side. He came on to advise the farmers in presenting products much better, which he did well, but he also brought connections with customers that we just could not have had without him. The addition of a former computer programmer created a much more professional company as she brought her technical expertise and attention to detail to the financials, website development, and contacts and experience with the farming industry. A former truck company manager brought her experience with farming and trucking logistics, along with her connections in the Grafton County farming network.

The next most important lesson was that we needed a proven website for our ordering system. Finding a site that was already tried and true with other food hubs proved to be not only less expensive, but also much more user-friendly, reliable, and time-saving. A website created by those who had run food hubs of their own, knew what we needed and spoke the same language as we did.

Another lesson is that in order to achieve profitability, the Co-op must provide better services and sales to the farmer than what they can get by selling elsewhere. This past year was the year that local retail sales began to improve, and since retail sales generally yield better prices per unit than wholesale sales, the Co-op did lose sales to retail outlets. The CEO sees this issue as temporary and a necessary step in the process of building farm markets, thus driving farms to enlarge their production of profit-making items.

Part of the problem is that our local restaurant customers are bound by what their customer are willing to pay for meals. So the restaurants often try to put downward pressure on the Co-op prices. However, the Co-op is finding potential regional customers who are willing to pay the same prices as our producers get in the local retail market. So if the Co-op can get the producers to grow enough of those items to efficiently transport and sell to regional wholesalers for the same prices, then everyone wins because the farms will sell higher volumes at higher prices.

Another lesson learned is how to increase farm profitability by improving effectiveness and efficiency. Farmers only have so many hours in the season, and only so much land and equipment. There is a limit to growth for each of them to establish for their own businesses.

Once the farm reaches the limit of its self-determined production capacity (time, expense, and land), the only way to increase farm profitability is to stop growing items that are less profitable, and grow more items that are more profitable - in time, expense, and money. For example, spinach is in high demand, but it is laborious to cut, triple wash, spin, and pack. It also requires several pieces of equipment and can bolt easily, thus losing a whole harvest in a couple of days. Spinach also costs more to produce than one can often sell it for. Therefore it may not be a good major crop. Butternut squash, carrots, parsnips and potatoes, on the other hand, take very little effort until you pick and store them. Once stored properly, they can be sold weekly for months, giving excellent cash flow through the winter months. On-farm profitability has the capacity to improve greatly over time, using these lessons. And when the Co-op members improve their profitability, the Co-op has the chance to improve its offerings of good markets that will bear the pricing needed to make those farms stay profitable.

If it can build proper infrastructure (strategically placed cold storage, efficient transportation networks within and outside of the organization, and effective alliances with other food hubs or distributors or wholesalers), then the Co-op can achieve profitability and remain a for-profit organization. That is the goal. With the current staffing and some infusion of infrastructure investment for the regional food system, it is likely that the Co-op's profitability can be achieved within 3 years.

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Project 2

Project Title: Specialty Crops Promotion: Linking Socially Disadvantaged Farmers to Low Income Consumers in Southern New Hampshire

Applicant: Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success. The Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success' (ORIS)'s mission is to "aid in the resettlement of refugee and immigrant groups in the state of NH by providing assistance, training, resources, and opportunities that promote self-sufficiency." ORIS oversees the New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP), a community-based agricultural initiative. NASAP assists new Americans to build

sustainable farm enterprises that are consistent with their culture and lifestyle aspirations and that strengthen regional, sustainable food systems as a whole.

Final Report (previously submitted)

Project Summary

This project addressed market access and public health. The Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success developed a targeted, multilingual, and culturally appropriate marketing and education plan *solely for specialty crops*, and promoted “ethnic” specialty crops as a niche market for which Fresh Start Farms increased sales to both immigrant and American born consumers at farm stands and through an existing Community Supported Agriculture program.

This project focused on enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops for producers selling via Fresh Start Farms collective. Refugee farmers living in Manchester, NH and participating in Fresh Start Farms grow and sell only fruits and vegetables, and the sites included in this proposal supplied only fresh fruits and vegetables, which are eligible specialty crops.

Under the Fresh Start Farms name, all NASAP farmers in Manchester are covered by a farm and market liability insurance policy, enabling them to market and sell their goods through farmer’s markets, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as well as wholesale and other viable outlets. Participants keep 100% of their profits to reinvest in their business. Because they are low-income themselves, refugees are committed to making their food available within their community, including providing for both refugee and American-born families.

Manchester is the largest city in northern New England and continues to be an immigrant community. According the US Census Bureau’s 2006-2008 American Community Survey 10.6% of the population of the city was foreign born (US Census Bureau, 2006-2008). This is in part due to the fact that Manchester resettles over 250 new refugees each year (Gittell and Lord. 2008). Of the 45,614 households in Manchester, 10.6 % live at or below the poverty level and 25.8% live below 200% poverty. Poverty rates increase when considering age, gender, and racial characteristics. In black/African families, the poverty rate increases to 21%; for non-citizens the rate is 23.3%; for families with a female head of household the rate is 41.9%; and for families with a female head of household with children less than 6 years the rate is 55.7%. Additionally, 14.1% of the residents in Manchester (6,340 households) receive SNAP benefits.

The use of federal nutrition benefit program dollars, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly the food stamp program) is on the rise at farmers' markets across the country. There is potential for SNAP/EBT redemption to benefit small and medium sized farms and farmers’ markets and the promotion of these programs is growing; however, taking advantage of these programs involves a number of technical, logistical, marketing, and financial challenges for the many farmers markets and farmers.

Since 2007, nutrition incentive programs at farmers markets in food deserts and low-income communities have increased access and affordability to healthy, fresh, locally grown food. Incentive programs increase the effectiveness of federal nutrition benefits by encouraging

federal benefit recipients to purchase locally. The matching/ nutrition incentives model, where an individual spends \$1 in federal benefits and receives \$2 in fresh local produce (and where the farmer is paid the full \$2) has helped to build new relationships between farmers and customers using federal nutrition benefits to pay for food. In a 2010 nationwide survey of over 2,000 participants taking part in nutritional incentives, administered by Wholesome Wave, 73% of respondents said they would not have come to the farmers market without the incentives in place.

Project Approach

Activities:

1. Develop and implement a marketing and education plan aimed at farmers participating in the Fresh Start Farms collective; train vendors on SNAP/EBT and nutrition incentive programs.
 - ORIS' Agriculture Program Director trained staff and interns on SNAP/EBT and nutrition incentive programs.
 - Staff conducted outreach to 16 specialty crop producers in the Fresh Start Farms collective about opportunities to sell ethnic specialty crops at farm stands in Manchester that were SNAP/EBT accessible. Many farmers had sold ethnic produce to other refugees in the past, whereby customers came to the farm or the farmers' homes and paid in cash. We explained the nutrition incentive program to the farmers as a strategy for them to increase their sales to this customer base.
 - Staff delivered training to 10 refugee specialty crop producers on accepting SNAP/EBT and nutrition incentive tokens at the market. These farmers were the ones who selected at least one of the 4 SNAP accessible farm stands/CSA pickup sites as part of their individual marketing plans. The training reviewed the token system and reimbursement process.
2. Notify FNS Field Office about incentives for SNAP/EBT.
 - ORIS' PD informed the FNS field office about the nutrition incentive program.
3. Create a marketing and education plan for customers, including information regarding the 4 newly established market sites and the EBT/SNAP and nutrition incentives programs.
 - ORIS PD developed a marketing and education plan targeted for SNAP recipients to learn about the SNAP accessible farm stands and nutrition incentive program.
 - ORIS PD supervised the marketing coordinator to implement the marketing and education plan which resulted in the following:
 - Organized meetings with 20 local food pantries, social service agencies, hospitals, and community based organizations, to discuss that Fresh Start Farms accepts SNAP/EBT at specific locations in Manchester, and to provide education on the nutrition incentive program.

- Distributed 3,000 Fresh Start Farms ¼ page flyers promoting SNAP/EBT accessible CSA and Farm Stands throughout Manchester.
 - Updated Fresh Start Farms blog and Facebook page to promote SNAP accessible CSA and farm stands.
 - Coordinated with the NH Food Bank and the NH SNAP Incentive Network to conduct outreach about SNAP Incentives in Manchester. This resulted in getting included in the UNH Cooperative Extension's Nutrition Connections Newsletter, which goes out to adults with children and seniors who receive food stamps, WIC, CSFP, TANF, or SSI.
- ORIS PD met with Catholic Medical Center's Manager of Community Outreach and Wellness to share information regarding the 4 newly established market sites and the SNAP/EBT and nutrition incentives program. As a result of this meeting, ORIS and CMC collaborated to pilot a vegetable prescription program. CMC submitted grants, and received \$10,000.00 to distribute vouchers to patients that were redeemable for fresh produce at the 5 Fresh Start Farms market locations (including the 4 sites in this proposal, and also at the Manchester Farmers Market).
4. Design marketing, education, and point of sales materials regarding Fresh Start Farms collective for neighborhood outreach.
- ORIS PD developed a power point presentation Fresh Start Farms, and Nutrition Incentives to deliver to community organizations.
 - ORIS marketing coordinator designed full page and ¼ page flyers to promote the Fresh Start Farms SNAP accessible farm stands. These flyers were designed in black and white to print in-house. Many agencies readily offered to make their own photocopies given this design!
 - ORIS PD designed a color CSA tear off flyer, and printed 30 copies.
 - ORIS marketing coordinator designed double sided farm stand signs with arrows to direct people to the markets. These signs were 18" x 24" corrugated plastic, with metal wickets, so they could be easily transported, set up and taken down each day of the market.
 - ORIS PD designed and printed a Fresh Start Farms market banner for use at the farm stands.
 - ORIS printed point of sale materials, including signs to teach people how to use SNAP at markets – make the process standard, clear, and simple to use, as well as recipes for specialty ethnic crops, to distribute at the farm stands/CSA pick up sites.
5. Conduct marketing outreach for Fresh Start Farms CSA customers, including refugee and immigrant communities (40 member CSA, 20 SNAP)

- ORIS staff distributed 500 Fresh Start Farms CSA brochures, and hung up 30 color tear-off flyers in Bedford, Derry, Londonderry, and Manchester.
- ORIS staff set up tables at relevant events to promote the Fresh Start Farms CSA, including Stonyfield 5K in Londonderry, World Refugee Day in Manchester, Community Resource Fair in Manchester, CMC Women's Health Forum in Manchester, and at the YMCA in Manchester.
- ORIS collaborated with the Manchester Food Coop to promote the Fresh Start Farms CSA by raffling off a single share as part of their membership drive.
- ORIS collaborated with Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital- Manchester Campus to deliver an employee only CSA.
- ORIS collaborated with Catholic Medical Center in Manchester to deliver a patient only CSA. This 5 week, 30 member CSA was the culmination of a vegetable prescription program pilot that ORIS and CMC partnered to implement. Of the 30 patients receiving vegetables, 16 refugee families. The CSA was designed to extend the regular season farm stands; Fresh Start Farms delivered these shares October 28th-November 25th, utilizing the producers high tunnels, and winter storage crops.
- ORIS staff and 2 Fresh Start Farms producers delivered a presentation to St. Mark's social justice committee on the Fresh Start Farms CSA. This resulted in 11 new members signing up for the Derry CSA.
- ORIS staff updated the Fresh Start Farms website and Facebook page to promote the CSA.
- ORIS staff sent out monthly Fresh Start Farms newsletters to 100 members via MailChimp.

Significant Results:

In 2014, Fresh Start Farms had a 122 member CSA, compared with a 60 member CSA in 2013. Of these, 28 paid with SNAP. Also of significance, is that 67 members signed up with Fresh Start Farms. 25 members were refugees who placed weekly orders with one of two growers in the Fresh Start Farms collective selling at the SNAP accessible farm stands. 30 members were CMC patients receiving CSA shares October-November. The latter was a springboard for Fresh Start Farms to extend their CSA through November in 2015 to the general public.

6. Coordinate delivery/pick up of Fresh Start Farms CSA shares.
 - ORIS staff coordinated with Fresh Start Farms producers to expand the CSA 18 weeks, up from 16 in 2013.
 - ORIS PD maintained a database of CSA customers by delivery site, including season, share size, and payment.

- ORIS staff coordinated with 10 specialty crop producers in the Fresh start Farms collective to grow, harvest and deliver CSA shares to 8 locations in Southern New Hampshire. This was up from seven locations in 2013.
- ORIS' PD updated weekly share numbers and sizes for delivery and communicated delivery details to Fresh Start Farms producers.
- ORIS staff organized weekly payment and incentive logistics for CSA customers paying with SNAP/EBT.
- PD organized logistics for CSA vacation credit vouchers.
- PD processed farmer invoices for shares delivered each month, sending to ORIS' bookkeeper for payment.

Under this SCBG, there was funding to hire a market coordinator 7 hours/week. This time was allocated to running the SNAP/EBT machine at 2 of the 4 market sites each week from June-October. ORIS' PD took on the responsibility of coordinating the Fresh Start Farms' CSA.

7. Coordinate four SNAP/EBT accessible neighborhood delivery sites where farmers participating in the Fresh Start Farms collective will sell fruits and vegetables: 2 in Manchester, 1 in Derry, 1 in Nashua (est. # of customers 200).
 - Based on feedback from the producers in the Fresh Start Farms collective, ORIS sited all 4 locations in different Manchester neighborhoods. This addressed both the needs of the farmers and their refugee customers, who lacked access to transportation. In order to reach more new American customers who wanted to purchase specialty ethnic crops with their SNAP benefits, we realized we had to set up in different neighborhoods. Staff worked closely with the farmers in February of 2014, to select the locations for the farm stands.
 - ORIS applied for business license permits for 4 farm stand locations in Manchester. This involved getting permission from the City of Manchester Parks and Recreation department to utilize 3 parks; and a partnership with the Manchester Community Resource Center for the 4th location. ORIS had to apply for a waiver for the fees associated with these farm stands, which was a total of \$4,600.00. The City considered each of these farm stands under the category of "Carnival" which is \$300 plus \$50 each additional day. With 18 scheduled market days per site, each location would have cost \$1,150.00. ORIS attended the aldermanic council meeting, whereby the vote approved the waiver of the fees, on the condition that in the future, we fundraise to pay in full.
8. Implement Matching Incentives Program at neighborhood delivery sites where farmers participating in the Fresh Start Farms collective are selling NH grown fruits and vegetables; reimburse farmers on a weekly basis.

- In addition to the \$2,500 in incentives that was funded through this Specialty Crop Block Grant, ORIS leveraged an additional \$8,000 in incentives from Wholesome Wave, in collaboration with the NH Food Bank. ORIS collaborated with the NH Food Bank as a regional lead for the NH SNAP Incentive Network to implement matching incentives in Manchester during the 2014 season.
- ORIS ordered 1,000 wooden tokens with green ink to implement the matching incentives program, whereby for every \$1 a customer spent using their EBT card would receive an additional \$1 token to spend on produce.
- ORIS staff distributed incentive tokens at the 4 locations on a weekly basis, and collected the redeemed tokens from farmers at the end of each market. Staff signed off on the farmer token receipts, keeping one copy for the office files for reimbursement.
- ORIS reimbursed farmers on a monthly basis. This was due to the schedule of ORIS' accountant and associated bookkeeping fees.

Significant results:

The total value of specialty crop purchases made by customers using SNAP and incentives at these 4 farm stands was \$8,790.00

9. Attend 4 newly established stands/neighborhood delivery sites weekly to:
 - Set up and manage EBT/ SNAP booth
 - ORIS PD coordinated staff schedules to complete EBT transactions at each market site for 18 weeks. Staff were responsible for communicating to SNAP customers on how the nutrition incentive program worked at point of sale, and distributing the \$1 for \$1 matching incentive in tokens.
 - Assist farmers selling NH grown fruits and vegetable (est. # of farmers 10)
 - ORIS staff provided technical assistance to 10 refugee specialty crop producers at point of sale to set up farm stand displays that were visually appealing, methods for keeping produce fresh throughout the market, and to provide information to vendors on current price reports from the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food.
 - Track SNAP and incentives sales
 - ORIS staff kept detailed daily market logs for each site which tracked SNAP usage, incentive distribution, and farmer redemption.
 - Staff tallied and reported data monthly, on SNAP usage, incentive distribution and redemption on Wholesome Wave's website, as a member of the NH SNAP Incentive Network.
10. Survey customers and vendors, monitor increase in sales.
 - All customers were asked if it was their first time shopping at the market. Answers were indicated with a Y or N on the daily market log next to their transaction. There were a total of 50 new SNAP customers throughout the season. There were 30 new customers that were shopping with vegetable vouchers provided by Catholic Medical Center.

