Final Performance Report
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
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FINAL: Glacial Hills Foods Center: Growing, Preparing and Preserving Fruits and Vegetables

Glacial Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council
Grant Awarded: $42,049

Project Summary

The purpose of this project was to educate individuals on how to properly grow, prepare and preserve fruits and vegetables. To increase production as well as consumption of fruits and vegetables, there needed to be training in our rural area. In order to increase specialty crop production, individuals needed to be trained on how to properly grow, prepare and preserve fruits and vegetables.

While fruits and vegetables look good to eat at the farmers market or grocery store, oftentimes individuals get home and are unsure of how to prepare the fruits and vegetables just purchased. Finding recipes to use with the vegetables and fruits was a concern, and by using the Glacial Hills Food Center the project provided that information and increased skills with using fruits and vegetables. This project provided some specialty equipment for the food center that enabled the project to do the cooking and preservation classes.

This project provided educational workshops and field tours for individuals in a seven-county area on how to grow, prepare and preserve fruits and vegetables. Specialty crop growing field tours were conducted to educate individuals on using high-tunnels and other practices when growing fruits and vegetables and other specialty crops. The Glacial Hills RC&D developed a shared-use commercial kitchen food processing facility in Horton, Kan. which was utilized for workshops on preparing and preserving fruits and vegetables. The project also educated fruit and vegetable producers wanting to create a value-added product.

Project Approach

The project approach was to educate individuals on how to properly grow, prepare and preserve fruits and vegetables and other specialty crops. The project team worked with the Kansas Rural Center and the Kansas Forest Service to put on two field tours of currently existing specialty crop farms. One was a bus tour with 45 individuals that toured eight existing market gardeners using high-tunnels and other practices to grow products for farmers' markets and grocery stores.

Another field day of walnut growing was held to show more than 120 individuals the practices of growing trees and the Nebraska Walnut Cooperative provided information on potential markets of walnuts for food use.
Producing fruits and vegetables in the off-season by using a high-tunnel system was also shared with individuals. A high-tunnel building workshop was held to show and provide 30 individuals actual experience in erecting a high-tunnel. A garden workshop was held in Marysville, Kan. that had about 45 in attendance. Jim Kenard was the speaker, teaching the Mittleider method of gardening that has been used all over the world, including underdeveloped countries with starving people. The morning was inside in the classroom and the afternoon was outdoors.

Individuals needed help on how to prepare the fruits and vegetables they just purchased. The project allowed individuals the opportunity to become familiar with the Glacial Hills Food Center, which is a new shared-use commercial kitchen food processing facility and the possibilities it has. There were 10

cooking classes for preparing and cooking fruits and vegetables that were completed using the Glacial Hills Food Center.
There also was a lack of knowledge about how to preserve fruits and vegetables for consumption at a later date. Some individuals may currently be canning, but have no formal training. Seven educational classes on how to properly preserve fruits and vegetables to minimize food safety and spoilage were completed that told the importance for having fresh, safe produce year round.

One workshop on How to Start a Food Business was held for 20 individuals how how to plan and develop their food products using the Glacial Hills Food Center. The Kansas State University's Value-added Foods Lab provide information on the assistance they provide for food product development and marketing.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved
Goal 1: Offer five growing workshops and field tours on how to properly grow fruits and vegetables in the seven- county region to 100 individuals.

The outcome was that four workshops and tours were held for more than 200 people. Knowledge about the material of the participants increased by more than 50 percent. During the high-tunnel building workshop individuals increased their knowledge and experience by 100 percent,

Goal 2: Conduct 10 courses in the Glacial Hills Food Center to 150 individuals on how to cook with fruits and vegetables using simple recipes and locally grown produce.

The outcome was 10 cooking classes held for 160 individuals. The majority of individual knowledge was increased by more than 50 percent in how to prepare and cook with fruits and vegetables. This knowledge increase was measured by the improved answers from the pre to the post questionnaires that were given to all participants.

Goal 3: Improve food safety techniques of preserving fruits and vegetables by offering seven courses to 50 individuals focused on proper methods of preservation of fruits and vegetables.

The outcome was seven classes provided on the proper methods of preserving fruits and vegetables to 42 individuals. The individual knowledge increased 100 percent since they had not used pressure canning and dehydration methods before.

Goal 4: To assist specialty crop producers create a value-added product utilizing the Glacial Hills Food Center.

The outcome was a workshop was held for 20 individuals including farmers on How to Start a Food-based Business. The Kansas State University explained the assistance they provide for food product design and development. There are several people currently working on developing their food products but nobody has yet used the Glacial Hills Food Center for a value-added product.

Beneficiaries

One group that benefited from this project was the individuals who attended the growing, preparing, and preserving fruits and vegetables. This group gained valuable skills in how to utilize more fruits and vegetables in feeding their families more healthy food.

Another group was members of the Brown County Healthy Foods Coalition, who are planning and working to increase the production and distribution of locally grown food. Those who went on the bus tour of market gardeners and others using high-tunnel and other practices increased their knowledge and understanding of how to increase the amount of food grown and produced locally.

The 120+ farmers who attended the Walnut Day field day were another group that increased their understanding and knowledge in how to grow and market walnuts for food use and other uses.

The 20 people who attended the How to Start a Food Business increased their knowledge and understanding of what it takes to plan and develop a food-based business and the development of food products.

The potential economic impact of this project is difficult to capture. Because it takes individuals, farmers and others a long time to make decisions to change what they are growing or doing with their enterprises, the economic impact will be in the future. Individuals who attended the cooking and preservation classes indicated they would implement their skills on a more frequent basis in preparing healthy food for their families.

Lessons Learned

Effectively marketing the classes on growing, preparing and preserving fruits and vegetables was sometimes a challenge. Some people read the newspapers but others don't. Some signed up for the project team's e-newsletter which was a good way to communicate with people once they had experienced the classes. Word of mouth is always a good way for people to tell about the project to their friends and neighbors.

Getting people to change their behaviors is difficult, whether it is their cooking habits or what they are growing. Time is needed for people to decide what changes is right for them in their lives or enterprises. Being able to provide more one-on-one assistance would increase the success of what people decide to do. This project wasn't able to do this but by working with partners such as the Kansas Rural Center, the Washburn Small Business Development Center, and the Kansas State University Value-added Foods Lab, the project team was able to reach and assist more people.

