



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Transportation and Marketing
Acer Access and Development Program

Fiscal Year 2018 Description of Funded Projects

Number of Grants Awarded: 6
Amount of Funds Awarded: \$2,671,804.00

For more information, please visit the grant program's website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/acer>

NOTE: The below project descriptions were provided by the grant recipients.

Michigan

Recipient: Michigan State University, Ingram, MI
Project Type: Producer and Landowner Education
Award Amount: \$249,747.27

Moving the Maple Syrup Producers Manual into the Modern World with an Online Module Based Platform of Accessible, Updateable Videos and Trainings that Replaces the Currently Out of Date Manual

The Maple industry across the nation has undergone substantial transformations in all aspects of production in the last 15-20 years. The trend toward greater production capacity per acre through efficiencies and the focus on food safety and modernization has left most printed materials out of date. New producers are turning to the web in increasing numbers and The Maple Syrup Producers Manual is out of print and no longer reflects the educational delivery mode desired by most of the maple producers surveyed. The technology shift away from print towards online, video content that can be updated within days not years was the impetus for this grant. Michigan State University will work with the former editors as well as the University of Vermont to assist during initial chapter reviews, updates, and creation of new content. This will be completed on a platform that is more responsive to market and technology shifts, and sugar maker demographic changes. The video content modules will be informative, professionally edited, and represent regional differences across the U.S. maple states. It will incorporate industry research and development advances, university research findings, as well as nationally identified specialists appropriate for the chapter topics. This will all be done in "sprints" so that the first chapter updates will be available in the first 3-8 months with chapters being rendered and disseminated consistently across the three years. It will enable the work to be reviewed and updated on a continuous basis.

New York

Recipient: Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Project Type: Producer and Landowner Education

Award Amount: \$474,258.00

Efficient, Profitable and Sustainable Maple Production through Applied Research, Education and Innovative Technologies

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University will extend research and education efforts of the Cornell Maple Program to increase maple syrup production per tap, improve sap collection and processing efficiency, and promote productive and sustainable sugarbush management practices through applied research, the development of innovative technologies and educational outreach. Areas of focus will include: 1) Development of sugarbush management guidelines for optimal sugar production, sustainable forest regeneration and enhanced ecological function; 2) Increased sap yield and quality through advances in tap-hole sanitation, vacuum efficiency, filtration and sap handling technologies; 3) Increased syrup quality, flavor and processing energy efficiency through advances in concentration technology; and 4) Improved profitability and sustainability of maple businesses through the efficient production of high quality value-added maple products and the development of new value-added maple products. Project staff will increase producer knowledge and adoption of improved technologies and processes in each of these focus areas through a three-part educational outreach effort including extension through workshops, maple schools, the publication of technical guidelines in print and digital formats, and the development of online, multimedia resources all conducted in collaboration with maple programs in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Rhode Island

Recipient: University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

Project Type: Market Development and Promotion

Award Amount: \$499,427.00

Collaborative to Communicate Maple Benefits to Help Producers Promote Maple Products to Consumers

Maple (syrup, sugar, sap/water), a sustainable North American agricultural crop, has a unique chemical composition with micronutrients and phytonutrients that have potential health benefits. However, consumers choose other sweeteners 99% of the time. Therefore, the newly formed Collaborative to Communicate Maple Benefits (C2MB) at the University of Rhode Island will encourage consumers to switch to maple, the 'smarter sweetener,' by increasing consumer awareness of maple benefits, including its sustainability, versatility, and potential health benefits. Specifically, the C2MB will: 1) Translate the latest maple research into curated content on a mobile-friendly web portal so it is easier for health-conscious consumers and journalists to find, understand, and share; 2) Promote maple as a 'natural, versatile, and sustainable functional food' through an integrated campaign, which includes targeted social media and point of sale materials; 3) Create a Maple Promotion League that utilizes student ambassadors for grassroots engagement at festivals and farmers markets, collaborates with stakeholders, the International Maple Syrup Institute, North America Maple Syrup Council, and the

Federation of Maple Syrup Producers of Quebec; and 4) Provide marketing tools to help producers, entrepreneurs, and hobbyists position and sell maple products to consumers. By inviting stakeholders to join the League, C2MB will amplify the campaign's reach - maximizing its immediate and long-term impact on consumer awareness of maple benefits and subsequent demand for maple products. As the hub for information about maple benefits, and creator of marketing tools for coordinated promotion of benefits by stakeholders, C2MB will increase primary demand and sales of maple products.