- 1 of the 4 sites that was established did not prove to be an effective location. This site was at the Manchester Community Health Center. The vendor who sold at this location is interested in selling at other venues in the future, if it proves to be more lucrative.
- 2 of the 4 sites doubled as Fresh Start Farms CSA pickup sites. This model proved to be an effective strategy for financial viability. It is important to note that the Saturday location was a popular CSA pickup site, but not a popular farm stand. This location is adjacent to an emergency food distribution site, which may have hindered the value of SNAP purchases despite the nutrition incentives. The Wednesday market, however was a very popular farm stand with the Bhutanese population. The customers reported through an interpreter that they liked shopping at the market because they were able to buy their traditional food (mustard greens, daikon radish, bitter melon, etc.) and they were supporting refugee owned farm businesses. Customers also mentioned the social atmosphere was a reason they came to the market.
- 1 of the sites was dedicated to support a refugee owned farm business that operates independently of Fresh Start Farms. This business, Common Earth Farm, only produces specialty crops, and therefore was a good fit for the farm stand. This business really emphasizes ethnic crops, and also had a large turnout from week to week. Many of these customers placed orders ahead of time, as in a CSA, and came to pay using their SNAP benefits, or their vegetable vouchers.
- 5 farmers reported an increase in sales from these SNAP farm stands. The other 5 did not report an increase of sales.
- 10 farmers reported an increase in sales via the Fresh Start Farms CSA. It is important to note that 2 of these growers delivered their CSA shares to the Saturday pick up sites. While they did not increase their sales via SNAP at these locations, they did increase revenue at this location, which did include CSA customers paying with SNAP. 2 other farmers who did not report an increase of sales had other barriers preventing them from being a consistent presence in the market. The remaining 1 farmer who did not report an increase in sales remained consistent, however, the location was simply not successful.

11. Provide record keeping support for specialty crop production and marketing.

- ORIS staff worked closely with 10 specialty crop producers to develop production and marketing plans during January 2014. These producers created estimated financial projections for their farm business related expenses and revenue from salable specialty crops.
- ORIS staff supported farmers to keep records of actual farm business related expenses and revenue from salable specialty crops. Copies of estimated and actuals have been kept on file at ORIS' office.

12. Prepare and submit reports.

- PD monitored activities and progress under ORIS' Specialty Crop Block Grant subaward, culminating in a final report.

Significant contributions and role of project partners in the project:

- The City of Manchester provided 3 out of the 4 locations for our farm stands at City Parks. ORIS utilized the JFK Coliseum, Lafayette Park and Kalivas Park. Additionally, the City of Manchester waived the \$1,150.00 business license fee for each of the 4 locations.
- The Manchester Community Health Center hosted one of the farm stands in their parking lot. However, this location is being evaluated for future use, since it was not well attended.
- The NH Food Bank coordinated activities for the newly formed NH SNAP Incentive Network, which ORIS officially became a regional lead for greater Manchester in 2014. Through this partnership, the NH Food Bank provided \$10,000 in funding for ORIS’ incentive program. They also helped to support marketing and outreach for the SNAP accessible farm stands.
- The Catholic Medical Center raised \$10,000 to pilot a vegetable prescription program. ORIS’ PD collaborated with CMC to design the pilot, whereby patients could redeem vouchers at any of the 4 Fresh Start Farms neighborhood farm stands as well as at the Manchester Farmers Market. All of these locations were printed onto the vegetable vouchers.
- Southern New Hampshire Services, Inc. distributed 1,000 quarter page flyers promoting Fresh Start Farms SNAP accessible farm stands, to recipients of Commodity Supplemental Foods and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.
- Manchester Food Coop promoted Fresh Start Farms on their website, and on WMUR Channel 9 program “Cook’s Corner”.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds were used solely at Fresh Start Farms' farm stands, where the only items available were specialty crops. This ensured that the funds were used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Goal 1: Increase in direct to customer sales of NH grown specialty crops by refugee farmers participating in the Fresh Start Farms collective marketing initiative

Performance Measure:

of customers at each newly established farm stand

Total volume of cash SNAP sales at newly established farm stand

Target: It is expected that through marketing of efforts, 200+ customers will purchase \$50,000 worth of NH grown specialty crops at 4 SNAP accessible locations in 2014. Fresh Start Farms collective will have a 25% increase in sales of fruits and vegetables, from a total of \$35,000 in 2013 to a total of \$50,000 in 2014 as outlined below.

Actual Accomplishments: 115 different customers purchased specialty crops at 4 SNAP accessible locations in 2014.

	Benchmark - 2012	Benchmark - 2013	Target for 2014	Actual for 2014
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Outcome: increase in refugee farmers' sales of specialty crops via sales at the Manchester Farmers' Market (MFM) *	\$5,000 in sales via EBT and incentives at MFM	\$8,000 in sales via EBT and incentives at MFM and 1 additional farm stand location	\$10,000 in sales of specialty crops by Fresh Start Farms SNAP sales at the MFM are N/A	\$13,756 in sales of specialty crops by Fresh Start Farms and Common Earth Farm
Outcome: increase in sales of specialty crops via SNAP/EBT at 4 farm stands			\$3,500 in sales of specialty crops at 4 farm stand locations	\$4,373 in SNAP/EBT sales at 4 farm stands
Output: \$ sales of specialty crops via incentives program at 4 farm stands	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$4,416 in sales of specialty crops via incentive programs at 4 farm stands
Outcome: increase in sales of specialty crops via CSA	20 CSA customers at \$6,000	50 CSA customers at \$16,000	75 CSA customers at \$24,000	65 CSA customers at \$24,300
Outcome: cash sales of specialty crops at 4 farm stands	<i>Estimated at \$3,000</i>	<i>Estimated at \$6,000</i>	\$10,000	CMC vouchers and cash sales \$10,000
TOTAL ANNUAL SALES	<i>\$25,000</i>	<i>\$35,000</i>	\$50,000	\$56,845

Goal 2: Increase in knowledge and consumption of specialty crops by customers paying with SNAP benefits

Performance Measure:

of SNAP customers at each market location

of new SNAP customers at each market location (weekly)

Benchmark: Because ORIS proposes to establish several new locations, the weekly sales for cash transactions, SNAP/EBT sales, and incentives has not previously been measured; however, project staff will establish a benchmark during the project's implementation. Records will include 16-20 weekly market logs for purchase of local grown specialty crops at each of the 4 locations June - October 2014.

Target: 75% of customers paying via EBT/SNAP will increase their knowledge and consumption of NH grown fruits and vegetables. Baseline of 136 total SNAP/EBT customers in 2013 from both the farm stands and the Manchester Farmers market. We cannot determine the breakout of how many customers were from the farm stands only and the person who managed this grant has left the organization.

Actual: 91 new customers purchased specialty crops at Fresh Start Farms SNAP accessible farm stands in 2014 including 50 new customers using SNAP/EBT, 30 customers using vegetable vouchers, and 11 new CSA customers (at the 2 designated pickup sites in Manchester). We cannot determine if we have met our goal numbers as the baseline numbers are not available for comparison (see **Target** above). Our sense is that the project manager felt we did, but we can't substantiate this.

When customers would use their EBT cards to make a purchase, the staff member on site would ask if the customers were new or returning and record this information on the Market Transaction Log. If new, the staff member provided information about the farm stands and produce items, which were exclusively specialty crops. There were also recipes on site, aimed to enhance consumers' knowledge of how to prepare these crops and incorporate them into their daily consumption. See Appendix for sample log form.

Goal 3: Increase in profitability, self sufficiency, and farm business viability for 20 producers in the Fresh Start Farms collective.

Performance Measure: ORIS conducted 16 one-to-one and group interviews with farmers to review their sales records to document an increase in sales. Farmers' increased income via cash sales, SNAP transactions, and matching incentives.

Benchmark: In addition to measuring annual sales for Fresh Start Farms collective and comparing the 2014 season to the two previous years, individual farmers will track annual sales via Profit and Loss records and via the schedule C or schedule F on income tax returns. Each specialty crop grower will track their sales volume in June 2014, July 2014, August 2014, September 2014 and October 2014.

Target: 80% of farmers participating in Fresh Start Farms report an increase in farm business viability.

Actual Accomplishments: In 2014, 14 farmers sold specialty crops via the Fresh Start Farms collective and 2 farmers sold specialty crops via the Common Earth Farms cooperative. Out of the 16 farmers, 11 reported an increase in farm business viability (69%).

Beneficiaries

This project focused on enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops for producers selling via the Fresh Start Farms collective. Refugee farmers living in Manchester, NH and participating in Fresh Start Farms grow and sell only fruits and vegetables, and the sites included in this proposal supplied only fresh fruits and vegetables, which are eligible specialty crops. Under the Fresh Start Farms name, all NASAP farmers in Manchester are covered by a farm and market liability insurance policy, enabling them to market and sell their goods through farmer's markets, farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as well as wholesale and other viable outlets. Participants keep 100% of their profits to reinvest in their business.

Clearly state the number of beneficiaries affected by the project's accomplishments and/or the potential economic impact of the project.

1. 11 refugee farmers in the Fresh Start Farms Collective increased their capacity for direct marketing of specialty crops. (Collective sales increased from \$35,000 in 2013, to \$56,845 in 2014).
2. Low-income customers had increased access to fresh, local produce in 4 different neighborhoods of Manchester. (115 different customers purchased vegetables with SNAP benefits at one of four Fresh Start Farms farm stands.)

Lessons Learned

- Capturing market data on paper market logs created a large paperwork burden. ORIS' PD had to manually enter SNAP usage data, incentives distributed, incentives redeemed, and vegetable vouchers redeemed at 4 markets/week for 18 weeks. This data could be collected more efficiently at the market with the use of a tablet or laptop.
- ORIS designed black and white ¼ page flyers to promote the SNAP accessible farm stand that resulted in a huge savings in professional printing costs. Other agencies provided positive feedback on this design, as it was a good size to hand out to prospective customers.
- A large percentage of customers using their SNAP benefits at the farm stands were Bhutanese refugees. There was a need in the community for access to fresh, culturally appropriate food, and Bhutanese farmers who were filling that niche market.
- Fresh Start Farms producers from the Somali Bantu community communicated to ORIS staff that their friends and neighbors were still buying specialty ethnic crops from them in their homes, and were paying cash despite the SNAP and matching incentive program. Through an interpreter, farmers said that these customers had a difficult time believing that these farmers could legally accept SNAP/EBT and that the matching incentive program sounded "too good to be true". The Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success will be hosting informational sessions for the community prior to 2015 market season. ORIS will continue to oversee these SNAP accessible farm stands for the next 3 years, as part of a USDA Community Food Project grant.
- Not all farm stands were successful. The location that resulted from a proposed partnership with the Manchester Community Health Center was not financially viable. The locations recommended by the farmers themselves proved to be well attended. The Fresh Start Farms producers know their customers' needs and preferences, which will be the driving force behind marketing to low-income consumers, especially refugees moving forward.
- 2 of the 4 farm stand locations in this project were new in 2014. One was successful, and the other one was a complete flop. The major difference was that the location of the successful farm stand location was recommended by one of the refugee farmers. The other, was a collaboration between ORIS and the Manchester Community Health Center. The important lesson learned is that the producers understand their customers' needs best. Moving forward, ORIS will work with farmers to change the location away from the health center to where community members will be more likely to shop.
- Accepting SNAP for CSA can be a bit tricky. Since SNAP is based on income eligibility, some CSA customers lost their SNAP benefits halfway through the season. Once this happened, they were no longer able to afford the CSA. It did create a bit of a financial havoc, since these customers did not communicate prior to their shares being delivered. ORIS will have to troubleshoot for this if Fresh Start Farms CSA shares will continue to be payable via SNAP.
- As a result of the Specialty Crop Block Grant funding, ORIS was able to commit to offering the SNAP/Matching Incentive program in 2014. This provided the springboard for additional partnerships with Catholic Medical Center. In January, the Division Head for Chronic Disease Prevention at the City of Manchester's Health Department, set up a

meeting between ORIS and Catholic Medical Center's Manager of Community Outreach and Wellness to discuss Fresh Start Farms' SNAP accessible farm stands. This initial meeting led to follow-up on possibilities for ORIS to collaborate on a fruit and vegetable prescription pilot, whereby patients would receive vouchers to purchase produce from Fresh Start Farms, and receive medical follow-up. CMC fundraised \$10,000, 100% of the proceeds paid for the redemption of these vegetable vouchers. While not all \$10,000 was used during the 18 weeks that the farm stands were operating, ORIS' PD and CMC extended the season to deliver a 5 week CSA from October 27th-November 24th for 30 patients. This proved to be a great opportunity for producers in the Fresh Start Farms collective to explore the feasibility for an extended season CSA in 2015, utilizing the 5 high tunnels that were constructed in November of 2013.

- It was anticipated that 20 producers in the Fresh Start Farms collective would increase sales of specialty crops, and that 80% (16 producers) would report an increase in farm business viability. However, in 2014, only 16 producers sold specialty crops via farm stands and/or CSA, and of those, 11 reported an increase in farm business viability. 2 farmers got off farm jobs, and grew food for home consumption only. 2 farmers that sold produce in 2013, chose not to farm at all in 2014. 1 farmer consciously scaled back his business, with the primary goal of farming for supplemental income. 1 farmer had unreliable access to transportation to the farm and market sites.

While refugees are excellent farmers, there are many obstacles to a smooth transition for them to becoming for-profit agricultural producers in the U.S. Most NASAP farmers are preliterate, limited English proficient, with very little to no experience learning in a classroom environment. Additional supports and interventions for refugees are necessary for them to progress toward self-sufficiency. It is requiring an intense and constant focus to get these farmers prepared to be successful at their farm enterprises. Despite these challenges, these communities show great potential and commitment to begin farming.

Contact Person

Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success

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Additional Information

Below: Banner design: ORIS purchased one with SCBG funds, farmers then purchased their own, with their own money.



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Project 3

Project Title: Speakers for 2014 NHPGA Summer Meeting and 2015 NHPGA/NHLA Joint Winter Meeting

Applicant: New Hampshire Plant Growers Association

Final Report (previously submitted)

Project Summary

The purpose of the request for funding speakers at the Winter and Summer Meetings is to address three main issues. First, both the NHPGA and the NHLA strive to offer quality educational programs to their members. Secondly, including well known speakers attracts more attendees to programs and increases membership in the Associations.

Finally, the current economic climate has greatly impacted many businesses and individuals who are members of these Associations. As with many organizations, it has been difficult to maintain membership numbers. The Associations have been conscious of keeping dues and meeting costs as reasonable as possible for members. Receiving grant money to sponsor quality speakers allows the Associations to provide outstanding programs without significant cost increases.

This project built on continual improvement to the speaker programs enabled by previous funding through the SCBGP. The NHPGA was the recipient of grant money through the 2011 SCBG Program. The funds received were used for a keynote speaker for the 2013 Joint Winter Meeting. The speaker that year, Delilah Onofrey, was a former editor of *Greenhouse Grower Magazine* and was currently involved in marketing for the Suntory Corporation.

The speakers chosen for the 2014 Summer Meeting and 2015 Winter Meeting complemented the 2013 speaker by covering different topics that were targeted to a more diverse audience. The 2014 Summer Meeting speaker covered pest and disease issues of interest to greenhouse, landscape, and garden center attendees. The speakers for the 2015 Winter Meeting addressed topics including tree root health, overwintering perennials, and garden center marketing tips. This project also enhanced prior programming by including well-known speakers that for the most part had been heard previously by committee members.

Project Approach

The first portion of the work plan involved organizing and hosting the New Hampshire Plant Growers Association (NHPGA) 2014 Summer Meeting. The board of directors discussed and planned this meeting during monthly board meetings. The event took place on Wednesday, August 6, 2014 at Lake Street Garden Center in Salem, NH. The agenda included a tour of the Garden Center and an in-depth discussion about the newly constructed retail greenhouse. This was extremely interesting to those in attendance since information was shared about the entire project including the impact of the new area on sales.

There was also a presentation by Rick Yates of Griffin Grower Services. Rick is a highly respected and very knowledgeable technical services advisor in the horticulture industry. He asked the board for preferences on topics for his presentation. It was determined that controlling pests in retail greenhouses was an important issue for many NHPGA members. Rick addressed this topic in his PowerPoint presentation and then briefly discussed selecting pesticides compatible with biological control agents. A brief business meeting was followed by

dinner and networking. While he was in NH, Rick also visited some greenhouse operations to further share his expertise.

There was a goal of increasing attendance over the 2013 Summer Meeting by 20%. While the meeting was quite successful overall, there was not an increase in attendance. The participation in the 2013 meeting was actually quite high therefore it may not have been too realistic to expect a significant increase over that number.

The second portion of the grant activity involved organizing and hosting the 2015 Joint Winter Meeting. There were been regular committee meetings throughout the year to plan the event and organize the speaker program. The keynote speaker addressed the topic of hiring retaining employees. Surveys from previous years have suggested that topics relating to business and personnel issues are popular. There were also several concurrent sessions targeting members of both the landscape and greenhouse sectors. Pesticide credits were offered for some of these sessions.

The planning process for the Joint Winter Meeting was organized by Cathy Neal, the chairperson of the committee. Cathy and other members of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service have done much of the work in the area of recruiting speakers. Committee members from NHPGA and NHLA have contributed ideas and organized "Table Topics" for the meeting. These are informal discussions about pertinent topics in the industry. Mike McPhail of NHPGA has organized the vendor registration for the trade show. Brian Krug of UNH Cooperative Extension was responsible for making arrangements with the venue. Diane Clary with NH Farm Bureau has organized the registration process including online registration.

The SCBGP funds for both the 2014 Summer Meeting and 2015 Winter Meeting were used to enhance the competitiveness of allowable specialty crops. The Summer Meeting speaker discussed pest control on greenhouse crops that included annual flowers, herbs, and vegetables. He also included some information on pest control that would be more pollinator friendly.