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FINAL: Grape and Wine Industry Extension Project

Highland Community College
Grant Awarded: $29,865

Project Summary

Members of the Kansas Grape and Wine Industry had approached Highland Community College with a request for in-the-field learning experiences and access to e-mail, phone and face-to-face consultations. In short, the Industry sought a local source for extension services to train their current members as well as help guide new members of the industry. As with any professional industry, stakeholders and operators (and perspective industry members) have questions about the latest research, best practice techniques, pest and disease control, site preparation or repair, and the latest technology developed for their industry. In this case, Kansas grape growers and winemakers have questions and concerns about sanitation, sensory analysis, pests and diseases in the vineyard, and other issues that oftentimes can only be addressed through face-to-face consultation. Highland Community College is the only such source in Kansas for that kind of information.

This grant proposal helped HCC to fulfill that request by the industry, by making existing industry members more efficient and helping guide entrepreneurs as they entered the industry. The items addressed during the consultations cannot be done over the phone or via e-mail. Sensory analysis, erosion problems, grape disease, vineyard site preparations; these are things that can only be done through face-to-face consultation. Highland Community College is the only source of viticulture and enology education and consultation in Kansas.

Project Approach

This grant was about beginning relationships and building a positive reputation in the Kansas grape and wine industry and with KSU Ag Research and Extension (KSU-ARE). With this project, Highland set out to become the best single source of education and consultation resources for the Kansas grape and wine industry. The grant called for eight workshops to be conducted statewide in addition to offering one-on-one vineyard and winery consultation appointments and phone/e-mail correspondence throughout the year.

HCC coordinated with KSU-ARE to schedule and advertise workshops, and attendance was greater than anticipated. An unexpected benefit was that current members of the grape and wine industry attended some workshops, and those industry stakeholders were not shy about offering their experiences about successes and failures in their own businesses. Occasionally, the workshops became a directed dialogue between current and perspective members of the grape and wine industry. Personal and professional relationships were made between current and perspective members of the industry that would not have been possible without the workshops. New growers found mentors, and winery owners found new sources of grapes to purchase.

In terms of individual guidance we assisted growers in addressing issues such as specific erosion problems, fruit and vine diseases, pest controls, and sometimes pre-planting preparation for both current and perspective growers. Different options for variety selection were discussed on nearly every vineyard visit. Viticulture is fairly new to Kansas, so many things which are “common knowledge” in states like California and New York are new information to Kansas farmers. In the case of wineries, we helped with

layout issues and pre-planning inside the winery. We did some on-site sensory analysis with winemakers to discuss problem aromas or other chemical problems in wine. We evaluated sanitation regimens and equipment and made suggestions to improve overall quality in winery operation. We discussed different winemaking techniques and blending combinations.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

When scheduling the workshops, project staff found that the industry covered more territory than originally anticipated. So the college squeezed some funds in the grant so that nine workshops could be offered. The workshops were held in Pottawatomie, Doniphan, Cloud, Ellis, Crawford, Lyon, Sedgwick, Douglas and Pratt Counties during the months of March, April and May. A total of 121 people attended the workshops, including, in many cases the Kansas State University Ag Extension Agents from those counties. Project staff offered information regarding how to start both a vineyard and winery, in addition to seasonal vineyard activities during those months. In all cases, the workshop attendees asked, "When will you be back?"

One unexpected but favorable event was being contacted by KSU Ag Research and Extension. KSU-ARE contracted HCC to complete a series of winery visits in an effort to complete KSU-ARE's obligations for a previous grant through KDA Specialty Grants in 2008. This contract work allowed HCC's expended funds to fall short of the predicted outcome which is a savings for everyone in addition to helping both KSU and HCC fulfill their obligations to the grape and wine industry.

Another goal was for HCC to become an “information clearinghouse.” By attending conferences throughout the Midwest, HCC personnel made contacts throughout the region and learned information presented at those conferences. HCC was then able to bring that information back to Kansas and disseminate it though the workshops and consultations. One such bit of information was that of a new “esther” form of the herbicide 2-4D, which is advertised as being less volatile. That’s an advance in herbicide formulation which could potentially be a major benefit to the grape and wine industry.

Through this work HCC was seeking to improve the quality and increase the quantity of existing grape and wine operations by offering information and answering questions from those currently in the industry and assisting new investors and they seek guidance while taking their first steps in the industry. With regards to wine quality, Mike Jones, a presenter from Scott Labs (Napa, CA) at the 2013 Kansas Grape Conference announced that since he started presenting at the annual conference in 2009, the wine tastes better, has better acid-sugar balance, fuller body, and an increase in overall quality. There were no wines at this conference that he would not purchase and take home to drink. It’s difficult to pinpoint the cause of this quality increase, but the activities of the college certainly aren’t hurting the effort. The number of acres planted in 2011 is unknown as many farmers do not report such acreage. There is no way to find out with certainty whether or not the goal of a 40-acre increase occurred in 2011. The number of wineries in 2010 was listed as 24 in our grant. Kansas Department of Revenue reports that there were only 23 that year. At the end of 2011 Kansas Department of Revenue reports that there were 29 wineries, an increase of six wineries that year.

Beneficiaries
A total of 121 people attended the workshops, including, in many cases the Kansas State University Ag Extension Agents from those counties. During the year, HCC personnel received/answered a total of 83 phone calls and 311 e-mail inquiries. HCC personnel visited 34 vineyards (or prospective vineyards) and completed 24 winery visits.

Lessons Learned
The only unexpected finding with the project was that e-mail far surpassed the phone call inquiries for the year. The project team anticipated 200 phone calls, but only received 83. They anticipated 350 e-mails and received 311 which is within reason. Most importantly, HCC personnel made 58 vineyard and winery visits while anticipating only 50.

This project was only one year in duration, and is thus concluded. However, KDA chose to fund a similar project in 2012. Therefore, the work done in this project will serve to be a strong foundation that HCC can build upon in 2012 and hopefully future years.

HCC did not find it necessary to hire outside consultants for any of the workshops, so those funds were not expended. The project with KSU-ARE allowed HCC to conserve some funds in travel and supplies. The project team has $1,329.63 remaining. Since HCC covers the full salary/wages/fringe for both Mr. Martin and Mr. Kohl, the College requested those funds to be transferred to the salary/wages portion of the budget, and that request was granted.

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FINAL: Kansas School Gardens Initiative: Cross-Agency Collaboration to Increase Fruit and Vegetable Gardens at Kansas Schools

Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education
Grant Awarded: $70,000

Project Summary

The rising levels of childhood obesity in not just the United States overall but also in Kansas and the lack of fresh fruits and vegetables that not only school age children but also adults are consuming provides the background for the purpose of this project. Data from the CDC's State Indicator Report on Fruits and Vegetables, 2009, shows that only 10.1 percent of Kansas adolescents meet both the daily fruit and vegetable serving recommendations. The F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2010 report ranks Kansas 45th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia in lowest fruit and vegetable consumption among adults, with only 10.6 percent consuming the Healthy People 2010 target amount. This research shows that there is definitely a need for building good consumption habits in our citizens at a younger age.