Vermont

Recipient: The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, Burlington, VT

Project Type: Producer and Landowner Education

Award Amount: \$499,757.00

Maple Forest Business Development

The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College will develop and disseminate new educational materials to landowners, maple operators, and key land management decision-makers to increase informed development of forest parcels into maple production. An interdisciplinary project team and collaborators will investigate and advance knowledge enabling these key stakeholders to integrate current silviculture findings and applied business analysis related to high yield maple production systems into sustainable cost-benefit decision-making. This audience includes maple producers, foresters, capital providers, appraisers, and land management companies. Forest management focus areas will include: sap yield, tree growth, species composition, forest stand attributes and forest management planning. This program will assist the target audience to achieve healthy, diverse and productive sugarbushes by utilizing up to date knowledge of potential sap yields across a range of tree sizes and accepted modern silvicultural prescriptions. Maple business analysis topics will include: annual financial performance, return on investment analysis, access to capital, business entity formations and transitions (legal), and supply-chain specialization opportunities that include both sap and syrup production. This project will develop and deliver a suite of outreach and extension resources with an emphasis on rigorous content and accessible formats. Project content will be geared to situations in Northeastern maple states (New York, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont) that account for 80 percent of U.S. maple production. Project outreach will not only reach Northeast stakeholders but maple stakeholders throughout the U.S. This will include online decision tools, technical reports, industry publications, online webinar presentations, small group presentations and large conference appearances.

Recipient: The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, Burlington, VT

Project Type: Producer and Landowner Education

Award Amount: \$448,702.73

The North American Maple Syrup Producers Manual: A Comprehensive Resource for Maple Sugar Makers

The North American Maple Syrup Producers Manual (NAMP Manual) and its forerunners have served as the primary educational and instructional resource for maple producers throughout the U.S. since 1963. The current version, the 2nd Edition (Heiligmann, Koelling, Perkins Eds.), was produced in 2006 and has sold nearly 12,000 copies, but is no longer in print. There is no recent comparable compendium of

maple-related information currently available. The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College will collaborate with Michigan State University to update several key chapters of the NAMP Manual to include the many technological advances in sap collection practices, maple syrup production equipment and techniques, the internationally-harmonized maple syrup grading system, and economic considerations. New chapters will focus on food safety regulations and practices and tapping guidelines and sustainability. Chapters will be written by research, regulatory, and industry experts and reviewed by maple industry professionals. The editors of the proposed 3rd Edition of the NAMP Manual are leading maple industry researchers and educators and have formerly served as editor and/or coauthors of several chapters in the 2nd edition. This resource will be available as a free pdf download suitable for use on computers or for printing. The 3rd Edition of the NAMP Manual will thus provide maple producers across the entire maple-producing region of the U.S. access to current maple industry information and best management practices, which will ultimately increase net profits for maple producers and encourage expansion of maple production.

Recipient: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Montpelier, VT

Project Type: Market Development and Promotion

Award Amount: \$499,912.00

Developing Markets and Increasing Awareness for Vermont and U.S. Produced Maple

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAFAM) will address some of the most pressing concerns for maple producers: consumer awareness and consumption domestically and abroad. The objectives outlined take a multi-faceted approach to develop knowledge and interest in maple for two primary consumer groups – the conscious consumer and food service professionals – and include directed marketing campaigns, agritourism, and international market growth. VAAFAM will be able to leverage those results to create strong, research-based consumer outreach materials and programs. With a diverse array of supporting partners from within the maple industry and technical assistance providers who are committed to this proposal's success, the objectives will lead to results that directly impact the sales and marketing potential of Vermont and U.S. produced maple sugar products.