The topics included in the Winter Meeting also focused solely on production and promotion of allowable specialty crops. There was more emphasis on landscape plants such as trees and shrubs than was included in the Summer Meeting. The presentation on salt application related to turf grass and tree root health. The speaker on customer marketing preferences focused on garden center displays that included annual and perennial flowers. Other sessions addressed various greenhouse crops, perennials, and trees that fall under the allowable specialty crops.

The Joint Winter Meeting was held on January 13, 2015 in Concord, NH. Patrick McGuiness was the keynote speaker. He is a speaker, author, and attorney focused on assisting green industry businesses. There were also concurrent sessions with speakers addressing the following topics: Overwintering Perennials, Gauging Customer Marketing Preferences, Spring Crop Checklist, NH Commercial Salt Applicator Certification, Tree Problems Encountered in 2014, and Tree Root Structure and Health.

The early morning sessions on Employee Sharing and Connecting High School Students with the Green Industry were also well attended. They allowed for networking opportunities that led to later discussions between companies relative to seasonal employment opportunities.

The program was extremely successful with the highest attendance recorded recently for this annual meeting. There were 179 attendees and 31 vendors.

The overall scope of the project solely benefited specialty crop sectors and funds were used entirely for that purpose.

The Joint Winter Meeting Committee met in early spring to evaluate the success of the meeting. Financial information was reviewed and the compilation of attendee surveys was discussed. The surveys asked about attendees' satisfaction with the meeting facilities, cost, program, and exhibitor arrangements among other topics. It also asked for each speaker presentation how much the given topic increased understanding or skills of the subject. There was additional space for attendees to offer specific comments or suggestions.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

There was a goal of increasing attendance over the 2013 Summer Meeting by 20%. While the meeting was quite successful overall, there was not an increase in attendance. The participation in the 2013 meeting was actually quite high therefore it may not have been too realistic to expect a significant increase over that number.

The number of attendees at the 2015 Winter Meeting totaled 210 compared to a total of 172 for the 2014 Winter Meeting. This was an increase of 22%. The goal was to increase attendance by 25% so this was nearly achieved.

Additionally, the survey results indicated that the presentation topics did significantly increase the knowledge of attendees on the given subjects. The goal was for 80% of attendees to report an increase in knowledge. A question on the survey for each session asked how much each presentation increased understanding, knowledge, or skills of the subject. For each speaker the majority of attendees ranked their increase in knowledge 4 or 5 on a scale of 1(poor) to 5(excellent). In every case more than 80% of those filling out the survey ranked their increase in knowledge 3 or better. While not everyone completed the survey, the numbers indicate that the goal was met.

Additionally, the survey results indicated that the presentation topics did significantly increase the knowledge of attendees on the given subjects. For each speaker the majority of attendees ranked their increase on knowledge 4 or 5 on a scale of 1(poor) to 5(excellent).

The funds from the SCBG were applied to speaker costs and promotion for the 2014 Summer Meeting and 2015 Joint Winter Meeting. A portion of the grant money was intended to cover costs for the speaker, Rick Yates, at the NHPGA Summer Meeting. However, Griffin

Greenhouse Services covered those costs for NHPGA. Therefore a larger percentage of the grant money was applied to costs for the Joint Winter Meeting. The costs for mailing and promotion of the Summer Meeting were \$284.35 and this was covered by the grant award.

The remainder of the \$2500 funding from the SCBGP was applied toward speaker funds and promotion for the 2015 Winter Meeting. Costs that were covered in part by SCBG funding:

Speaker Costs (Honorariums, travel, lodging):	\$1549.00
Mailings, promotions, registration costs:	\$1588.00

The SCBGP funding enabled both the NHPGA and NHLA to attain a modest net income from the program. This will enhance future programs and services for all the beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries

The combined memberships of the NHPGA and the NHLA exceed 300 businesses and individuals. Many of these companies send several employees to events such as the Joint Winter Meeting. The Granite State Landscape Architects (GSLA) organization is now interested in participating in the Winter Meeting. They have stated that they would like to participate but do not expect to share in any revenue from the meeting. This would benefit NHPGA and NHLA since it would increase visibility and offer networking opportunities with another facet of the green industry in New Hampshire.

There are several sectors of the green industry involved in the Associations. The NHLA, GSLA, and NHPGA membership lists include landscapers, landscape architects and designers, nursery operations, garden centers, perennial and greenhouse operations, and educators.

The intended beneficiaries of the project are the members of the NHPGA, GSLA and NHLA. In addition, the Associations themselves would also benefit from increased attendance at the meeting.

The economic impact of this project will be readily available and measurable. In most years, the Associations net a very modest profit from the Winter Meeting. If the number of attendees and trade show vendors increase, there will be an increased profit for both Associations. The Summer Meeting does not typically generate a significant profit since it is meant primarily as an educational and networking opportunity and does not include a trade show. The registration fee covers costs but is purposely kept at a level that makes it reasonable for companies to send several employees if they so choose.

This increased revenue will allow more financial support for future programs and member services. The following are some of the items it would help to support:

- Annual scholarships given to horticulture students at the University of New Hampshire
- Publication of material to educate members of the industry and provide pertinent updates on state issues and events
- Sponsorship of University of NH Cooperative Extension Workshops to benefit industry members

- Website work to provide information to NHLA and NHPGA members
- Twilight meetings throughout the state to allow information exchange and networking

Lessons Learned

The planning and execution of the 2014 Summer Meeting occurred without unexpected delays or challenges. The attendance at the meeting was not as high as our goal of having a 20% increase, but as mentioned previously, the 2013 Summer Meeting was exceptionally well attended.

The planning and execution of the 2015 Joint Winter Meeting also went according to schedule. Holding regular planning meetings throughout the year and having target dates for completion of tasks was extremely beneficial. Selecting speakers that at least one committee member has heard in person has been found to be important.

Contact Person

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Project 4

Project Title: Demonstrating Strategies to Promote Pollinator Conservation for New Hampshire Specialty Crop Growers

Applicant: New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD)

Final Report (previously submitted)

Project Summary

Pollination by wild and managed bees is a critical component to food production. Habitat loss, combined with exposure to lethal chemicals and inadvertent but harmful land management practices are significantly reducing bee populations, negatively affecting pollination and the farmers that rely on it. According to the most recent report from the US Pollinator Health Task Force (“National Strategy to Promote the Health of Honey Bees and other Pollinators”, published May 19, 2015):

- Declines of both honey bees and wild bees are taking place world-wide
- Honey bees have been in serious decline for more than three decades in the United States
- Population declines for non-managed bee pollinators are also occurring, and
- Meeting the growing demand for pollination services in agricultural production is becoming increasingly difficult

Specialty crop farmers in New Hampshire have historically taken pollination services by honey bees and wild bees for granted: most have either been unaware of the ongoing declines or, if

aware, have lacked the knowledge or skills to actively promote pollinators on their farms. The purpose of this project was to provide specialty crop farmers with the information and tools they need to support bee pollinators and ensure adequate pollination services in their farm operations.

This project did not build on a previous SCBG funded project.

Project Approach

The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts envisioned a three-fold approach to encourage pollinator promotion by specialty crop growers: county-level workshops to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and promote their deliberate cultivation; the creation of demonstration sites situated around the state to showcase best management practices for bee pollinators, and; a state-wide Pollination Summit aimed at bringing together state and regional experts to discuss NH pollination issues with a roundtable of specialty crop producers. All told, a minimum of 100 specialty crop beneficiaries were intended to gain skills and knowledge specific to promoting bee pollinators as a result of this project.

Activities Performed

The Promoting Pollinator project accomplished the following intended goals:

- Distributed an initial state-wide producer survey, resulting in 137 completed surveys by specialty crop growers.
- Compiled survey results to form a meaningful baseline of New Hampshire specialty crop growers' knowledge and skills regarding bee pollinators.
- Completed 14 workshops across the state of New Hampshire, attracting a total of 280 participants including at least 80 specialty crop growers. Four of the workshops also included discussion of pollinator-friendly IPM practices designed to inform pesticide applicators and offered continuing education pesticide credits. Post-workshop surveys were distributed at the completion of each workshop, and results compiled to measure growers' increased pollinator knowledge.
- Completed the installation of 10 demonstration sites around the state featuring a variety of strategies available to specialty crop producers for promoting pollinators. Printed and distributed brochures for each demonstration site (see appendix) to encourage visits and explain the featured BMPs.
- Convened a Pollinator Summit in partnership with the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the University of New Hampshire's Cooperative Extension that featured a wide array of state and regional pollinator experts and attracted 260 attendees. A detailed final survey was completed by 155 people, of which at least 29 were farmers.
- Partnered with the Xerces Society, UNH, UNH Cooperative Extension, NRCS, the Northern

New England Pollinator Habitat Working Group and other natural resource specialists on workshops, demonstration sites and the Pollinator Summit.

Favorable Developments

- As a result of this project, the Sullivan County Conservation District was invited to join the Northern New England Pollinator Habitat Working Group (NNEPHWG), a regional initiative that brings together pollinator habitat specialists from 4 states (Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire). The purpose of the NNEPHWG is to promote and improve pollinator habitat management efforts by reviewing scientific literature, exchanging ideas and disseminating its findings. Participation on this working group benefits all participants of this project by providing access to: regional agricultural and pollinator specialists; ongoing and under-reported research, and; new and evolving methods and techniques aimed at promoting native pollinators on farms.
- Also resulting from this project, the Cheshire County Conservation District subsequently applied for and received additional funding from the NH Conservation and Heritage License Plate (“Mooseplate”) Program and the USDA Conservation Innovation Grant to expand its work on promoting pollinator habitat. The supplemental funds will establish pollinator habitat for non-farming landowners, support inventorying and monitoring of existing beneficial pollinator plants on candidate habitat sites, install additional pollinator habitats, and educate the public.
- As a part of this project, the Rockingham County Conservation District experimentally applied a monocot selective herbicide on two existing pollinator plantings, in order to reduce the percentage of grasses dominating and suppressing the intended flowering perennials. The use of the material was very successful, which not only significantly improved the treated plantings but informed NRCS and other project partners about the efficacy of this technique to manage existing plantings. From this successful trial, the strategic use of monocot-selective clethodim herbicides to diminish the invasion of pollinator plantings by grasses will now be more widely recommended for maintaining and improving pollinator habitats throughout New England.

Significant Contributions of Project Partners

- The Natural Resources Conservation Service staff contributed by: providing technical expertise to specialty crop growers interested in promoting pollinators on their lands; helping Districts to identify growers willing to host demonstration sites; promoting District workshops; advising growers and District staff with demonstration site design and implementation considerations, and; helping to coordinate and co-sponsor the Pollinator Summit.
- UNH Cooperative Extension contributed by: promoting and helping to present District

pollinator workshops; identifying possible demonstration sites and partner farmers; coordinating the Northern New England Pollinator Habitat Working Group (NNEPHWG), and; helping to coordinate and co-sponsor the Pollinator Summit.

- The NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food contributed by helping to coordinate and co-sponsor the Pollinator Summit.
- The Xerces Society, University of New Hampshire Bee Lab, University of Maine professors and other pollinator specialists contributed their expertise by agreeing to present at District workshops and the Pollinator Summit.

Work Plan Goals/Accomplishment Comparison

<u>Goal</u>	<u>Status</u>
1. Pre-workshop survey – goal: 75 SC producer participants	Task completed - 137 SC producer participants (goal exceeded)
2. 12 Workshops (at least 2 of which to include pesticide credits) SC producers @ each workshop	Task completed - 14 workshops, 4 of which included pesticide credits (goal exceeded) - goal: 12 - total of 80 SC producers for all workshops (did not meet goal)
3. Post-workshop surveys - goal: 80% of respondents report increased knowledge	Task completed - 100% of respondents (80/80) reported increased knowledge (goal exceeded)
- goal: 50% of respondents report intention to increase or initiate activities	- 81% of respondents (65/80) reported intention to increase or initiate activities (goal exceeded)
4. Outreach	Task Completed and ongoing - all Conservation Districts report increased pollinator outreach resulting from participation in this project
5. 10 Demonstration site installations	Task Completed: 10 demonstration sites installed across the State. Brochures for all sites available and in print.

6. Pollinator summit
- goal: at least 100 participants

Task Completed: 260 people attended, of which at least 27 were SC producers (goal exceeded)

7. Overall Project Goal:
- 100 SC beneficiaries affected

GOAL ACHIEVED

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Baseline Survey

Baseline data was collected through a state-wide pollinator survey completed by 137 specialty crop producers, evenly distributed in all 10 New Hampshire counties. Findings from the survey revealed that:

- More than 70% of all respondents grow 3 pollination-dependent crops: cucurbits (squash, pumpkin, cucumbers, etc.), tomatoes and peppers. More than 65% of all respondents grow blueberries, but less than 50% grow either apples, strawberries, peaches, or brambles (raspberries and blackberries). Only 2% of respondents (3 growers of 135 responding) produce cranberries.
- About 50% of respondents grow pollination-dependent crops both indoors (in high tunnels) as well as outdoors – the other 50% grow these crops outdoors only.
- Nearly 60% of respondents rely entirely on wild pollinators to pollinate their crops. 12% of respondents import bees for pollination, while about one third (30%) keep honeybee hives on their farms.
- 90% of all respondents have tried promoting native bees on their farms by using one or more practices. But by far the most popular practice (84% of respondents) was the least active or quantifiable, namely minimizing exposure to harmful pesticides. Just over half of respondents have tried “planting wildflowers adjacent to crops to provide additional nectar and pollen”. The least attempted practice was installing bee nesting boxes (15%).
- When asked if these practices have been successful, just 17% responded “yes, definitely” while 83% responded “yes, probably”, “somewhat”, or “don’t know”.
- 8% of respondents were not concerned about pollination on their farms. The vast majority, 92%, were either very concerned or somewhat concerned.
- 94% of all respondents were interested in learning more about promoting native pollinators on their farms.

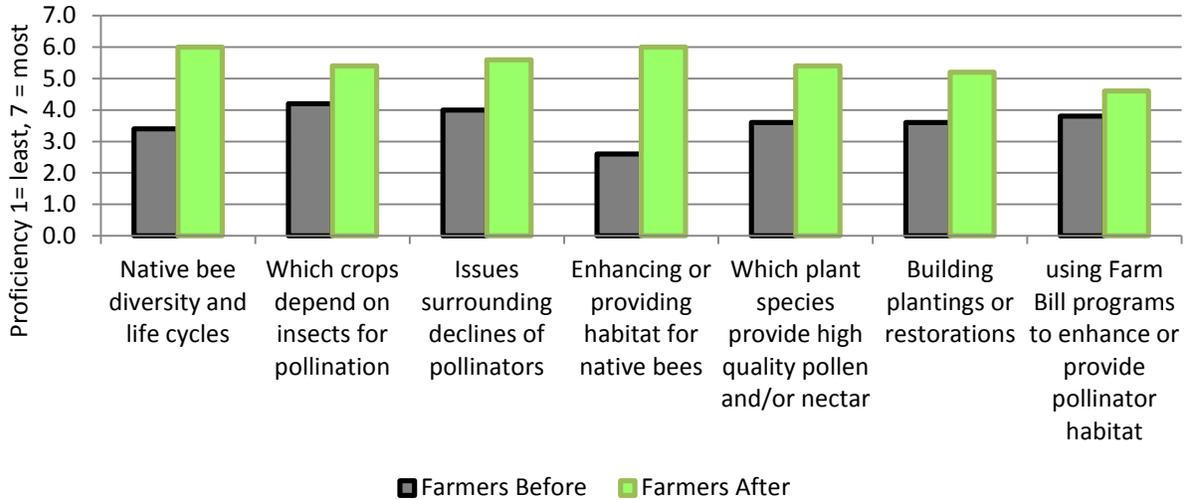
Baseline Data Results (~135 respondents)

% Farms Growing Crops Requiring Pollination	Cucurbits, tomatoes and peppers	Blueberries	Apples, strawberries, peaches and brambles	Cranberries
	>70% each	66%	<50% each	2%
Where Crops are Grown	Indoors and Outdoors	Outdoors only		
	49%	50%		
How Pollination Needs are Being Met	Rely on Wild bees	Hives Maintained on farm	Hives are Imported	
	58%	30%	12%	
Strategies tried to Encourage Native Bees	Minimizing exposure to pesticides	Planting wildflowers or herbs	Field Management	Installing bee boxes
	84%	70%	82%	15%
Were the strategies successful?	Yes, Definitely	Probably or Somewhat	Don't Know	
	17%	53%	30%	
Concerned about pollination on their farm	Very Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Not Concerned	
	49%	43%	8%	
Interested in learning more?	Yes	Somewhat	No	
	76%	19%	5%	