With school-age children receiving as much as 58 percent of their daily caloric intake through the school breakfast and lunch programs (School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children, Stallings et al., 2010), there is a need to increase the amount of fresh fruits and vegetables specifically consumed at school. These statistics provided the motivation for this project.

The purpose of this project was to provide technical and educational support to K-12 Kansas schools in planting school fruit and vegetable gardens and tying lessons learned from the gardens into classroom curriculum. Our goal with this project was to increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among students in Kansas schools by not just simply exposing them to gardening but also by having them be an integral part of the gardening process. Research shows that students who have had the experience of helping with a garden, watching plants grown, and then harvesting the produce from those plants are much more likely to eat fruits and vegetables that they may never before have been willing to try. This exposure to school gardens will help to give Kansas kids the skills necessary to make healthier food and lifestyles choices throughout their lives in turn creating life–long consumers of these specialty crops in Kansas.

The importance and timeliness for this project was immediate as the need for technical and educational support related to school gardening programs in Kansas has become evident. Several Kansas schools have either already started these programs or are showing much interest in starting them and need a support structure in place to help them throughout the process of creating, maintaining, justifying, and sustaining their school garden projects.

Project Approach

During this grant period several achievements were made through many activities and tasks that were accomplished.
The significant accomplishments completed during this grant period were:
• Administration of a school gardens survey sent out to all K-12 schools to gain insight into the interest-level in school gardening and resources needed for Kansas schools.
• Collaboration with the Kansas School Gardening Coalition to create a well-rounded survey and approach for the Kansas School Gardens online curriculum.

• Recruitment of the Kansas School Gardens (KSG) Curriculum Writing Team – consisting of four Kansas teachers representing grade levels K-12, four Kansas Gardeners/Garden Educators, and four environmental education professionals.
• Writing of the KSG curriculum content and cross-curricular, K-12, hands on activities.
• Creation of the four video school garden case studies from across the state to provide real-world examples of already established rural, urban, and suburban Kansas school gardens.
• Implementation of the curriculum, activities, case studies, garden resources, etc. into an online web-based format called the Garden Gate housed on the Kansas Green Schools website. The garden gate can be found at http://www.kansasgreenschools.org/green-schools-garden-gate
• Preparing, promoting, and hosting, with the help of several project partners, of three KSG professional development workshops across the state. The workshops were designed to provide participants with an introduction on the how-to's of school gardening and the KSG curriculum, an introduction to environmental education, and show them how these tools along with their classroom curriculums when combined and used together create a fantastic, interdisciplinary, hands-on learning environment for their students.
• Providing school gardening start-up or enhancement grant funding to seven Kansas schools with representatives who attended one of the three regional workshops and applied for one of the school garden grants. Each school received between $330 and $500 in funding for a total of $3,000 given out in school garden grant funding.
• Providing an ongoing support network for Kansas educators through the Kansas Green Schools website. This site provides a location for schools to create a school profile page where they are able to list the projects their school is involved in and communicate with other schools on the network.

The roles and contributions of the project partners were vital. The team was very fortunate to work with fantastic partners who were essential to the success of this project. They note that they could not have achieved such a well-rounded and well implemented project without the support and hard work of their partners. Partner contributions include:
• Administration of the Kansas School Gardens survey to all K-12 Kansas schools.
• Kansas School Gardens online curriculum content.
• 17 Kansas specific school gardening hands on, cross-curricular, K-12 activities.
• Four video case studies examples of established rural, urban, and suburban school gardening programs in Kansas.
• Ongoing guidance and collaboration throughout the project from the Kansas School Gardening Coalition and the Kansas School Gardens Curriculum Writing Team.
• Support and assistance in preparation, promotion, and hosting of three regional school garden workshops.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

There were several goals and measurable outcomes achieved for this project.

• The first goal achieved was to provide materials, training, and grant-funding opportunities for K-12 Kansas educators through professional development workshops that showcased the Kansas School Gardens Curriculum (KSG)/school gardening how-to's, several environmental education activity guides, and demonstrate the connections between gardening and the educators' classroom curriculum. This goal was achieved both through implementation of three regional workshops held across the state with a total of 46 participants as well as shorter trainings offered at the Kansas Green Schools Conference and the Kansas Environmental Education Conference, which combined allowed the team to provide the KSG curriculum to another 100+ educators.

During the workshops the participants were taken through several of the how- to steps, resources, and activities of the KSG curriculum along with several activities from five environmental education curriculum guides including Project Learning Tree, Project WET, Projects WILD and WILD Aquatic, and Growing Up WILD. Participants were shown how all of these materials along with the creation of a school garden when implemented with the educators' classroom curriculum provide a fun, engaging, hands-on learning environment for their students with the school gardening program as the central, essential focal point.

One of the main goals of the KSG curriculum was to provide a way for teachers to not only start a school garden themselves, but to make sure and involve their students in every step of the process from plotting the garden to planting the plants to harvesting and eating the produce. Having the students in involved in every step is essential to creating a citizenry that will become life-long specialty crop consumers.

Lastly, after the workshops participants were eligible to apply for a $330 to $500 Kansas School Gardens grant to help enhance their already existing school garden program or start a new one. A total of 12 schools applied for the grants and the team only able to award out seven grants, which made for a very competitive process. The grants were all well written and the team was thrilled to be able to help seven Kansas schools implement gardening programs into their schools for a total amount of funding awarded at $3,000.

• The second goal achieved was to provide website support in the form of gardening info/fact sheets, technical assistance, blogs/forums, resources for school gardening, and information on funding opportunities. This goal was accomplished through many tasks.

The first task that helped accomplish this goal was to administer a state wide survey of K-12 schools to see how many were interested in school gardening and what resources they would need to start a gardening program. Based on the data gathered from over 100 schools we were able to create an outline for the Kansas School Gardens (KSG) curriculum. After the curriculum outline was created the team was then charged with recruiting a writing team consisting of four Kansas teachers, four Kansas gardeners/educators, and four environmental education professionals.

This team met via conference call several times over the summer and was able to collectively write and complete all components of the KSG curriculum. After several revision and editing processes the KACEE staff was then able to create the Garden Gate http://www.kansasgreenschools.org/green-schools-garden-gate which is housed on the Kansas Green Schools website. The Garden Gate is the "hub" for any and all KSG information including the curriculum which includes step-by-step everything from how to start a garden to harvesting and eating the produce and also 17 Kansas specific school gardening hands on, cross-curricular, K-12 activities , virtual video tour case studies which provide real world examples of Kansas school gardens, gardening resources that include information on funding opportunities for schools, and the Kansas Green Schools forum where any Kansas Green School can communicate and network with others from all across the state.