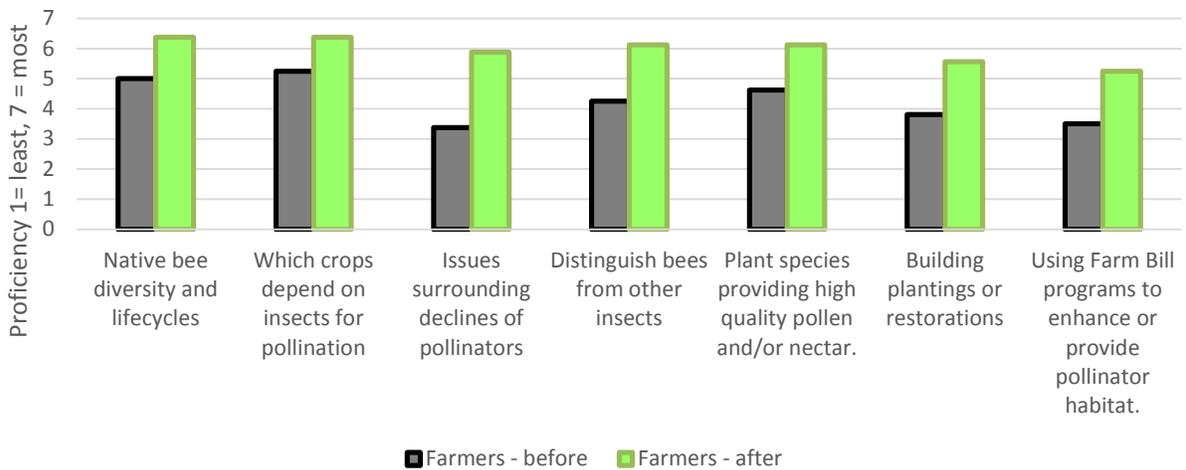
Pollinator Workshops

Fourteen workshops were held, 4 of which also offered continuing education credits for pesticide applicators (see example announcements in appendix). In total, the workshops attracted approximately 280 participants, of which at least 80 were specialty crop farmers. Other attendees included landowners, gardeners, teachers, students, foresters, beekeepers, plant nursery employees, biologists and environmental outreach professionals. Post-workshop surveys completed by the farmers clearly document the increased knowledge of native bee pollinators and improved habitat management skills gained from the workshops:

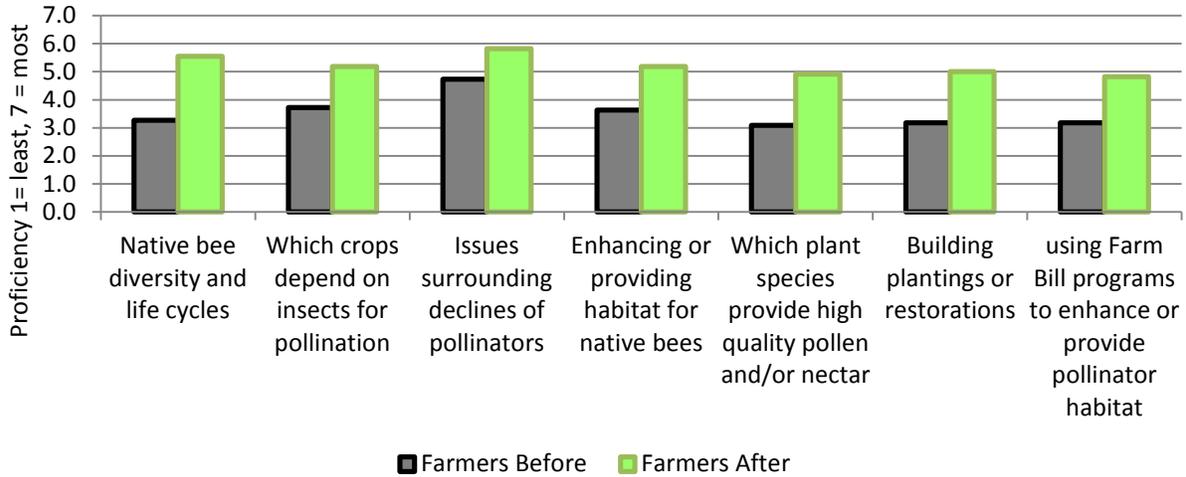
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
 Carroll County Workshop:
 5 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 11 attending) 5/26/15



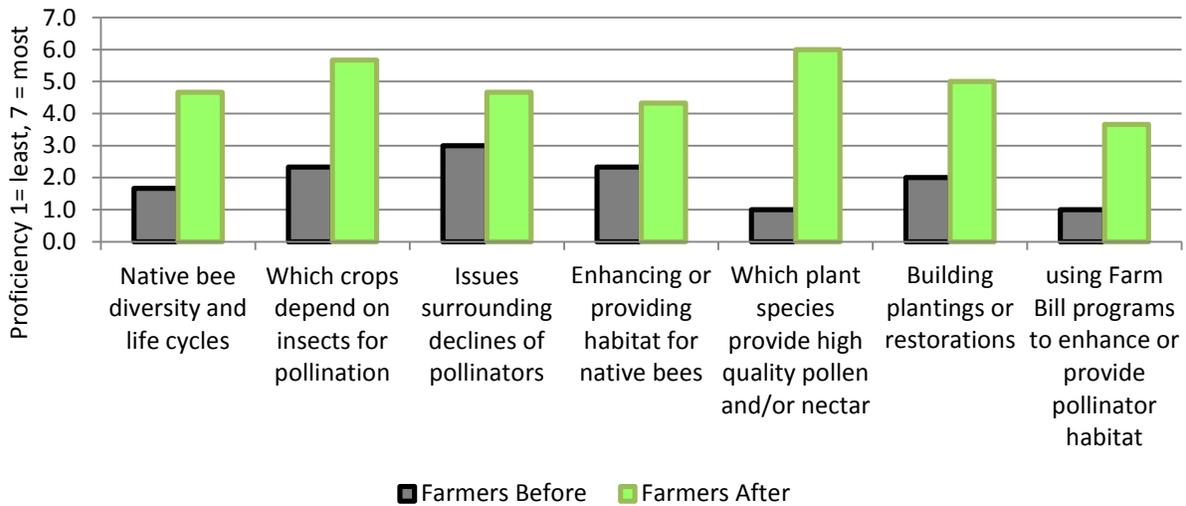
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
 Cheshire County Workshop:
 16 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 56 attending) 3/25/15



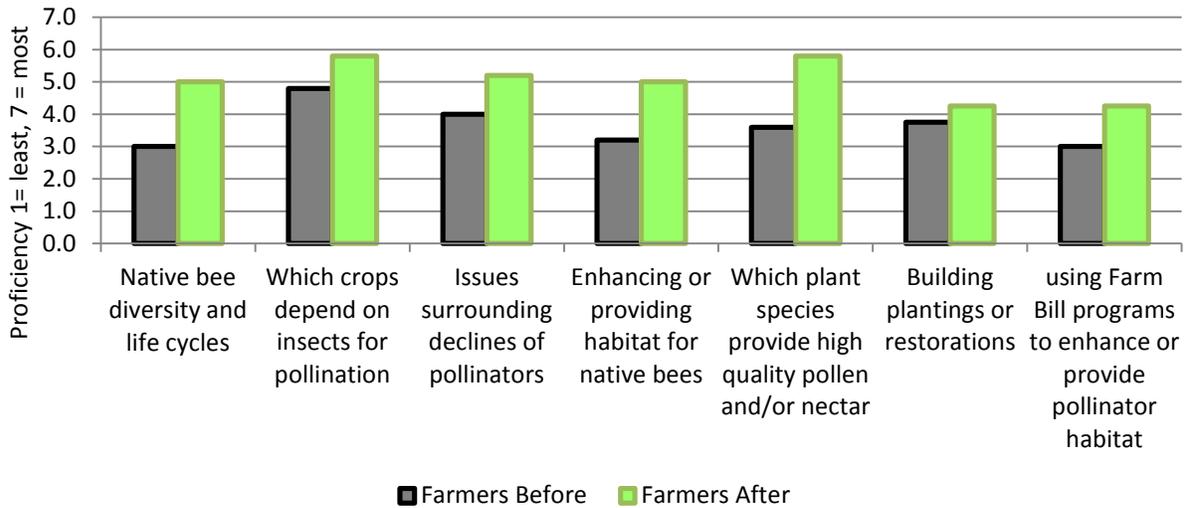
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
 2nd Cheshire County Workshop:
 11 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 27 attending) 5/12/15



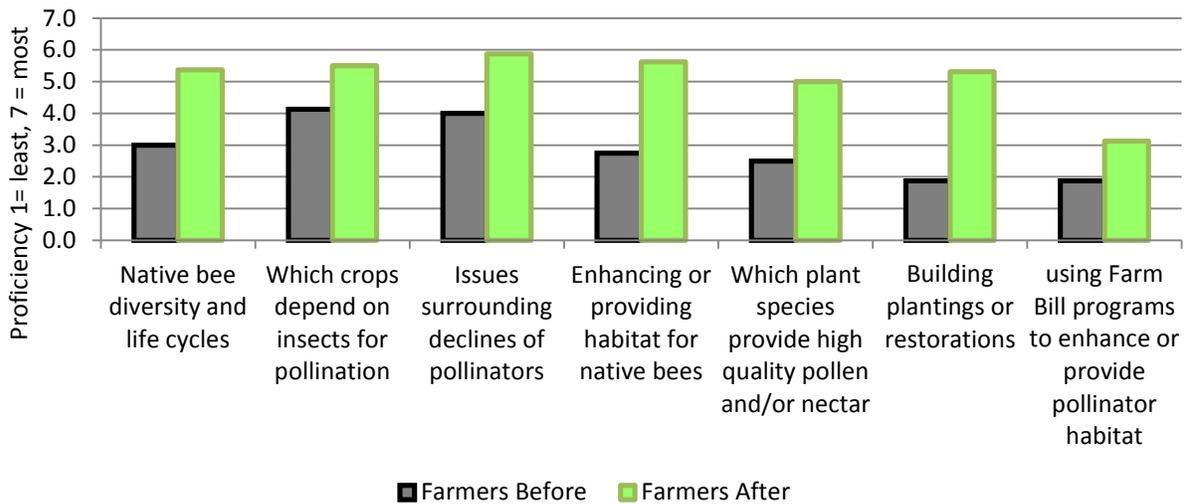
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
 Coos County Workshop:
 3 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 8 attending) 6/27/15



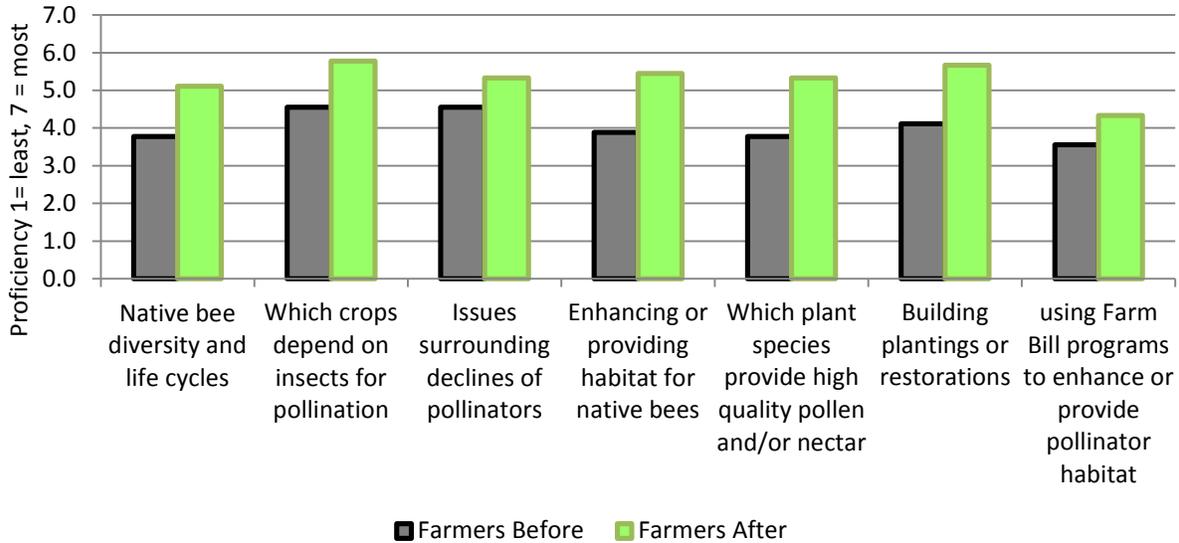
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
 Grafton County Workshops:
 5 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 27 attending)
 2/20/15 and 5/13/15 (2 events combined)



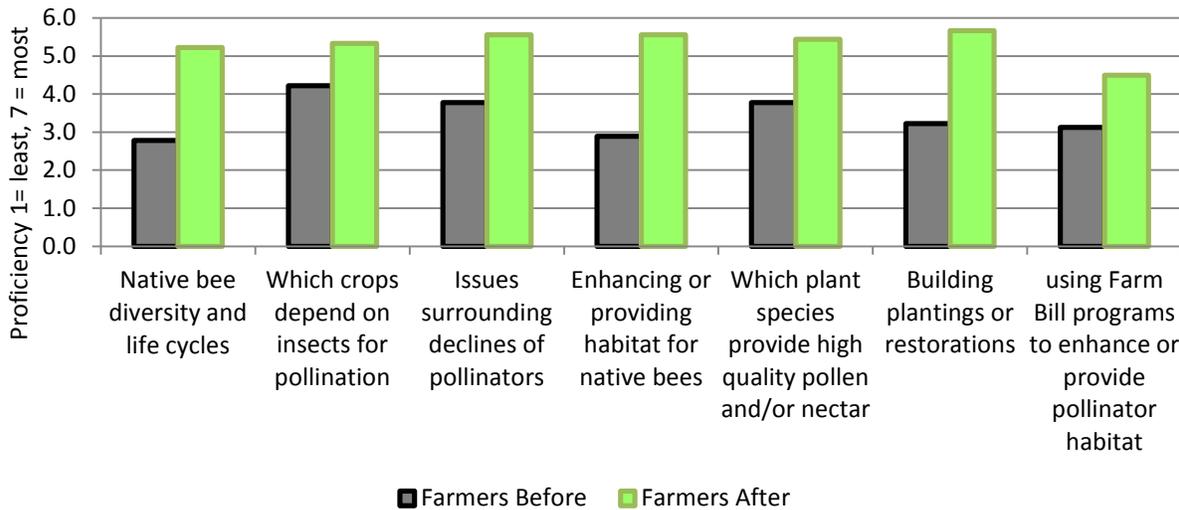
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
 Hillsborough County Workshop:
 8 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 15 attending) 5/12/15



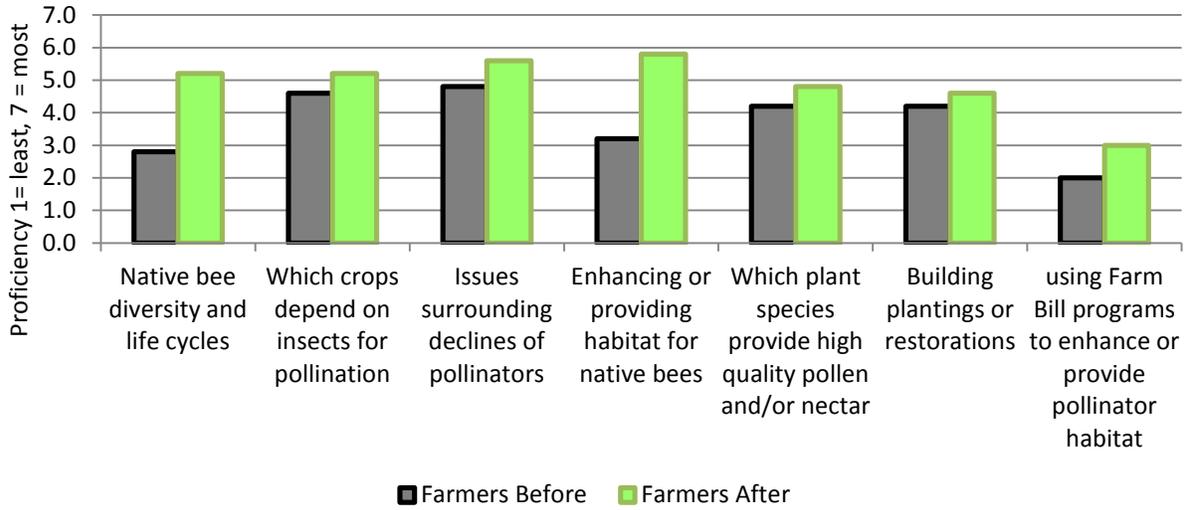
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
Merrimack County Workshop:
9 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 18 attending) 5/13/15