• The third goal was to host a School Gardens Summit where interested parties from the state could come and share school gardening resources, ideas, showcase their stories, and have facilitated discussions on the how-to's of starting a school garden. This goal was achieved through KACEE's annual Kansas Green Schools Conference which was attended by over 100 Kansas educators. During the pre-conference workshop the new Kansas Green Schools Investigations which include school gardening were the main focus and participants were able to receive several hands on materials that supported green projects they

can do at their schools. Participants were also taken through an activity where they could plan out what a future school garden could look like at their school and what the process might be for getting started.

During the conference school gardening was highlighted through a track that included presentations from several experienced gardeners and educators who are involved with school gardening. The presenters gave conference participants great insights into the possibilities of school gardening and the tremendous health, development, and learning benefits that school gardening creates for students. The Kansas School Gardens initiative was also highlighted at KACEE's annual Kansas Environmental Education Conference which was attended by over 75 Kansas educators and natural resource professionals. During one of the conference sessions participants were able to hear an overview of the KSG curriculum and upcoming KSG workshops.

Overall by meeting each of these goals the team was able to move toward achieving our measurable outcomes for this project of increasing child nutrition knowledge of specialty crops by increasing the number of productive school gardens in Kansas and facilitating a 10 percent increase in school gardens in KS. By accomplishing the goals set we were able to train more than 146 Kansas K-12 educators which will affect an estimated 2,920 Kansas students. What constitutes a 10 percent increase? The initial Kansas School Garden survey conducted in 2011 revealed that out of the 130 schools that completed the survey, approximately 11% of those schools had existing school gardens. Given that this survey was sent out to the approximately 1600 schools, we have a response rate of only 8% which would indicate considerable variability. Couple this with the fact that the respondents were self-selected and it is likely that when asked to complete a school garden survey, those schools with gardens completed the survey at a higher rate than others. Thus it is highly like that the percentage of schools that have gardens is lower than the 11% found in the survey. (Estimated variability of +/- 3%). There are roughly 1600 public and private K-12 schools in the state of Kansas. If the 130 responding schools are representative of the general trends in school gardening throughout the state, then approximately 11% of the 1600 schools would have school gardens, or 176 schools. **Therefore, an increase of 10% would be approximately 17-18 new school gardens.**

We are able to document the creation of 12 gardens through our grant period as a direct result of the workshops and small grants that were provided (7 schools received small grants to start a new school garden and 5 additional participants began a garden without any funding from this grant). In addition, we conducted a follow up survey with our workshop participants to determine if others had initiated a school garden (see Appendix 1). This survey revealed that in addition to those gardens that were begun with a small grant or were self-reported, an additional 8 gardens were started as a result of this workshop. The survey gives us feedback from 13 schools, 2 of which we previously counted in our reporting, 3, which did not begin a garden and 8 that were newly reported gardens. **Thus, the direct impact of this project was the creation of 20 NEW SCHOOL GARDENS!**

Based on the numbers stated, **this represents an approximate 11.36% increase in raw data** and when variability is factored in, a 8.3-14.3% increase in school gardens in Kansas. Additionally, we have utilized our online resources and created a facebook group to host our online Kansas School Gardening community with a current membership of 67. We believe that there are likely others that as a result of these workshops and our web-based resources have started a school garden. Based on this analysis, we are reasonably confident we achieved our measurable outcome and/or exceeded it.

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries of this project include Kansas K-12 schools (educators, students, and student families) and specialty crop farmers. Forty-six educators attended the KSG workshops and an additional 100+ educators who attended both the KGS Summit and the Kansas Environmental Education Conference received training in the KSG curriculum, over 17 KSG hands-on, cross-curricular activities, and training in four environmental education guides with a total of over 300 activities to take back with them and use in their classrooms. Educators who attended at least one of the KSG workshops were also eligible to apply for a $330 to $500 KSG grant for their school to help enhance an already existing school garden program or to start one. Seven schools received school garden grants for a total of $3,000 awarded.

Kansas K-12 educators also had the opportunity to attend two other professional development conferences that included KSG tracks and sessions during the grant period. Additionally the KSG curriculum, activities, etc. located on the Garden Gate website are all free online resources that can be utilized by any schools (teachers and students) at any time. The Garden Gate website is housed within the Kansas Green Schools website which is already home to a network of more than 300 Kansas schools who have registered their schools as Kansas Green Schools. The estimated number of educators impacted by this project is more than 150. This has a significant impact on more than 3,000 students and their families in the state.

Lastly, the impact on specialty crop farmers in tremendous as with over 150 educators and more than 3,000 students and their families engaging in school gardening. This in turn helps to create a stronger connection and hands on experiences in making healthier food and life-style choices. This has the potential to impact choices made throughout their lives will affect the rates of childhood and adult obesity as well as advancing the number of Kansas citizens, children and families alike, becoming life-long specialty crop consumers will increase.

Lessons Learned

One of the most meaningful lessons learned throughout this project was that Kansas schools are ready and eager with the help of a good support system in place to start gardening programs. The demand for school gardening information, support, funding opportunities, etc. is overwhelming. The team found through the work done for this project that given the right tools, resources, and education Kansas educators are more than willing, they are excited, about starting gardening programs in their schools and they see the direct benefits to their students overall improved health, development, and learning skills when they are given the opportunity to use a school garden as one of their teaching tools.

This is a fantastic outcome to see from this project because it lets the team know that it is on the right track and need to continue their work to improve the level of support, funding, and resources available to Kansas schools. The project team reported that they felt very fortunate to not encounter any negative conclusions as a result of this project. They said they were thrilled to have the opportunity to work on this project and could not have achieved the successes that we did without the help of several project partners who worked with them to create a well-rounded Kansas School Gardens program that exceeded their expectations and helps to combat the rates of childhood and adult obesity in the state by creating a Kansas citizenry that makes healthier lifestyle and food choices increasing the rate of specialty crops, specifically fruits and vegetables, consumed in Kansas.

Please see the additional supplementary document for pictures and highlights from this project.

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FINAL: Growing Healthy Families, Farms and Communities Through Farmers' Market EBT

Kansas Rural Center
Grant Awarded: $70,000

Project Summary
Kansas Rural Center (KRC) completed collection of survey data about EBT machine use and feedback on both EBT and this program. The complete survey report is included at the end of this report. KRC feels this is the most valued outcome of this project - that the data has been collected. Overall, KRC concludes that EBT utilizing the current machine set-up is a challenging system for markets to implement, and new technology such as "Square" should present a major breakthrough.

At the time this project was initiated, in late 2010, more than 267,000 Kansans were receiving Food Assistance, a 22% increase from April 2009, according to USDA Food and Nutrition Service Program Data. Without a nearby farmers market EBT program, these Kansans were unable to redeem the more than $263 million in benefits distributed though the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for Kansas specialty crops, according to the Farmers Market Coalition (Winch, Rachel, Nutrition Incentives at Farmers' Markets: Bringing Fresh, Healthy, Local Foods Within Reach, October 2008): "With the conversion of benefits from paper coupons to a debit type Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card starting in the 1990s, millions of SNAP participants lost their ability to use their benefit dollars at many farmers markets, which lacked the equipment and the processes to allow for EBT purchases."

This project sought to address challenges for farmers markets in implementing EBT programs that would enable SNAP benefits to be utilized on fresh fruits and vegetables at those markets. These resource challenges included high initial equipment costs, elevated market staffing requirements, lack of skillset by market managers and boards in setting up an EBT program, and difficulties in raising SNAP recipient awareness of farmers market EBT processing capacity.

Although the number of markets in Kansas which accepted SNAP/EBT benefits was growing, only 7% of Kansas markets listed in the National Farmers Market Directory accepted SNAP/EBT funds in 2008. (2009 Farmers Market Coalition Position Paper, http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/joinus/policy/)

The timeliness and importance of this project were underscored by alarming health news. While obesity rates had risen to about 30 percent of the U.S. population—carrying with it an epidemic of diabetes—food stamp enrollment had also exploded.

About one in eight Americans now relies on the assistance, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, up from one in 50 people in the 1970s (USDA Food and Nutrition Service Program Data, http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/34SNAPmonthly.htm). Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that less than one in five Kansans consumes fresh fruits and vegetables at the USDA recommended level of five serving a day. (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=FV&yr=2009&qkey=4415&state=KS)

At the time this project was initiated, Kansas was receiving over $260 million annually from USDA FNS for its Food Assistance Program. VISION Cardholders were unable to purchase Kansas-grown specialty crops at the majority of farmers markets and farm stands across the state. Therefore, the recipients of SNAP were limited in their ability to support Kansas' specialty crop farmers and to access healthy, locally raised fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops.

Meanwhile, the benefits to specialty crop producers participating in a market with EBT capacity could be significant:

Between fiscal year 2008 and 2009, for example, the total value of SNAP redemptions at farmers markets and farm stands nearly doubled, from over $2 million to over $4 million. (USDA, Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) at Farmers Markets: A How-to-Handbook, June 2010, available at http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5085298)

As of June 2010, thirteen markets in Kansas had established EBT programs. This project's objective was to assist six new Kansas farmers markets in developing EBT capacity in 2011 and to increase the percentage of markets accepting EBT from 13% in 2009 to 22% in 2011.

This project also sought to offer farm stands information and technical assistance enabling them to accept SNAP benefits for Kansas grown specialty crops with a no-cost EBT processing device.

Project Approach

Several markets experienced significant problems with the technology providers and a disappointingly low customer service quality that prevented them from quickly addressing the problems. In addition, the proposed solutions in this grant -- with assistance in set-up and small market coordinator stipends to help -- were not sufficient to help markets over the barriers they faced. Most markets have low-paid, part-time managers who are managing the market on top of farming chores, which made the administrative work around the EBT program more challenging than this program anticipated and helped account for the lower-than-desired completion by markets attempting to participate in the program. We have high hopes that new technology will assist greatly.

Surveys were submitted to farmers markets with EBT programs, including the new markets added to the program under this grant in 2012. Responses were compiled and are attached.

The focus of this project was enhancing the competitiveness of Kansas-grown specialty crops. Farmers markets are the primary outlet for specialty crops in our state. While SNAP eligible food categories include meat, dairy and baked goods, KRC estimated that 85-90% of market vendors with SNAP-eligible products are specialty crop producers. In fact, the markets who completed our end-of-project survey and who benefited from this program reported that 100% of their vendors benefiting from this project were specialty crop vendors.

The matches anticipated by the participating farmers markets was provided by the four new markets assisted by this program, due to issues with resolving EBT machine problems and other demands of offering EBT (the project called for six markets). These matches may have benefited other commodities offered at those markets, but were not specified as such. The match from SRS did not materialize due to

transition in program leadership at the key point of furthering those relationships. The match from Glacial Hills did not materialize due to inability of the regional coordinators to complete implementation of the program with the market manager's (a local farmer) workload. The Beans & Greens program match assisted the Kansas City Kansas markets in boosting total SNAP benefits utilized.

The work plan for this project consisted of several individual tasks. In 2011project reports on EBT expansion were reviewed for eight participating markets and in 2012 a conference call was hosted with EBT coordinators at the markets to determine successes and shortcomings. The program was promoted via news release and via publicity through the ksfarmersmarkets.org website. The how-to publication (Bringing EBT to Your Farmers' Market) was revised in early 2012 and a new how-to publication for farm stands and direct marketers was completed in 2011. However, the opportunity for promoting farm stand EBT's was not carried out uniformly due to challenges around program director transition, timing with start-up of markets in the spring, and difficulty with obtaining the farmers' markets' desire for the program. Focus was applied to the farmers' market portion and farm stands were de-emphasized.

Early on in the project in 2011 meetings were held with the boards of potential expansion markets. Two markets were selected and entered the program in 2011. With one market utilizing wired service instead of wireless, funds were freed up to pursue a total of five markets in 2012. One of them dropped out of communication when our program coordinator left, and could not be re-established by the new coordinator despite repeated attempts. One was unable to complete the application process due to farmer/manager workload (the above mentioned Glacial Hills), and one was in the midst of location mid-season and thus was unable to complete set-up of their machine. This also caused them to drop out of communication for the second half of the season. In total, two markets completed the program requirements in 2011 and two in 2012. In total, four markets completed the program. For these four markets, we worked with them to complete the USDA FNS Retailer applications. Promotional materials were distributed to KDSRS offices and other agencies serving SNAP recipients in the counties where these markets are located. Because of the small number of markets participating, monthly newsletters and phone calls were not done. Instead, the program coordinator communicated individually to market managers via e-mail and phone. The markets were visited each year and one story about Cottin's market was posted on the ksfarmersmarkets.org website in 2012. The markets submitted project-end reports but did not complete monthly reports.

A market token design was developed and additional markets were assisted with designs. Market tokens were ordered and delivered to markets. There was a challenge in delivery to one market that moved locations.

Merchant agreements and vendor education materials were completed as originally planned, but EBT market program operating procedures were not. There was not a critical mass of new programs allowing for significant learnings to establish these "best practices." Each market dynamic and manager were very different. Program director continuity also interfered with this part of the project.

Coordinating promotion with Kansas State Research and Extension FCS agents and Family Nutrition program educators was not completed due to the program director departure at a critical time and due to the difficulty in recruiting and setting up markets.