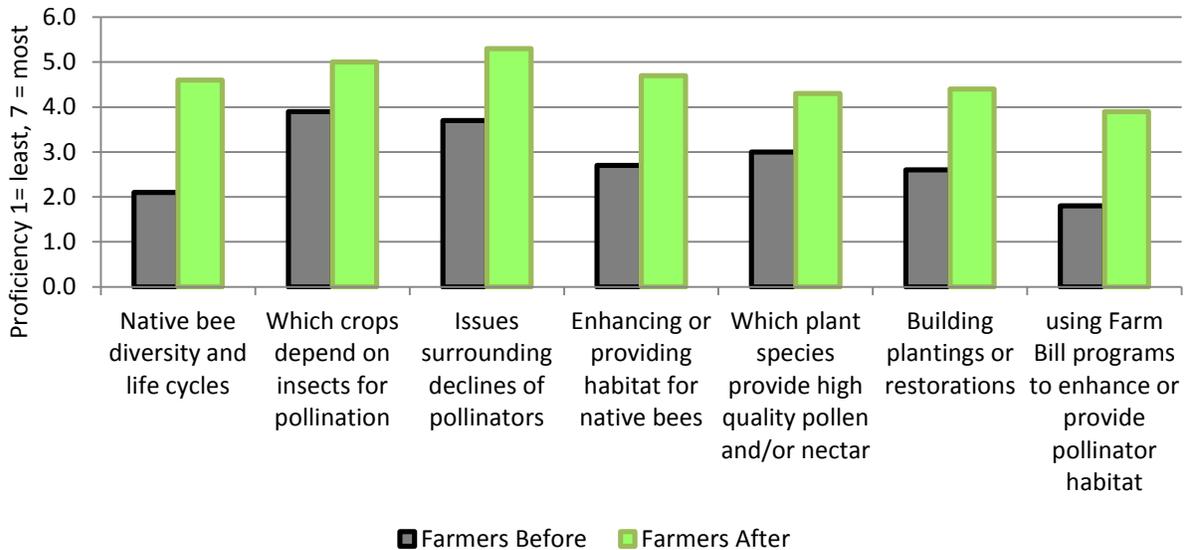
Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After
Rockingham County Workshops:
9 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 20 attending)
5/14/15 and 10/2/15 (2 events combined)



Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After Strafford County Workshop:
5 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 10 attending) 4/22/15



Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After Sullivan County Workshops:
12 Specialty Crop Farmers (of 51 attending) 12/4/15



- ❖ *Note: There are no survey results from the Belknap County Conservation District: Although the workshop was conducted and approximately 20 people attended, the survey forms were lost before they could be tabulated.*

Demonstration Sites

10 demonstration sites were established, all of which will remain open to the public through 2016 (see brochures in appendix). The 10 site locations are:

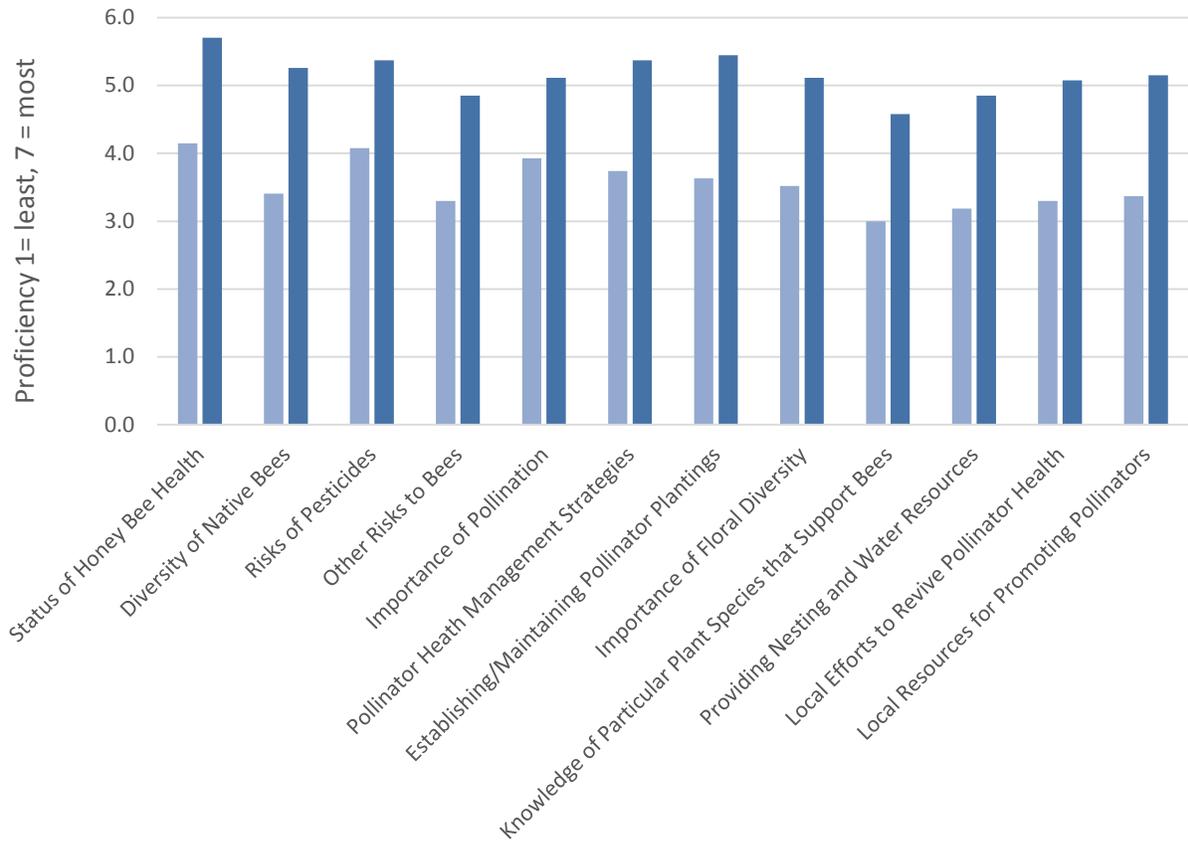
Sullivan County Complex, Unity, NH
Spring Ledge Farm, New London, NH
Carter Hill Orchard, Concord, NH
Mildred's Drumlin Farm, Dover, NH
Goss Farm, Rye, NH
Picnic Rock Farms, Meredith, NH
New Earth Organic Farm, Colebrook, NH
Brookdale Fruit Farm, Hollis, NH
Grafton County Complex, North Haverhill, NH
Alyson's Orchard, Walpole, NH

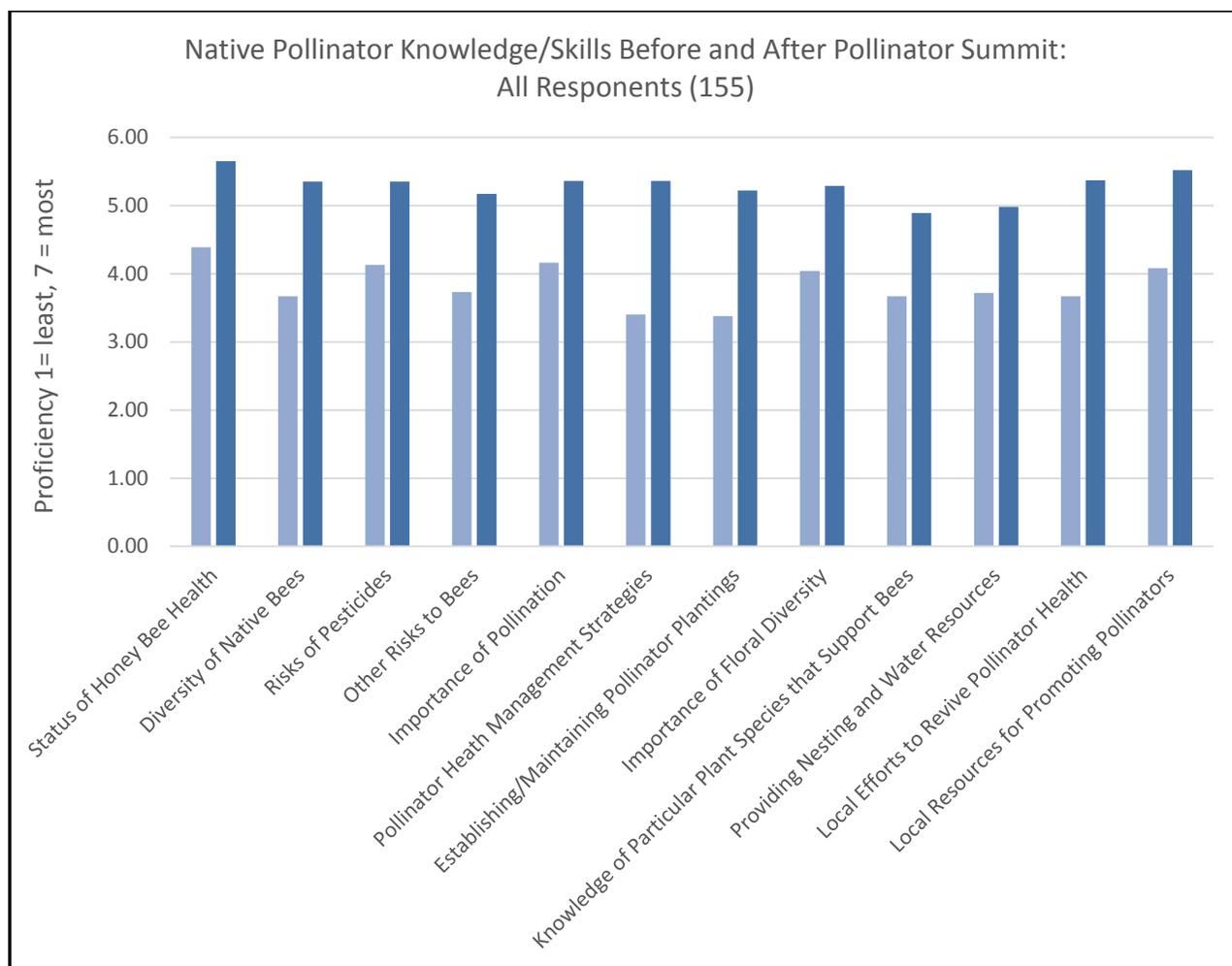
Best management practices on view at the sites include site preparation techniques, working with existing landscapes, planting and cultivating native vs. non-native plant species, providing a succession of blooming plants with a mix of flower shapes (to accommodate different bee tongue lengths) throughout the growing season, seed plantings vs. plug plantings of perennials, managing for pollinators in fruit orchards, providing protection from pesticide drift, providing areas of woody debris and exposed soils for nest sites, nesting boxes and other nesting considerations, and encouraging pollinators in unproductive sites.

Pollinator Summit

A statewide Pollinator Summit was held at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord, NH on November 2, 2015 (see appendix). The event was coordinated in partnership with the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, UNH Cooperative Extension and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the venue was filled to capacity – 260 people attended. The original vision for the event, namely that it “bring together state and regional experts to discuss NH pollination issues with a roundtable of specialty crop producers”, was realized: 14 speakers, including college professors, researchers, specialty crop producers, regulators, beekeepers, entomologists and landscapers gave presentations which included two roundtable discussions. A detailed exit survey (see appendix) was distributed and completed by 155 of those in attendance, of which 29 were specialty crop farmers. Survey results document that specialty crop farmers (as well as all other attendees) significantly increased their knowledge of bee pollinators and their promotion:

Native Pollinator Knowledge/Skills Before and After Pollinator Summit: Specialty Crop Farmers (29)





In addition, when asked in the survey “Did attending this conference change what you intend to do to support pollinators on your property?” 93% of the responding specialty crop farmers (27/29) answered “Yes”. Of those, the particular changes farmers intend to make are, in order of frequency:

- To provide additional resources for pollinators (plantings, nest boxes, etc.)
(24/27 – 89%)
- To adjust management (tillage, mowing, etc)
(20/27 – 74%)
- To consider pesticide impacts on pollinators in future pest control decisions
(13/27 – 48%)

- To seek out additional resources for financial and/or technical assistance in pollinator support and protection
(11/27 – 40%)
- To contribute to regional knowledge through community engagement, hosting workshops, assisting in monitoring projects, etc.
(9/27 – 33%)
- Other (5/27 – 19%): “Less mowing and better plant selection and diversity”, “education”, “open tours for school children locally”, “better confidence in my NRCS pollinator contract”, and “reporting the info of this meeting to Lancaster Farming”.

Beneficiaries

The intended purpose of the project was to benefit a minimum of 100 specialty crop farmers by increasing their knowledge of pollinators and promotion techniques. Of the 280 people that attended the County pollinator workshops, at least 80 were specialty crop farmers who voluntarily completed the post-workshop surveys. Similarly, of the 260 that attended the Pollinator Summit, at least 29 were specialty crop producers. While some of the farmers at the Summit may have also attended a County workshop (and be double-counted), it is also true that additional farmers likely attended the events without completing the surveys. And so, taken together the goal of benefitting 100 specialty crop farmers was probably met, if not exceeded, by these events alone. Including the additional farmers who visited or will visit the demonstration sites, as well as other farmers that are in active contact with the Conservation Districts for technical assistance, the project definitely achieved its primary goal.

In addition to the target farmer audience, many related groups clearly benefited from the completion of this project. Landowners and gardeners learned how to promote wild bees and increase bee diversity on their lands, increasing the pollination of not only crops but all native plant species that depend on pollination to reproduce. Bee-keepers benefited from the heightened awareness of bee habitat requirements and the implementation of practices that directly improve the health and survival of maintained hives. Landscapers learned how to incorporate pollinator needs into their projects and for their clients. And a variety of other stakeholders, including teachers, students, foresters, plant nursery employees, biologists and environmental outreach professionals also increased their knowledge of this important issue.

Lessons Learned

The project was an excellent opportunity for the 10 Conservation Districts in New Hampshire to work collaboratively as a state-wide team. The experience was constructive and effective, but also instructive as New Hampshire Districts are typically accustomed to working independently. More broadly, the opportunity for the Districts and the NH Association of Conservation Districts to actively collaborate with a variety of leading organizations and agencies on this topic was a very welcome and positive experience for everyone involved.

One intended project goal, namely that at least 12 specialty crop producers attend each of the 12 County workshops (for a total of 144), was not met. While a few programs were able to exceed this number most fell short, resulting in a total of about 80 farmers for all of the workshops. Similarly, only slightly more than 10% of the 260 attendees of the Pollinator Summit self-identified as farmers, the event's target audience. In retrospect, this relatively low turnout of farmers for the events is not surprising given their more immediate needs and concerns. Further, for most producers pollination needs in New Hampshire appear to be being met by wild and managed bees, at least for the time being. But the fact remains that many specialty crop farmers in New Hampshire were not reached by this project, despite aggressive event promotion by the Districts as well as several partner agencies with comprehensive mailing lists. This ongoing challenge – reaching farmers with critical information they need to avert problems later on - is one that requires continued focus from all of the state's conservation organizations.

Contact Person

The coordinator of this project is Lionel Chute, District Manager of the Sullivan County Conservation District and Director of Natural Resources for Sullivan County, New Hampshire. Lionel's contact information is:

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lchute@sullivancountynh.gov

Project 5

Project Title: Local Foods Plymouth Farm to Desk Project

Applicant: Local Foods Plymouth

Final Report (previously submitted)

Project Summary

Local Foods Plymouth (LFP) was founded in 2005 as a Farm to Plate Program: a year-round, online farmers' market ever since. Up until 2013, LFP was lacking direct involvement from the business community. LFP believed if a program was offered allowing employees to do their online shopping and have specialty crops delivered to their workplace that same week, LFP could engage this workplace population to become local specialty crop food buyers.

With this target in mind, the original application to the Specialty Crop Block Grant was to launch what would be called LFP's "Farm to Desk Project" (F2D).

Stated Project goals included:

- *connecting specialty crops producer with businesses/employees
- *expanding the LFP customer base
- *increasing year-round easy access to specialty crops

- *reducing farmers' costs for selling specialty crops
- *reducing food transportation related energy consumption
- * improving NH's food security by strengthening viability of local farms
- *helping sustain local economy using "Local Multiplier Effect"

Describe the importance and timeliness of the project:

This was the perfect time to launch this initiative. Firstly, there is a growing national trend to build strong local food economies: a goal has been set for New England to source half its food locally by 2060.

Secondly, F2D was timely at a local level as the current Plymouth NH Master Plan supports growing the local food movement to preserve farmland and to benefit the entire community. This Master Plan recognizes a healthy population is supported by services that meet the health needs of all. These services include promotion of exercise and wellbeing/access to healthy food supplemented by local agricultural initiatives.

F2D contributed to this growing national trend, and supported the NE and Plymouth, NH goals by engaging the business community in the effort to grow the local food economy and to make healthy food choices by buying local specialty crops for their families.

Project Approach

The Project design occurred during the first 3 months of 2014 using grant funds from the NH Charitable Foundation. F2D was then launched in April 2014. Activities performed for implementation & operation of F2D are outlined on the timetable below:

Activity Performed	Actual Timeline
Developed & distribute brochures & other marketing materials specifically promoting specialty crop products	Jan 27th – Feb 3rd
Developed Specialty Crop Lists & Amended website	Began Feb 3 rd Also an Ongoing Activity
Canvassed business community to promote F2D and to describe the F2D Project utilizing LFP's current business membership	Feb 3 rd – March 7 th
Presentation at Plymouth State University (PSU)	March 11, 2014
Development of surveys to track success of project	March 14, 2014
Presentation to Squam Lakes Association (SLA)	March 18th
Presentation to Squam Lakes Conservation Society (SLC)	March 18th
Follow-up with Employees at each Business	Began March 14 th Also an Ongoing Activity

First Delivery to PSU	April 4, 2014
Coordinate with Farmers to confirm produce availability for increase in buyer numbers	April 4, 2014 & thereafter weekly
Distribute coolers & ice packs etc.	First Week April
Contacted all employee participants to go over website ordering process	March 11 - 21
Begin first week of ordering & product delivery	April 4, 2014
Weekly data collection: processing of web reports including separating out non-specialty crop product orders	Began April 4, 2014
Second Round of Presentations	April 8 – May 1, 2014
Weekly troubleshooting	Jan throughout
Weekly data collection & compiling sales spreadsheets from reports	April & Throughout the Year
Third Round of Presentations	May 1, 2014 – October 2014
Weekly/Monthly bookkeeping	April & Throughout the Year
Annual Report to NH Charitable Foundation	December 1, 2014
Distribute Surveys to Farmers, Businesses & Employees)	December 1, 2014
Finalize Survey results	December 15, 2014
Implement changes where possible based on results: Extended buying period & Set-up auto reminder buyer email each Tuesday	January 2015
Cheerleading initiative to encourage new & renewed memberships	March – October 2015
Continue Project: Deliveries and Growth	Throughout 2015

Significant results, accomplishments, conclusions and recommendations:

By December 31, 2014, LFP had 20 actively participating business and 134 employee members. Members were added through outreach campaign including canvassing businesses by email, personal contacts, phone calls, tabling events, brochure mailings, and through presentations at their place of work.