We did not implement any non-specialty crop promotion or programming with the EBT program. If matching funds had been obtained, we might have done so, although that was not planned or intended. This program was always created and marketed specifically for specialty crop promotion, which was ensured through training provided by our staff to participants and growers, the education materials that were provided as part of the program, and the other programs that were administered in conjunction (Savor the Season).

In our one-on-one and group verbal communication and training with the recipients during the two years of the program, we made it very clear that this program would only be utilized to promote purchases of specialty crops. We provided instructions to the market managers and the growers at the participating markets that the tokens were to be utilized solely for specialty crops. The branding on these materials illustrated specialty crops. And finally, the program was promoted to those markets where specialty crops are emphasized, and only to specialty crop growers. In addition, this program utilized our Savor the Season program for grower, consumer and market education materials, to promote the products to be purchased with the materials provided in this program. Savor the Season was created in conjunction with growers and extension agents to exclusively promote specialty crops with 24 recipe cards featuring a different vegetable each. This was also funded by a Specialty Crop Block Grant. And, finally, we did not implement any non-specialty crop promotion or programming with EBT program participants.

In our one-on-one and group training, we provided verbal instructions to the market managers and the growers at the participating markets that the tokens were to be utilized solely for specialty crops. The branding on the support materials illustrated and promoted only specialty crops. The program was promoted to those markets where specialty crops are emphasized, and only to specialty crop growers.

The branding on these materials illustrated specialty crops -- a giant orange carrot. In addition, this program utilized our Savor the Season program for grower, consumer and market education materials, to promote the products to be purchased with the materials provided in this program. Savor the Season was created in conjunction with growers and extension agents to exclusively promote specialty crops with recipe cards featuring 24 different elegible vegetables. Savor the Season was also funded by a Specialty Crop Block Grant.

Final reports and program evaluation were distributed in 2012 after eight of the 18 markets in Kansas offering EBT completed the survey. This number of completion was only achieved after $50 incentives and reminders were provided.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The core objective was to complete the survey and from that understand if using EBT at farmers markets would be a favorable improvement. The survey was completed and the survey results can be used by market managers and vendors to make sound decisions regarding EBT in their

markets. As a favorable development, our survey of markets using EBT indicated that "in general, all markets saw an increase in attendance and sales because of the use of EBT transactions." This indicates that once EBT is in-place, and for markets who have the infrastructure to continue to operate the program, that it is beneficial to offer EBT. It also indicates that consumers are interested in using the program, and with more awareness and training, it may continue to grow.

The first goal was to increase the number of Kansas farmers' markets that accept food assistance (SNAP). At the completion of the project, December 2012, 18 Kansas farmers markets accepted SNAP benefits via EBT programs. This represented a net increase of 5 markets, from 13 markets in 2010. (Two markets ceased to offer EBT since 2010.) However, this increase did not achieve the goal of 22% of Kansas markets accepting SNAP, due to the increase in the number of Kansas farmers markets during the same period, to 105 markets. This means that at the conclusion of the project, a stable 16% of Kansas farmers markets offer EBT programs, with an increase in farmers markets overall, representing a 1% increase over 2010.

The second goal was to increase the redemption rate of SNAP benefits at Kansas farmers' markets. Eight markets participated in the reporting of EBT transaction data at the conclusion of this project (all markets who participated in 2012 participated, as a condition of their one-year contract in this program). To maximize participation in the survey by the non-contractual markets, we offered a small stipend of $50. These eight markets, three of whom were new in 2012, reported a total of 1,539 EBT SNAP transactions, despite the fact that for two of the markets (one old and one new), the EBT machines were inoperable throughout nearly the entire season. One was due to machine malfunction and inability to obtain service from the vendor; the other was due to market relocation. The target for number of transactions at the conclusion of the project was achieved. The total value of SNAP transactions reported by these eight markets was $26,879.27. Given that several of the state's largest markets participating in SNAP did not participate in this survey despite the incentive offered, we can conclude that our total dollar value well exceeded the goals of the program; however, we cannot definitively state as such. Markets participating reported a number of challenges including machines that broke down, lack of service from machine vendors, and starting too late in the vending season to make impact. These factors are reflected in the learnings for the project.

The third goal was to increase income for specialty crop producers at 19 Kansas farmers' markets. Total number of SNAP transactions reported exceeded the goal, with 1,539 reported, although receipts reported by these eight markets totaled only $26,879.27. Still, we can conclude that all 18 markets would total an increase well over our target, with the majority of that additional income going to our state's specialty crop producer-vendors, as the majority of vendors in our markets. Debit transactions reported numbered 728, for a total value of $15,695. This was significantly lower than desired, at slightly more than the 2009 benchmark but only about half of what was targeted. This might reflect the increased usage of other technologies by vendors to accept debit cards, such as the Square card reader for smart phones, which was reported by some of the responding markets. Two of the markets reported giving up on EBT machines in favor of the market manager or the market signing up for the Square machine. This indicates a major opportunity for growth in Vision card usage, if Square technology could be utilized.

The fourth goal was to increase the number of Kansas farm stands accepting food assistance (SNAP). Only 1 farm stand agreed to participate in 2012, and 1 was interested in 2011, but neither reported completing the season using the device. This reflects the challenges of communicating and implementing EBT with markets and vendors, and also transition within the Program Director roles in the organization in year 2 when more farmers could have been solicited, the challenge of continuity introduced by

extending the program over a second year, competition by Square technology that is so easy to use by vendors now, and challenges adopting EBT technology by the markets themselves that decreased the managers' ability to advocate for it with their vendors.

Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of this work will be market vendors and customers. From the vender standpoint it has been proven through this project that EBT increases sales and attracts more customers to the market thereby increasing the economic vitality of the market. From the customer standpoint it makes it easier to purchase local foods that can be part of healthy and wholesome meals for families in the community. Folks in the community with EBT cards are more likely to have limited cash available to make food purchases, so markets that don't offer EBT are in a way forcing those potential customers to make their purchases in grocery stores.

Direct Beneficiaries of this project include:
Community residents and specialty crop vendors of the 8 new farmers markets offering EBT benefits in Kansas during 2011 and 2012, which are:
Emporia
Garnett
Overland Park
Kansas City Kansas -- Juniper Gardens
Kansas City Kansas -- Catholic Charities
Kansas City Kansas -- Strawberry Hill
Lawrence -- Cottin's
Wichita -- Grinter's

Four of these markets directly benefited from the full services of this program; the remaining markets as well as 10 additional existing markets with EBT benefited from inclusion in our promotional materials. We also assisted those who needed help with obtaining tokens, such as Allen County. SNAP Recipients in these communities benefited from improved access to affordable, locally-grown specialty crops.

Kansas Specialty Crop Producers:
In the years of this grant, 2011 and 2012, 4 new markets participated plus 4 additional markets received assistance. Together, 8 markets responding to our survey at the end of 2012 reported 117 specialty crop vendors. With 18 total markets benefiting from our promotional materials, including some of our state's largest markets, we believe that our target of at least 300 Kansas specialty crop farmers benefited from the increased traffic through their markets through promotion of this program, but we cannot substantiate that all experienced an expanded customer base as a result of this program.

Although we estimated three to six farm stands would become SNAP Retailers and begin excepting VISION cards, only one entered the program and did not report concluding the program.

Kansas Communities: Communities benefit economically through farmers market EBT programs; USDA estimates that for every five dollars spent through SNAP, $9.20 of local economic activity is generated. This economic impact is magnified when consumers purchase direct-marketed local products. Communities benefit health-wise when citizens have access to high-quality, nutritious fresh fruits and vegetables; farmers markets are an especially vital source of fresh produce in urban and rural communities lacking grocery stores. This would indicate that for the 8 markets who replied to our survey,

their communities benefited from at least $242,000 in additional economic activity. The additional 10 markets, some of which are the largest in our state, would push that figure much higher.

Lesson Learned

Final grant funds expended reflect personnel involvement in data collection and analysis to close out the project. The large amount of in-kind match reported reflects the fact that we opted to summarize at the end of the project, with in-kind breaking out as follows: $12,750 in cash match by KRC, and $15,100 in-kind match by KRC staff, board, contributors and markets. A significant amount of funding has not been expended, primarily regarding supplies and fees/service costs for machines due to the following: fewer markets participating than anticipated; use of "wired" service by one market and thus much cheaper machine service; difficulty maintaining contact between program coordinator for KRC and on-site market coordinators (primarily due to market coordinator challenges); delay in project reflected in original extension which partially resulted in lack of progress on project over winter and thus not beginning season with services and supplies in-place; and other conflicting responsibilities of KRC-KDA coordinator later in the season. A major finding is that support for markets and growers must be implemented over the winter; programs that cannot start until the market opens will face an uphill climb through the season. Unfortunately, however, markets are often in-flux over the winter, making that contact difficult, as well.

Please see the additional supplementary document for survey results from this project.

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Our Local Food Program: Strengthening Awareness and Sales of Kansas Specialty Crops in the Tri-Region Area

Kansas Rural Center
Grant Awarded: $70,000

Project Summary

This project was inspired by data demonstrating that Kansans spend $525 million on fruits and vegetables annually while Kansas farm income from the sale of these specialty crops is estimated at only $15 million. This disparity illustrates the potential economic impact of increased specialty crop production in our state. On the national level, direct-to-consumer sales, through outlets such as farmers markets, farm stands and U-pick operations, experienced an annual growth rate of about 10% between 2002 and 2007 – double that of the rest of the food economy. Mirroring a national trend, the number of Kansas farmers markets has doubled over the past decade. From 2002 to 2007, Kansas moved from 45th to 33rd in state ranking based on vegetable acres per 100 people.

These statistics point to a burgeoning demand for local food. With this project, we sought to answer the question, "How can Kansas specialty crop producers better connect with buyers who value not only the high quality of most local fruits and vegetable, but also associate with values such as 'supporting local economy, farmers receiving fair share of economic returns, and maintaining local farmland'?"

This project built upon 2010 work through a KDA Specialty Crop Block Grant, "Expanding the Buy Fresh/Buy Local Program to Kansas," that funded the development of the Our Local Food-Kaw River Valley (OLF-KRV) original food label after bringing in the national Buy Fresh, Buy Local program proved unfeasible. This project provided for the continued operation of OLF in the 12-county Kansas River Valley region and expanded the program to include the South Central chapter (eight counties surrounding Wichita) and the Twin Rivers chapter (six counties surrounding Emporia). The regional chapter model provided both a local coordinator, with existing relationships with producers and businesses in the area, and a larger network comprised of other chapters. The program network was able to share resources and experiences to improve individual chapter success.

Information gathered in the first year of the OLF-KRV program informed the development of the South Central and Twin River chapters. Additionally, KRC received a USDA Risk Management Agency grant in 2009 that funded an educational and networking workshop to connect Kaw River Valley farmers with restaurants, grocers and institutions seeking to purchase local food. Evaluations and outcomes of this workshop guided the development of the 2011 local food workshops included in this project.

Project Approach

The program sought to help specialty crop farmers increase sales and benefit from expanded marketing channels through three main project efforts:

1. Promoting consumer awareness of producers and ability to locate them via the Our Local Food regional web sites and local food guides Utilizing blogs, Facebook and contact management programs, regional coordinators promoted activities of local produce growers and local food businesses who had enrolled in the program, as well as area events featuring local grower members. These media channels gained followers throughout the project. Coordinators also provided press advisories and obtained coverage for events, tabled at events and provided marketing materials including banners, bumper stickers, and

produce stickers to help grow awareness for local foods in their regions.

With the addition of the two new chapters, flexibility was provided to coordinators to seek out those activities that were most beneficial in their regions. This provided understanding about the local food challenges unique to the regions. The original chapter, Kaw River Valley (KRV) obviously is a more advanced local food shed in terms of awareness, production and consumption, but has significant distribution challenges. The newly added Twin Rivers (TR) and South Central (SC) areas, while growing and populated with local specialty crop producers, demonstrated more need for basic assistance and information for farmers and consumers. However, the flexible approach created difficulty in obtaining specific data about increased sales in this first year, due to lack of systemic consistency in the program. The project team considers the relationships and qualitative data gained to be well worth the costs of flexibility.

2. Improve business skills and networking of both producers and food buyers through regional workshops and consultations with regional coordinators. Partnering with regional restaurants, county extension agents, and business leaders, the regional coordinators organized “Local Connections” educational workshops in each of the three regions, for a total of 3 offered during this project. These workshops featured panels and expert speakers about issues including how to sell to restaurants, what marketing opportunities can be utilized by producers, and what buyers are looking for. Buyers also benefited from being able to meet and network at these events with farmers.

In addition, the coordinators, who managed farm and business sign-ups, tabled at events, and fielded phone calls, were able to connect farmers and buyers they had met through their day to day activities.

Based on connections made and verbal feedback, we determined that the best “connector” activities were networking and educational events for farmers, at which buyers could be invited. Coordinators’ best roles were to create the venues at which both groups could come together, rather than try to make individual connections, although of course such connections are serendipitous as a result of coordinator networking. But serving a “broker” role is very difficult to sustain as a central role for a coordinator with other responsibilities. Consumer awareness and interest in local foods is growing, such that meeting demand needs to be a focus of future specialty crop growth efforts. Education around business skills, including marketing, remains important for farmers, as does the opportunity to network with each other.