Between project launch and November 1, 2015, F2D members purchased over \$13,300 worth of non-specialty crop products from the farmers, offering additional income to the farmers.

Though the Grant period ended March 1, 2015, LFP continue to market to other businesses into the spring. A large campaign was launched in the summer of 2015, but not only did LFP fail to see new memberships coming onboard, existing members were not renewing. We are in the

process of assessing the F2D project to see where improvements can be made. Though our hope is to relaunch, if we are unable to see how to revitalize this project, it may have to remain dormant. We are coordinating with other entities in NE that operate similar projects to see what we might be able to add or change to make F2D sustainable. At this point in time, we conclude that the project is missing some aspects that would keep it sustainable. We recommend touching base with us in the spring to 2016 to get a list of our recommendations regarding this type of farm to desk project.

At the end of the 2014 grant year, LFP submitted an annual report for the F2D project under the SCBGP. This report provided a detailed description of the work completed during that year.

The work completed in 2015 was built upon the groundwork laid in 2014 under the previously funded SCBGP period. The 2015 work compliment and enhanced that previously completed 2014 work. For example, the SCBGP 2014 funds allowed LFP to make the F2D project very visible and respected in the community. This gave LFP the ability to go to new businesses with a track-record and the ability to provide positive testimony, to potential new participants, from F2D participants. This was a very favorable outcome and helped open the doors for even great visibility about F2D.

As stated in the annual report, though design of the project began in January 2014, there was a delay in aggressively implementing the Activities Plan as outlined on the above timetable. This delay resulted from not obtaining NH Governor and Council Approval until June 2, 2014 and then the first payment of the Specialty Crop Block Grant funds was not received until June 24, 2014. A direct impact of the delay in approval and funding was the inability to hire a project coordinator during the implementation phase.

A second problem the project faced was transportation of goods. Due to the overwhelming initial success of engaging business partners and the large number of participants, the number of products purchased weekly by the fall of 2014 was greater than what could easily fit in the delivery vehicle. The F2D coordinator had to make multiple trips back to the product storage site and had to made adjustments in the sorting, storage, and delivery of the large number of products ordered weekly. Though we talked about investing in a delivery vehicle, funds were not readily available to add this to our budget.

The third problem faced was related to overnight storage of products: vendors delivered products Thursday and F2D deliveries were completed each Friday. On a few occasions, produce were damaged, wilted, and just unattractive. As LFP gained experience with this project, steps were taken to assure products freshness and integrity.

LFP originally planned to sign up businesses with five or more employees. As the awareness of the project grew, we found businesses approaching LFP and wanting to participate. Given the overall goal of connecting local people with local goods, we opted to open up F2D to any local business wanting to participate, regardless of the number of employees.

The last grant installment was received from NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food in early October 2014. Up until November 2014, participants paid \$15.00 for their F2D membership. A decision to increase F2D membership price from \$40.00 was made at that point. LFP felt this increase in the membership fee would allow F2D to be financially self-supporting after grants funds were exhausted in 2015 and would give members more sense of “ownership” in the project and give them an incentive to buy on a weekly basis. As stated above though, membership and participation dramatically dropped off after the holidays in 2014 and never recovered.

Though members were able to purchase non-specialty crop items through the F2D Project, LFP tracked specialty crop item sales separately, by way of quarterly sales reports generated from “ZenCart”, LFP’s host web site. LFP did this so that SCBG funds were used only for the specialty crop program.

The Coordinator assigned a modifier on all sales tracking sheets distinguishing eligible specialty crop items. For instance, review of the below sample report determines available honey and apples are specialty crop items:

v_products_vendor	v_products_name	v_specialty crop	v_cost
sc_lfp1141	honey –pint	Sc	\$8.00
mr1018	english muffin - half dozen	n_sc	\$3.50
sc_cm1004	macintosh – ½ bushel	sc	\$15.00
hn1002	eggs – doz	n_sc	\$3.50

In addition, during the grant-funded period, the Coordinator generated quarterly ZenCart reports distinguishing what percentage of overall Farm to Desk Project sales were eligible specialty crop items. For example, review of the below sample report determines \$250.00 as being 100% of quarterly Farm to Desk sales, of which \$180.00 (or 72%) are specialty crop items

v_products_vendor	v_products_name	v_specialty crop	v_cost	v_farm2desk	v_%wk_sales
sc_lfp1141	honey –pint	Sc	120.00	Yes	48%
mr1018	english muffin - half dozen	n_sc	40.00	Yes	16%
sc_cm1004	macintosh - ½ bushel	Sc	60.00	Yes	24%
hn1002	eggs – doz	n_sc	30.00	No	12%

Project Partners included the following local employers:

Campton Elementary School	Genesis Behavioral Health
Speare Memorial Hospital	Off the Hanger
Dressers Unlimited	PAREI
Squam Lakes Conservation Society	Mid State Health Center
Holderness Prep School	White Mountain National Forest Service
North Way Bank, West	Enterprise Center

Plymouth Elementary School	Speare Primary Care
Plymouth State University	Current Graphics
Squam Lakes Association	Mega Print
Resource Management Inc.	Plymouth Regional High School

These partners opened their doors to LFP during the business and community canvassing activity (as outlined in the work plan). The Coordinator went onsite and used staff meeting time to describe the F2D project and to sign up participants. The partners also allowed us to appoint a primary contact person at each business to form a cheerleading and informational role. Allowing LFP to do this had a direct impact on workplace flow and showed strong support for this Project. LFP was also invited to setup at community tabling events to broadcast information about F2D.

Once the businesses signed up as participants, they allowed LFP to come to their workplace weekly to deliver products to members who had ordered. This process could have been seen as disruptive but instead, the participant business partners welcomed LFP staff literally with smiles and positive feedback.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

As stated in LFP's original SCBGP grant application, the goals of implementation of the F2D project included:

1. Connecting specialty crops producer with businesses/employees
2. Expanding the LFP customer base
3. Increasing year-round easy access to specialty crops
4. Reducing farmers' costs for selling specialty crops: LFP
5. Reducing food transportation related energy consumption
6. Improving NH's food security by strengthening viability of local farms
7. Helping sustain local economy using "Local Multiplier Effect"

LFP believes all these goals were met by the sheer facts that under the F2D project, new members joined and participated in LFP and LFP sold more products after the Project was implemented.

LFP's original SCBGP grant application stated that the hope was to increase the number of annual buyers and the amount of specialty crop products they purchase and therefore how many specialty crop products the farmers sell. LFP projected in the application that 40 new users and up to 5 new specialty crop farmers would be participating in the Project, with \$40,000 increase in farmer sales. Actual calculations were that sales increased approximately \$22,000, which fell well short of the projection. Approximately \$13,304.93 worth of specialty crop products were sold between March 23, 2014 and October 1, 2015 and LFP added 20 businesses and 134 new users who were actively purchasing these crops.

During the grant period, the growth of LFP through the F2D project allowed LFP to add new vendors. Specifically, 10 new specialty crop producers were added to our program (for more details of the specialty crop products offered, please see the attached list). These vendors ranged from herb growers, to honey and apple producers.

Prior to the implementation of F2D, there were no local avenues for delivery of specialty crop to the workplace. F2D gave the specialty crop producers an opportunity to sell their specialty crops without the costs of daily delivery to a marketplace, marketing, or advertising: marketing and advertising was provided by LFP through the “onestop” shopping web portal.

Measurement of Word of Mouth Marketing:

LFP anticipated that a residual benefit of the F2D Project would be word of mouth marketing by F2D participants and that this would help grow the specialty crop market and help grow a local food economy in general. LFP anticipated that this benefit would be quantifiable through surveys. It was LFP hopes that these surveys would also help glean data regarding how F2D buyers heard about the farmers. The surveys were developed in the fall of 2015 and distributed to a select group but no one filled them out. This was a huge disappointment for LFP because it provided data gaps for fully assessing the word of the effect of mouth marketing on the specialty crop market.

(see attached specialty crop product list in Appendix)

Beneficiaries

Those who benefited from the F2D project included:

1. All of the 15 specialty crop producers who sold more products without having to incur an increase of retail costs.
2. All 134 members who had specialty crop products delivered right to their place of work. This helped individuals save time running errands after work, gave them the opportunity to support local agriculture, to eat healthy specialty crops and to help sustain the local economy.
3. All 20 business participants who had the opportunity to support their staff in the benefits listed in #2.
4. The general community who benefits from a growing local food economy. LFP helps sustain and grow the local economy using the "Local Multiplier Effect" which proposes that approximately \$.45 of each \$1.00 spent in a community stays in the community.

Lessons Learned

It was not always easy to track specialty crop sales though our current online farmers’ market website. Staff spent a lot of time sifting through specialty crop sales information when it is likely there was a much more straight forward way to do this tracking. LFP has recently been working with a web designer who understands there are better retail website hosts that have more comprehensive and easier ways to track data.

Our community is extremely supportive of new initiatives. We do believe however, that one of the issues with significantly reduced membership numbers seen after the winter of 2015 is that the “newness” of having a workplace specialty crop delivery program “wore off”.

In hindsight, LFP should have offered memberships to F2D at the same rate as the regular memberships (\$40): increasing the initial \$15.00 membership fee to \$40.00 caused membership attrition.

One of the goals of this project was for it to develop into something that would be self-sustaining: this did not occur. LFP is currently in the process of assessing this project to figure out what kept it from succeeding beyond the fall of 2014. LFP suspects that issues may include the increased membership fee and newness of workplace specialty crop delivery program wearing off.

Contact Person for the Project

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Project 6

Project Title: Educating Consumers about the Contemporary Orchard

Applicant: New England Apple Growers Association

Final Report (previously submitted)

Project Summary

To address consumer concerns about food safety and the use of pesticides, the New England Apple Association produced three educational video programs about integrated pest management (IPM). Concerns about pesticide use with apples is expressed periodically by the media in sensational, if misleading, reports, such as the inclusion of apples in the “Dirty Dozen,” the Environmental Working Group’s annual list of produce they imply might contain dangerous levels of pesticide residue.

While EWG is providing a valuable service by monitoring pesticide use and the EPA, much of the information on its list is vague and speculative, and conceals its bias for organic foods. The “Dirty Dozen” makes for an glib headline and story, but the facts around pesticide use are much more complex.

New England apples are, in fact, safe, and our farmers are some of our best and most sophisticated environmental stewards. Aside from moral and ethical concerns, growers have multiple incentives to limit their chemical use, from their personal safety to reducing overhead to their economic livelihood. The New England apple industry has a good story to tell, and it behooves us to tell it.

Grant funds were used to edit and produce the programs using footage obtained in 2012 at orchards in Connecticut and New Hampshire. **The three-part** series, “New England Apple Growers Battle Pests with IPM,” covers the five main principles of IPM:

[IPM, Part 1](#) examines how pests are **prevented** and **identified**.

[IPM, Part 2](#) explores how New England apple growers **monitor pest populations** in their orchards and decide **when to treat** the predators threatening the apple crop.

[IPM, Part 3](#) looks at how apple growers **use a diverse combination of management tools** to treat pests in their orchards.

The programs were posted on YouTube and newenglandapples.org, the New England Apple Association website, August 6-8, 2014, and are now available for download to orchards, educators, and other interested parties.

Project Approach

Final script development of the IPM videos began in March 2014, using footage taken in the spring and summer of 2012 at Rogers Orchards in Southington, Connecticut, and Apple Hill Farm in Concord, New Hampshire.

The biggest challenges were an abundance of source material and the complex nature of the subject of pests and disease and how to treat them. Writer Bar Lois Weeks, executive director of the New England Apple Association, and director Russell Steven Powell, the Association’s senior writer, soon determined that there was enough material to produce three IPM programs rather than one, and the complex nature of the subject merited it. Over the next few months, Weeks completed scripts for three separate programs, approximately 10 minutes long each.

Post-production occurred in June and July, initially with discussions with independent editor John Browne, Weeks, and Powell. The greatest challenge was to make three distinct programs rather than one on our limited time and budget.

The three met for three days in Browne’s editing suite in July 2014 to rough edit the programs. After each session Browne emailed low-resolution copies of the work completed that day to Weeks and Powell so that they could communicate changes to Browne from their remote locations, and be more efficient and better prepared for the next team editing session.

After the final meeting of the three, Browne made final edits and added music and narration. The completed videos were posted online on August 6, 2014.

In addition to producing the programs, project director Powell wrote introductory text and posted them in the weblog newenglandorchards.org, over three days, August 6, 7, and 8, 2014.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

A baseline goal for the IPM videos was 100 views per month during the first year of the programs' release. A target goal was 500 views per month.

Viewership of the programs met or exceeded the baseline goal in each of the first two months, declined during the last quarter of 2014, but has climbed in 2015:

August 2014	139
September 2014	100
October 2014	32
November 2014	24
December 2014	30
January 2015	60
February 2015	65

The decrease was not entirely unexpected, as little was done to promote the series during the fresh harvest season (during late summer and fall, our promotional efforts are focused on getting consumers to the orchard, farm stand, or grocery stores to purchase the season's fresh fruit). We will re-introduce the series in the weblog newenglandorchards.org between March and June, and feature the series in the spring and summer editions of *McIntosh News*, the association's quarterly newsletter. We are also redesigning the association website, newenglandapples.org, in a way that will make the videos more prominent on the home page, and easier to find and view while on the site. Finally, we will reach out to organizations ranging from Ag in the Classroom and IPM Northeast to publicize the series and encourage sharing.

The slow start in viewership was somewhat unexpected; while we were determined to launch the series prior to the fresh harvest, we did not fully anticipate that it would conflict as much as it did with the promotional demands of the season, when consumers attention is focused on fresh fruit rather than bugs and bacteria. Winter, spring, and early summer may be better times to educate consumers about IPM. The impact of the series is cumulative; the more it is viewed, the more it is shared, and the higher up it appears in searches. We plan to aggressively promote the IPM videos in 2015.

Powell monitors and records statistics from YouTube (which hosts the videos) on a monthly basis. The IPM programs' real value will be measured over time.

Beneficiaries

While it is impossible to isolate and quantify the economic benefit to farmers, apple growers large and small benefit from the IPM video series indirectly and directly (there are between 300 and 400 farms growing apples commercially across the region). They benefit indirectly as the series proactively educates consumers and addresses their concerns.

Growers benefit directly by having access to a new, technology-friendly resource about IPM, to which they can direct their customers.

Concerns over food safety are not limited to apples, as the “Dirty Dozen” list implies. The IPM video series benefits all of New England agriculture (as of 2007, there were nearly 35,000 farms in the six-state region, according to the National Agricultural Statistics Service), not just its apple growers, because it describes:

Pests and diseases that impact other crops;

IPM practices and strategies common to all farmers;

New and emerging pests from around the globe, such as the brown marmorated stinkbug, which threaten not just apples, but multiple crops.

Lessons Learned

The biggest lesson learned during the project was our need to adapt to our material rather than forcing it to fit our preconceived structure. We originally proposed a single program five to ten minutes long, but this was inadequate. We did not accurately estimate the breadth and depth of the topic or predict the quality of the growers and field scout articulating aspects of IPM.

Our solution was to divide the topic into three manageable programs organized around the five main principles of IPM: 1) prevent pests; 2) identify pests; 3) monitor pest populations; 4) decide when to treat; and 5) use a diverse combination of management tools.

This meant more work, and our budget was limited. But it was the best way to present the topic in a way that was understandable and entertaining. We accomplished this goal by putting extra effort into our preparations for the editing sessions. We did much of the work online from remote locations, Powell in Hatfield, Massachusetts, Weeks in Cheshire, Connecticut, and Browne in Stow and Gloucester, Massachusetts. This included reviewing rough edits from each work session online so that editing work could continue between sessions and to enable Powell and Weeks to be better prepared for those meetings.

We expect the series to have a long shelf life, and four months is too little time to evaluate its success, especially since much of that time occurred during the fall 2014 fresh harvest. Still, the drop-off in viewers in months three and four reminds us that promotion must be ongoing.

There will always be some passive value to the series as the result of searches for IPM by interested parties. The IPM programs will be particularly valuable next time a story appears in the media impugning apples and farming practices.

But the series will only be as successful as it is well-known, and Powell and Weeks will promote it throughout 2015 to increase awareness among teachers, students, and other educators, and throughout the agricultural community.

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Project 7

Project Title: Farm Tools 101: Equipment bank and How-To Workshops

Applicant: Small and Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire

Partnering Organization: Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire

Final Report

Project Summary

Small and beginning specialty crops farmers struggle to purchase expensive equipment which will make their farm business less labor intensive and more efficient, competitive and profitable. This project's equipment banks are designed to aid farmers at the most basic level. The equipment list in the original proposal and a modification of that list were all based on input from SBFNH's list serve/discussion list and on brainstormed lists from local and state level meetings. Workshops were designed to promote the use of the equipment banks and appropriate and safe handling of the equipment.

The project built on two projects funded by Heifer International which helped establish some rental equipment, and expanded the groundwork of SBFNH's 2011 and 2012 SCBG projects which provided training to help small and beginning farmers develop the agricultural and business skills needed to move from hobby farming into commercial production and marketing of specialty crops introduced techniques for production for some underutilized crops such as mushrooms, small fruits and berries, herbs, and expanded season vegetables.

The next logical step appeared to be providing more equipment to help farmers develop these markets in this era of increased interest in local economies, especially local food economies.

Small & Beginner Farmers of NH purchased all of the equipment listed in the original grant proposal with one adjustment based on farmer feedback about what would be more useful. Due to sales and quantity discounts, the equipment money was able to stretch to purchase additional equipment, again based on farmer feedback. Main equipment banks were established in Coos and Cheshire counties. The beekeeping equipment was separated from the main equipment banks and placed with a centrally located beekeeper in Merrimack County. Individual items of equipment were placed in 5 other locations around the state to make them

more accessible to each region. The equipment item that was removed from the list was the BCS powered rotary plow, as it did not appear that many of our farmers had a BCS tractor. This was replaced it with five Jang seeders after polling the state council representatives and email list. When the equipment came in under budget, it was possible to also add two tool sharpeners.

Small & Beginner Farmers of NH partnered with NOFA NH to present two workshops at the 2015 NOFA NH Winter Conference:

Cultivating Tool and Equipment Efficiencies for Specialty Crop Production, led by Andy Pressman of the National Center for Appropriate technology and in partnership with NOFA NH

Solving the Equipment Dilemma

At the 2015 Farm and Forest Expo, Kate Kerman and Christine Pressman led a workshop entitled “*Renting Equipment: The Affordable Way to Run a Small Farm.*” The workshop showcased the equipment banks and emphasized the advantages of renting equipment that is either too expensive for a small farmer or which the farmer might like to try out before making an investment.

Training the Trainer on-farm workshops were hosted by equipment bank caretakers in Jaffrey and Lancaster, New Hampshire, also led by Andy Pressman. Participants, including equipment caretakers, learned how to safely use equipment from the equipment banks in ways that enhance specialty crop production.

Project Approach

The main project approach was to provide access to equipment that beginning farmers would find useful for improving their productivity in growing specialty crops. Secondly, the goal was to promote the use of that equipment in a safe and responsible manner. Our project partner, Northeast Organic Farmers Association, NH, made the promotion and education about the equipment much more feasible through holding workshops at the 2015 Winter Conference. All of the workshops featured the available equipment. The “train the trainers” workshop allowed participants to handle the tools as well as see their use demonstrated. All the workshops emphasized ways in which these tools could help efficient production of specialty crops.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Goal One: Establish Equipment Bank of essential farm tools at two regional sites across NH by June 30, 2014

Target: at least 12 NH participants will rent tools from the Equipment Bank and at least 10 will complete post-equipment rental evaluations, with 90% satisfaction. At least eight will either plan to utilize the Equipment Bank again or plan to purchase their own equipment based on successful trials with Equipment Bank tools. Equipment rentals will save at least \$200 per farmer participant per year.

We did not reach this target. Despite having the bulk of the equipment banks in place by the spring of 2015, and having workshops, advertising the availability of the equipment in the newsletter and on the website, at the annual meetings, the state council meetings and regional meetings, SBFNH members by and large did not rent the equipment. Caretakers used some of the equipment. One caretaker was very pleased with her results from using a Jang seeder and the flame weeder. The honey extractor was rented once.

Goal Two:

Put on one on-farm workshop on safe and effective equipment tool use (with proper body mechanics) repair and maintenance (and possibly welding). A Train the Trainer Workshop will be developed and led by NOFA-NH. SBFNH presenters will repeat that workshop at two farms in NH in 2014 and offer summary workshops at at least three regional conferences during the winter of 2014-15.

Target: We expect to achieve a goal of at least 15 participants for each workshop (average over two sites), with a minimum of ten participants at each session. 15 participants will complete post-workshop evaluations, with a self-reported gain of at least 25% increase in knowledge of equipment safety, maintenance, repair (and/or possibly welding), helping them save at least \$250 per farmer per year.

Since the equipment banks were located in two widely different locations in New Hampshire, Andy Pressman agreed to lead two “train the trainer” workshops, one in Cheshire County and one in Coos County rather than having SBFNH caretakers put on the other workshops. There were 9 participants at one workshop and 8 at the other. Evaluations indicated an increase in knowledge of equipment safety but were unclear about how much money equipment use would save them.

Summary workshops were offered at the NOFA NH Winter Conference in January of 2015 and at Farm and Forest Expo in February 2015. The planned workshop for the NE Fruit and Vegetable Conference was not accepted and we replaced it with an offered workshop on using the honey extracting equipment in the fall of 2016.

Goal Three:

Write and publish six articles in SBFNH’s bimonthly newsletters related to the project over the two-year grant period (three in 2014 and three in 2015). Focus will be promoting the Equipment Bank and on the How-To 101: Equipment Safety, Maintenance and Repair Workshops.

Target: We expect to achieve a goal of at least six substantive articles during the project. We expect the articles will be read by at least 400 people per article. Project Manager, webmaster or delegate will track SBFNH email clicks and web hits.

During the grant period from January 2014 through November 2016 the newsletter published reports on the progress of the grant in all but two issues, and included three front page articles on equipment caretakers and four half page listings of equipment available to rent.

The equipment page on the website ranged between the 4th and 19th most visited of the website during 2015 and 2016. In 2015 it averaged 10th most visited with an average of 171 hits per month and in 2016 it averaged 9th with an average of 202 hits per month.

On our mail program, MailChimp, the campaigns sent out with the newsletters had an average opens rate of 38.5% in 2015 with an average click-through rate of 54% from those opens and 42.34% in 2016 with an average click-through rate of 49% from those opens. In particular, the issue that featured equipment rental in 2016 had a 42% open rate and a 51% click-through rate, This would mean over 300 viewings of the electronic newsletters at the time of publication.

These statistics from the website and the emailed newsletter would indicate that people are being exposed to the information about the equipment program. There were also articles in local papers and the weekly Market Bulletin about the workshops and about SBFNH's programs.

Goal Four:

SBFNH's website will include current and past bimonthly newsletters for member use. Equipment Workshop videos will be posted online after the Train the Trainer Workshop. The website will also include the Project's Final Report on the Equipment Bank and Equipment Safety, Maintenance and Repair Workshops.

Target: We expect at least 200 people will view the newsletter articles and project Final Report online. We expect at least 100 people to view the Equipment Workshop video at the SBFNH website. Project Manager, webmaster or delegate will track SBFNH web hit.

The website includes current and past newsletters for member use, and the majority of members receive the newsletter electronically which they can download, print or view on their computer. Due to the person who was moderately trained on using the video camera not being able to attend the workshop, the video wasn't of an acceptable quality. However, the project manager has developed a posting for the SBFNH new website which includes links to videos and instructions for all of the major equipment in the equipment banks. Since SBFNH was planning to publish a new website in July 2016 it was decided to put the videos on the new site rather than duplicating effort by putting them on the old site. Likewise the final report will be put up on the new site. Development of the new website was severely delayed due to a technical issue and lack of attention during the summer months but it should be active by the end of 2016.

Beneficiaries

We achieved over 3,000 exposures to farmers with information about through this two-and-a-half-year project via workshops, newsletters, meetings, agricultural events and our website.

We used flyers and newsletters as educational tools at agricultural events such as the NH Farm and Forest Expo, NOFA-NH Winter Conference, SBFNH County meetings and in feed and grain stores and agricultural service providers' offices statewide. At the Farm and Forest Expo we reached several hundred members of the general public, many of whom took newsletters and informational flyers.

The main beneficiaries are our farmer members and equipment caretakers now and in the next few years, when this equipment will be available to over 200 farms with at least 400 farmers and workers to help make their production easier and more profitable.

Lessons Learned

We have learned that the caretakers are using many of the equipment bank items to good effect but that we have not found the right formula for encouraging our general membership to rent these tools despite a great deal of publicity. We will be doing equipment workshops for Ag Commissions around the state this year where we can publicize our new equipment and even take pieces of equipment to rent out on the spot. We are taking another look at rental fees, and might offer fee waivers to those that cannot afford it at this time. We will be attending Farm & Forest Expo and NOFA NH Winter Conference again this year. We plan a follow-up investigation among our members about why they are not renting this equipment despite suggesting that we buy it. Here are some questions to investigate.

Is the equipment so useful that they have decided to own these items?

Are the locations too distant from their own farms?

Is the system of calling the caretakers to arrange the rentals too cumbersome? (Should we set up a central renting system at our website, for instance?)

Are the fees too high?

If they missed the original trainings, are they uncomfortable about using the equipment?

Content related lessons include in particular the area of using flame-weeders to improve productivity. This was, interestingly enough, strongly emphasized by a workshop presenter for another Specialty Crop Grant, Mark Fulford as well as the presentations by Andy Pressman.

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Additional Information

From a feature newsletter article, February-March, 2015:

Activities Performed



Christine and one of the snazzy new Jang JP1 precision seeders.

Project 8

Project Title: Feeding the Valley—Workplace markets

Applicant: Vital Communities

Final Report

Project Summary

The purpose of this two-year project was to double or, ideally, triple the number of worksites in the Upper Valley of the Connecticut River partnering with farms to offer specialty crop delivery to their employees on-site. Through facilitating worksite delivery, Vital Communities planned to overcome the barrier of inconvenience to local food purchasing and increase the consumer base for local direct-to-consumer sales.

Over the two-year project period, we doubled the number of worksites engaged in on-site CSA delivery with New Hampshire and Vermont specialty crop farms. Eleven farms sold products to 19 workplaces, over 50% of new customers bought more local specialty crops due to the project, and farms grossed \$135,016 over two years.

At the time of the proposal (Spring 2013) we were hearing anecdotal reports from Upper Valley farmers that market capacity for existing direct market outlets, such as CSA shares and farmers' markets, was nearing saturation. Citing a lack of marketing skills and resources, time, and/or personal contacts, Upper Valley farmers asked Vital Communities' Valley Food & Farm program to facilitate connections with workplaces that could incorporate specialty crop sales into their wellness benefit programs for employees. The project approach was later confirmed by our 2014 Upper Valley Local Food Market Assessment, which examined growth areas in the local food system and found that farms and consumers desire more direct market connections. Fifty-six percent of the region's farmers want to

increase their direct-to-consumer sales, and 75% of consumers said they wanted to eat more local fruits and vegetables. Twenty two percent of consumers indicated they would buy more local food if it were delivered to their home, school, or workplace. Eighteen percent of farmers said marketing was a barrier to growth.

Vital Communities' approach was to leverage our role as a regional sustainability convener to help worksites consider and implement a local food wellness benefit. Vital Communities engages citizens, communities, and organizations in creating solutions to our region's challenges, working closely with area employers through our Corporate Council, Local First Alliance, and Transportation Management Association. Our Valley Food & Farm Program fosters the relationships that keep agriculture part of daily community life. Workplace Markets leveraged Vital Communities' non-farm business relationships on behalf of local farm businesses, relying on employers' commitment to local economy and/or sustainability as an incentive to consider on-site farm delivery.

This project did not build on a previous SCBG-funded project.

Project Approach

In fall 2013 we began worksite outreach planning, including seeking input on project design from three worksites who supported the proposal, and from four CSA farmers.

Our priorities for the matching process were: 1) Vital Communities would play a neutral role, neither recommending nor excluding interested farms; 2) We would help establish the farm-workplace relationship; 3) Vital Communities' ongoing support would not be necessary after the formal conclusion of the project, i.e., the relationships would become self-sustaining.

We also confirmed baseline numbers of current farm-to-workplace programs in the Upper Valley, concluding that 13 was the correct number of existing CSA drop sites at workplaces.

In January 2014 we created a suite of outreach tools for employers and farmers. Two simple, double-sided pieces, available in print and pdf format, promoted the farm-fresh delivery concept to worksites (attached to this report). Farmer outreach consisted of a simple Word document describing the project and their potential involvement.

In January 2014, we held a first best practices meeting with our organizational partners: The Intervale Center, Rutland Area Farm and Food Link, and Local Foods Plymouth. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture was also represented (details under Partners section).

The most time-consuming component of the project was recruitment of worksites, which took place through phone conversations, emails, and meetings. Our first 2014 worksite candidate committed in December-January and the last in April. All contacted worksites participated in the project except those who felt they could not meet the deadlines. No worksite expressed interest in a multi-farm online ordering platform and only two farms did so.

Two email announcements to all farmers with CSA listings in our Valley Food & Farm Online Guide (522 total recipients) described the program and requested their level of interest. After gathering uniform information about the CSAs or delivery offerings as well as types of farm products, day/time limitations, and special delivery situations from each of the 21 farms that responded, we sent them a list of interested workplaces. Farmers selected their preferred prospects, from which we compiled a spreadsheet of farms for each worksite's consideration. As a result, seven businesses engaged with

seven specialty crop farms at eleven locations for the 2014 season (three of the farms met the USDA definition of Beginning Farmers).

In fall-winter 2014-15 we evaluated the year through electronic surveys to farmers and consumers and conversations with farmers and worksite champions. Although farms were largely positive about the project they did wish for more customers at each site, which we hoped we could support via new marketing materials under development in spring 2015. The materials were not ready before CSA deadlines.

We held our second partners meeting via phone in winter 2015 (see partners section).

In December 2014 we began our second season of workplace outreach for CSA partnerships. We did a general promotion of worksite markets via the Vital Communities e-newsletters, which most of our worksite partners receive (6,000 readers). We personally contacted 20 worksites via email, phone, and intermediary contacts such as wellness staff at partner organizations who might know the wellness staff at a potential site. (Total worksites personally contacted during the project is estimated at 36.) Out of 20 worksites, we were able to take five through the process of creating successful farm partnerships in 2015. Out of the remainder: five did not return repeated inquiries but we later learned one of these was already working with a farm; at least four indicated they were interested in the future but not in 2015; and the rest began the process but then fell out of communication.

An addition to the project this year was ongoing communication with worksites to offer printed material supporting local specialty crop consumption and experimental on-site education at one worksite. We reported on this intention in our 2014 Annual Report. Funding from the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program supported a redesign of the Valley Food & Farm local food promotion materials, including posters and rack cards encouraging local farm purchases, adding a database of recipes to the Valley Food & Farm website, and general marketing activities. We used these materials in communication with worksite contacts. We also experimented with cooking education at one worksite, doing a grilling demonstration in September and attending the employee health fair in November with a winter vegetable soup. (Costs were only applied to this funding for appropriate specialty crop promotion; materials and time that also promoted non-specialty crops were applied to FMPP or match.) In fall-winter 2015 we did our final project evaluation, again through electronic surveys to farmers and customers, conversations with farmers and worksite contacts, and discussion with the Valley Food & Farm advisory group (our advisory group includes farmers, farm-related businesspeople, and farm to school educators).

Our original proposal included potential development of a multi-farm online ordering system. Two growers expressed interest, but no worksite has done so. Without concrete demand from a location with a significant customer base, we could not justify project dollars on market development for this concept. It might be a successful enterprise in the Upper Valley region, but would need a feasibility study.

Other commodities

Eleven specialty crop farms were able to participate in the project over two years. Participating farms are all diversified vegetable farms, some of whom also offer non-specialty crops for sale (mostly pastured meats). Our staff time promoted the specialty crop CSA component of those businesses, and we were not called upon to directly advise on non-specialty crop sales, storage, or use for those worksites. Two pastured meat farms expressed interest in worksite delivery; we added them to the worksite offerings (using matching funds) but neither were chosen for a worksite partnership.

Partner Contributions

Specialty Crop Block Grant funding supported two formal best practices conversations among workplace markets support organizations during the grant period. The Intervale Center, Rutland Area Farm and Food Link, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture were all able to participate in both formal conversations, Local Foods Plymouth attended one. The discussions covered our activities, successes, challenges, and lessons learned. We also shared our outreach materials and benefitted from the Intervale Center's research on workplace-based sales. All our work in this part of the value chain is formative and these conversations are extremely valuable, so much so that we spontaneously organized a third meeting among the Vermont non-profits over lunch at the Vermont Farm to Plate Annual Gathering in October 2015.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

During the granting period, our goal was to open and expand farm-to-workplace markets for specialty crop producers. All the activities described in the Project Approach section served this goal. Eleven specialty crop CSA farmers report nineteen new or expanded sites tried worksite delivery over the project period. Currently we expect 14 sites to continue in 2016, slightly more than double the pre-project baseline of 13 sites. Farmers estimate a cumulative gross income of \$135,016 over two years, \$58,382 in 2014 and \$76,634 in 2015.

Our original and adjusted outcomes for the grant period were as follows:

1. Double the baseline of (13) direct specialty crop farm sale sites to 25 in our region, with a stretch cumulative goal of 30 sites [adding 12 to 17 new sites]. Adjusted goal 2014: Add 20 sites during the project.

Participating farms report that over two years 19 new or expanded direct specialty crop farm sales sites were created through the project. Out of the 2014 sites, three stopped delivery in 2015, due to farm business changes (2) or lack of customers (1). Out of the 2015 sites we expect at least two will not continue, due to farm business change (1) and insufficient customers (1). At this writing we anticipate 14 worksite relationships will continue in 2016, hence we met our original stretch goal of sites added during the project.

In our 2014 Annual Report we took a new stretch goal of adding 20 new sites over the span of the project. Although we nearly reached this with short and long term sites, we do not count the one-year sites as 'added.' Additionally, two of our 19 sites are 'expanded' (i.e. one added a pop-up farm stand, and one existed but was boosted by promotion of new and old sites at the college where it is hosted). That said, we anticipate new sites will continue to add farm delivery in 2016.

This outcome measure did not address whether new sites continued to partner with a farm past the life of the project, or past the first year. The details of the business partnership can be lost in a purely quantitative analysis. Of the three sites that dropped in 2015, one was dropped by a downsizing farm and picked up by another farm that year; one was dropped by a farm reducing the CSA component of the business; one had too few participants (eight in 2014, fewer forecast in 2015).

2. Due to worksite delivery, 30% of new customers will report "buying more NH- and VT-grown fruits and vegetables." Customer surveys will also measure whether workplace-based markets decreased participants' VT/NH specialty crop purchases at other venues or increased overall NH/VT

specialty crop purchases. We will ask customers to estimate change in total dollars spent on specialty crop purchases during the project.

We are very pleased with the data on this outcome, as the project was designed to overcome the barrier of 'inconvenience' to purchasing local food directly from farmers and did so. We gathered data via electronic surveys sent to worksite contacts and farmers, with a request that it be passed on to the customers. In 2015, we offered an incentive to survey respondents.

We gave a multiple choice question: 'How did the worksite CSA change the amount of "locally grown" fruits and vegetables you bought this year? (please consider "locally grown as grown in New Hampshire and/or Vermont).' Respondents could indicate whether they bought more, were a CSA member the prior year so no change, bought same amount but from a new location, or bought fewer.

2014: Based on farms' reporting, we now estimate 134 CSA participants subscribed to Workplace Markets at the 2014 locations. Of the 25 subscribers who answered our electronic survey, 84% were new to CSA, and, of these, 85.7% reported that the CSA accounted for increasing their overall consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables. From this initial data, we can extrapolate with 95% confidence that, due to this program, between 72% and 99% of participants new to CSA in 2014 increased consumption of locally grown [NH & VT grown] fruits and vegetables.

In 2014, zero survey respondents chose 'I bought the same amount, just from a new location.'

In 2015 farmers report 197 customers for Workplace Markets. We surveyed customers in December and January, this time offering an incentive for participating, and received 43 responses. Of these, 33 (77%) were new to CSA, and 16 of these (48.5%) bought more locally grown fruits and vegetables due to the CSA. We can extrapolate that between 60%-90% of total customers were new to CSA and approximately half of these bought more locally grown fruits and vegetables.

In 2015, out of the 43 respondents, 6 (16%) indicated that they "bought the same amount, just from a new location."

We also asked about increase in spending, and can say with 95% confidence that that due to the project 66%-100% of 2014 participants increased their spending on local fruits and vegetables by over \$100, and 50%-82% of 2015 participants increased their spending on local fruits and vegetables by over \$100.

3. Participating specialty crop farms will set and meet sales goals over their term of participation. Using financial reporting from specialty crop producers and results of customer surveys we will be able to assess the increase in specialty crop sales as a result of Workplace Markets and our progress toward our stretch goal of \$165,000 aggregate gross income.

Farms did have sales goals for each site, in shares rather than dollars, and in many cases did not meet them. We are disappointed to not meet this outcome. Whether or not farms met the goal, however, does not always predict whether they plan to continue working with the site. In one example, a farm wants 20 members but reports just 16 for two years in a row with the comment "love this drop" (no further detail provided). One farm almost doubled their sales goal at a site but will not continue due to closing their farm business for unrelated reasons (we are helping the site find a new farm partner). A farm might see future growth at a low-subscriber site, or find ancillary benefits in the sales outlet.

Out of 19 sites over the two years, four sites met farm sales goals. Fourteen did not, and two farms did not report goals. Out of the fourteen sites, however, only four have confirmed the end of the

relationship. We believe the remaining ten will continue in 2016. Farms want a number of shareholders ranging from 5 to 50 across the sites, and received shareholder numbers ranging from 1 to 31. The aggregate gross income to farms over two years was \$135,016 (more detail in Beneficiaries section).

4. Vital Communities' involvement will effectively address the common issue of customer retention. For each worksite involved over multiple years, employee participation will hold steady or increase during the second year. Data will be gathered through communication with the worksite and customer surveys, above; and will include quantitative data such as total numbers of participants, repeat participants, and qualitative data about reasons for participation/non-participation. Sites continuing for both years kept relatively steady shareholder numbers. Nine sites participated in both years, one lost 9% of shareholders from 2014 to 2015 and one almost tripled shareholders in that time, the rest ranged around a 10% gain in shareholders. As mentioned above, total shareholders at participating sites was 134 in 2014 and 197 in 2015.

Shareholders gave excellent feedback on reasons for continuing or ceasing their CSA involvement. Shareholders planning to stop CSA stated familiar barriers such as, "We struggled to eat everything in a week, and the amount of veggies that we eat on a normal basis was low," "I don't like strawberry and kale," "I only joined this year as we moved and were not able to have our own garden. Next year I plan on growing my own." Shareholders continuing stated reasons such as, "Convenience, expands the healthy options on my table, and the sense of fun it offers my colleagues," "I love the fresh veggies straight from a local source and the convenience. For many years, I participated in a CSA where I live. When I returned to work full time several years ago, it was very difficult to get to my old CSA before they closed on pick up days. Having the CSA come to work is genius!"

Asking 11 farms and 19 worksites to track individual repeat customers proved too onerous. We do not have enough data to make causal relationship between Vital Communities' role as the market facilitator and a retention rate. Customers surveyed did not make a connection between Vital Communities and their intention to continue or discontinue their CSA shares. We do know that farmers were largely satisfied by our work (see below), and see our impact via qualitative comments such as, "We wouldn't have had any worksite relationships without Vital Communities. They introduced us to the worksites and did an amazing job of presenting what we offered."

5. Specialty crop farmers will express 100% satisfaction with Vital Communities' work in surveys and conversation. This will include satisfaction with an equitable process for matching interested farms with workplace market opportunities.

We did not meet this ambitious goal but are pleased with how close we came. Out of 14 farms responding to this question over two survey years, eight farms reported 100% satisfaction, three reported 75% satisfaction, and one reported 0% satisfaction.

In the case of the 0% satisfied farm, no participating worksites were near enough to their service area for them to engage in the project, and we presume this caused dissatisfaction. As far as the 75% satisfied farms we believe the low number of shareholders at a site was dissatisfying for two. In the third case, the farm did not wish for the worksite to expand to add more farms, whereas the worksite did wish to extend the business offer, and Vital Communities made the choice to work with the worksite to expand.

We asked farms whether they thought the process for matching farms to workplace market opportunities was equitable. Six farms indicated the process for matching farms to worksites was equitable, one said it was somewhat equitable, one said not equitable, and four indicated they did not have enough information to answer the question.

Beneficiaries

Specialty Crop Farmers: Eleven participating farmers earned an estimated \$135,016 combined gross income over the two project years, selling a peak of 197 CSA shares in 2015. 2014 estimated combined gross income to farms is \$58,382, 2015 estimated combined gross income to farms is \$76,634. Two sites will not continue in 2016 to our knowledge; if these are removed and other shares and prices remain the same for 2016, farms will gross \$74,019 this year.

Farmers may drop a few more worksites over the next two years unless share numbers increase, at the same time, new sites are interesting in expanding their offerings. We hope the approximately \$70,000 yearly gross will be the norm or low end for these farm-workplace sales outlets in years to come.

Five participating farms are in New Hampshire and six are in Vermont.

Beginning farmers: Four farm beneficiaries met the USDA definition of beginning farmers. One of these closed their farm in winter 2015 after a re-evaluation of family goals. The farmer wrote us: "We want to thank you again for all of the work you and Vital Communities did to make this possible. This was our first truly profitable year and the customers that you helped us find made it possible."

Worksites: 19 worksites engaged with new or expanded local food access for a high of 197 shareholders (we did not ask farms to track individual shareholders and hence do not know total number of individual shareholders engaged over the two years). Nine worksite locations were in Vermont, nine in New Hampshire, and one business had drops in both states (we have been counting this as one expanded site).

Customers: If we conservatively assume that the 197 shares sold in 2015 went to a 2-person household, 394 individuals received CSA shares. In 2015, 50%-82% of shareholders increased their spending on local specialty crops, which we consider a benefit.

Ancillary beneficiaries: Worksites who have not yet partnered with a farm, and non-shareholder employees at participating sites have increased exposure to local foods. We have not quantified this exposure but know from conversation that it is occurring and we hope local food as a wellness benefit is becoming the norm at sites.

Lessons Learned

The project confirmed our expectation that workplaces were not a fully tapped market for CSA delivery in the Upper Valley. The extent of growth in the workplace-based market remains to be seen over the next few years as sites either continue to expand and solidify farmer relationship. We will continue to match farms with sites and help new sites begin a program, as requested. We continue to provide our workplace contacts with local food marketing materials.

Our question about the feasibility of a multi-farm business model was inspired by nearby examples that our project partners have developed. We have not found enough demand from either a workplace or farms to further delve into a workplace-based business in the Upper Valley. Additionally, farms did not

report delivery infrastructure as a barrier to growth in our Market Assessment. The Intervale Center developed their Food Hub with a focus on workplace delivery after a feasibility study in the relatively densely populated Chittenden County (VT) area; Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (VT) has developed Farm Fresh Connect, an online ordering platform developed to build business opportunities for beginning farmers. If a similar program is to develop in the Upper Valley, workplaces might not be the target sales location.

A strength of the project design is that Vital Communities does not need to play an ongoing role once the farm-workplace relationship is established. We did not have worksites or farms make any formal commitment to the program, to ongoing communication with our Valley Food & Farm program, or even to evaluation, because we intended to be a light and soon unnecessary presence. In future we would consider one or more of these commitment methods, in order to better measure impact, as well as use our marketing resources to support increased use of local foods both among CSA shareholders and other staff. This was an oversight we regret, and will work to remedy.

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Project 9

Project Title: Continuation of the Buy Local Agriculture Campaign partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development

Applicant: NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food

Partnering Organization: NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development

Final Report

Project Summary

The New Hampshire public continues to be interested in and willing to buy local products. The emphasis in this project was on activities that promote Specialty Crops. Our work is making it easier for consumers to identify New Hampshire specialty Crop products and their sources. Our partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development (NHDTTD) has been successful in connecting the consumer to New Hampshire agriculture on many levels.

Through funding from the 2013 SCBG program this campaign was continued which helped producers showcase their products to a growing customer base. This funding successfully built on previous SCBG funded activities that promoted and featured specialty crops using this common logo in various media:



The logo has become recognized through this ongoing campaign and tandem promotion supported with other funds, as identifying New Hampshire agriculture and specifically, specialty crops. This funding allowed us to try new media channels and expand our reach using new creative platforms.

While we appreciate that these funds have allowed us to expand our marketing efforts, we have not relied on these funds exclusively for marketing in New Hampshire. State funds and support from other partners form the base of our marketing activities and these programs will continue whether or not SCBG funds are available.

Project Approach

The overall goal of the Continuation of the Buy Local Agriculture Campaign partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development is to build upon the success of the program as it has been established and promoted in previous years with the ultimate goal of building awareness of NH agriculture and agricultural products and to increase sales of these products.

The focus of our activities with this funding, has been creating an updated series of TV spots for airing as part of the project and beyond. Partner funds have also paid for production costs for some of the spots that include some non-specialty crop promotion. The TV spots drive viewers to the NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food website for more information and we have seen spikes in visits when the spots air.

Additionally, we have advertised on social media, specifically Face Book. New ads were created and posted, featuring seasonal specialty crops. Followers on Facebook have been steadily increasing and we have already exceeded our project goal.

We also developed new printed pieces, highway maps featuring NH farms, which have been distributed over the past year.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

- **10 percent increase in NHDAMF website visits as a result of the consumer campaign which will drive consumers to specific website(s) for information (baseline of 200,000 page views per year at time of application).** Our website visits have been growing. From January-December 2016 the website showed 291,908 page views (32% increase). Measured via AWStats (changed from Web Trends that was in place at time of project proposal).

- **Establishment of 5 additional farmers' markets (70 markets at the time of application).** During the 2016 summer market season there were 68 markets that officially signed on to our market directory. We know there were additional markets that never submitted a registration form to the NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food. Summer market numbers have remained somewhat static during the last couple of years, however, the number of registered markets in 2016 increased by four from 2015. It is not unusual for market coordinators, who are often market vendors who volunteer to oversee market organization, to change from one year to the next and new contact information is not passed on to us, making it difficult to track down market activity. Also, while overall summer market numbers have remained relatively unchanged, there have been new markets coming into operation while others have closed or merged together, creating larger, stronger markets.

There are currently 20 "winter" markets (that operate around the state from November to May), on the 2016-17 list. We expect this list to grow as markets organize.

While we weren't considering winter markets at the time of the original proposal, the winter markets have seen the most growth. Market numbers, including the summer and winter markets together did increase our total markets well beyond the original goal of five additional. Our online directory of farmers' markets (summer and winter) are among the top downloaded documents from our website.

- **10 percent increase in Facebook likes on the NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food Facebook page (14,600 at the time of application).** Facebook likes are currently at 30,670 (52% increase), representing a very successful response to the ads we have placed on Facebook. The ads promote timely agricultural topics and product information and encourage viewers to follow the department on Facebook, as well as visit our website. We have found a high rate of engagement by those who follow the page. Additionally, our following on Twitter continues to increase, reaching a different audience. We have added Instagram to the mix, as well. See Appendix, Project 9
- **New publications will be distributed to 20,000 consumers.** The NH Garden Guide map and the NH Agriculture Map were both updated and redesigned by late 2015. 50,000 copies of each map were printed (100,000 in total) and ready for distribution in early 2016. Partner matching funds paid for non-specialty crop participation in the Taste of New Hampshire Agriculture map. To date about 45,000 of both maps, total, have been distributed at events, farmers' markets and through the state highway rest areas. This has exceeded our goal. Additionally these maps are available in PDF format on our website: <http://agriculture.nh.gov/publications-forms/agricultural-development.htm>. See Appendix, Project 9

Beneficiaries

- 68 summer farmers markets and 20 winter markets with approximately 500 total vendors (NH Farmers' Market Association and NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food)
- 428 commercial tree fruit (138) and berry growers (347) marketing through harvest your own, farm stand operations and some farmers' markets (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
- 665 vegetable growers marketing through farm stands, harvest your own and farmers markets (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
- 529 greenhouse and nursery growers marketing through on-site retail outlets, farm stands and farmers' markets (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
- 491 maple producers (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
- 158 farms with colonies of honeybees (US Census, 2012)
- 223 Christmas tree growers (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
- 22 NH wineries (NH Winery Association, 2013)

Lessons Learned

New Hampshire's Agricultural products, including specialty crops, are desired by consumers. Our project has helped shoppers identify NH products and studies have shown consumers will select NH products when they are known to them. This project increases public awareness of the availability of local agricultural products and will create new opportunities and new markets for NH agricultural businesses. The public seeks information about agriculture and products.

The Buy Local New Hampshire Agriculture Campaign continues to be successful on multiple levels. First it has allowed NHDAMF to establish and maintain a unique partnership with New Hampshire's state tourism office which has continued beyond the scope of this individual project to the benefit of both agencies. Second, the marketing activities conducted in this campaign seem to have been successful in building awareness and demand for NH agricultural products. The interest in local food and agricultural products is booming. Farm numbers increased in New Hampshire according to the most recent Census of Agriculture from 2012, while farm numbers declined, as a whole, across the country. This would point to more farmers starting up to meet the growing demand for local products. We are anxious to see the results of the 2017 Census.

We believe this project has been a major factor in building awareness of our local agricultural industry and encouraging consumers to buy local Specialty Crop products. Our project will continue with additional SCBG funds and we will continue to measure our impact.

Our television spots are effective at reaching the NH audience. We have plans to expand our television exposure to multiple networks.

The interest in New Hampshire food and agriculture is certainly displayed via Facebook and other internet venues. Our ads have a high "click-through" rates, and interaction on Facebook. This further reinforces that our efforts are well-placed and effective. Facebook advertising has become a key component to the marketing campaign. We have begun to utilize other social media platforms as part of the mix to reach more people. Social media will continue to be a

major avenue for outreach to both the consumer and the producer and will continue to be a component of the Buy Local New Hampshire Agriculture Campaign moving forward.

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Additional Information

See Appendix Project 9 for links to publications, examples of internet and social media advertising and television spots.