3. Enhance collaboration on regional food system issues through food assessments and supply chain partnerships. South Central, with the help of Sedgwick County Extension and a shared intern, was able to complete a regional food assessment of farms, production, and markets for specialty crops. Due to a late start by the coordinator, Kaw River Valley utilized an intern to assist with gathering data for a food assessment but was not able to complete an analysis during the timeframe of the project. Twin Rivers worked with student groups in marketing and promotion on a research project in which 97 people in the Twin rivers area were surveyed to assess the degree of interest in issues related to local food. Two groups of promotions class students designed promotional packages with different goals. One group focused on recruiting businesses to OLF, and the other focused on increasing public demand for local food.

Through interaction with buyers, especially, the coordinators identified major supply chain gaps in the local food system for specialty crops, namely, the need for aggregation, processing and distribution businesses and facilities. This points to major opportunity for future work and entrepreneurship in growing specialty crops market and consumption in Kansas.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Goal 1: New relationships between producers and food businesses will be established resulting in increased Kansas specialty crops purchases.

Performance Measure: Number of new relationships established that result in sales of specialty crops.
Result: Businesses were surveyed, as the most accurate and easiest-to-obtain indicator of business-farmer relationships. In the Kaw River Valley, 50 percent of businesses responding at the end of the project said they had formed new buying relationships with local producers as a result of OLF participation during this project. In South Central, when asked in a survey at the local foods workshop, 18 participants reported that they connected with a local farm or food business with which they planned to pursue a relationship. Twin Rivers did not survey businesses due to lack of business participation.

Goal 2: The regional label will be used in a variety of marketing outlets permitting consumers to easily identify locally raised specialty crops.

Performance Measure: Number of members using the OLF label in each of the program categories – farmers, farmers markets, local food businesses.
The final number of Chapter Members in each category for our first year totaled:
KRV: Farm Members: 55, Business Members: 14, Farmers Market Members: 8
SC: Farm Members: 35, Business Members: 4, Farmers Market Members: 5
TR: Farm Members: 21, Business Members: 1, Farmers Market Members: 2.

In a final straw poll of members, two-thirds reported using the OLF branded materials.
Coordinators reported seeing the materials across a wide variety of venues in all three regions, including farmers markets, restaurants, and stores with local produce vendors.

Goal 3: Heightened consumer awareness of specialty crop producers and improved availability of information to locate outlets for locally raised food.

Performance Measure: Number of subscribers to bimonthly OLF e-newsletters, number of OLF web site unique visitors, with a target of 1,200 combined subscribers to chapter e-newsletters and 2,500 unique visitors to the web site.

Final numbers:
Chapter e-New subscribers came in well under target, at only 726 total subscribers across three chapters. However, Facebook follows totaled at least 738 by the end of the project, which was not planned in the original proposal. Blogs were used for each chapter, rather than a single website. With the blog platform, total page views, not unique visitors, were measured, with a total of page views topping 9,000.

Anecdotally, “Vocal Local” consumers reported enjoying updates about local food events, activities and news, as well as national news about local foods development. Promoting events proved more feasible than promoting individual member featured products, however.
The coordinators’ part-time status along with the newness of the program did not provide enough time to establish reliable information channels to provide meaningful news about specific farm or business offerings. Again, that “broker” role would be hard to sustain without significantly more dedicated personnel resource.

Goal 4: Improved business skills and networking of both producers and food buyers through regional workshops and consultations with regional coordinators.

Performance Measure: Number of attendees at Local Food Connections Workshops held in each region, with a goal of 120 total attendees across the three regions.

Reporting:
About 75 participants attended the three workshops, held in late 2011 at Manhattan, Wichita and Emporia. Because these were first-year events in the OLF program, and the format was left open to each coordinator to evaluate in each region, smaller workshops were planned.

The information gathered about successful format, desired topics, and general pull of the workshops will guide future education offerings around local food. These results varied according to a number of factors, including time of year, amount of planning time available, steering committee involvement, and local interests.

Beneficiaries

The anticipated beneficiaries at the beginning of the project included specialty crop producers with farms or existing marketing channels in these counties: Atchison, Butler, Chase, Coffey, Cowley, Douglas, Geary, Greenwood, Harper, Harvey, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Kingman, Leavenworth, Lyon, Morris, Osage, Pottawatomie, Reno, Riley, Sedgwick, Shawnee, Sumner, Wabaunsee and Wyandotte. Farmers markets, grocers, restaurants and individual consumers in those counties were anticipated as secondary beneficiaries. Those counties were also predicted to benefit through the retention of economic activity in their local economies.

The 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture lists 274 farms producing fruits and vegetables and 197 orchards in these regions, with the estimated number of specialty crop producer beneficiaries surpassing 400. These counties are also home to 72 percent of Kansas residents.

The primary beneficiaries were expected to benefit from increased sales and expanded marketing channels. As reported above, some increase in farm relationships was reported by the business participants, but translation to economic benefit at such an early stage in the OLF program would be difficult to measure.

Lessons Learned

In general, the project team found that producers desire tools that empower them to make their own business decisions, grow their own business brands, and enjoy flexibility to make marketing choices. Therefore, enrolling in a "program" was a tougher sell than simply providing the tools that could be helpful, if so desired. In addition, due to farms' and businesses' own brands, OLF marketing materials were not consistently used, although the brand mark itself received favorable feedback. As a signifier of activity, it provided a valuable gathering tool to bring people together, and that opportunity to gather with local activists around local food was welcomed. The produce stickers, to be applied to individual pieces of produce, received mixed feedback due to labor involved to apply them, and businesses (stores) were not receptive to “requiring” them on local produce. Opportunities to connect through learning activities provided the best networking opportunities.

The project team’s learning through this project has helped refine our future approach around local food toward empowering producers, their communities and businesses to join together and find their own solutions to their own needs, without imposed restrictions of a brand. However, having an umbrella to gather under, such as a flexible OLF brand and coordinators to help facilitate, remains important at this stage of local foods development in Kansas. Once community connections are made, they seem to endure and carry themselves forward, as we learned with a coordinator-facilitated community food organizing project in Manhattan, which was led by that community and came together with the help of the Kaw River Valley coordinator, but managed its own projects and meetings after initial formation. The project

team planned to pursue this type of activity more in 2012, to further test the value and need of the "community food organizer" role in galvanizing energy in rural communities into action-oriented teams.

The tools of Our Local Food -- the website food "hub" and certain consumer marketing tools, such as bumper stickers, received good feedback and will be very welcome and useful tools for coalescing consumer interest around the local food movement. As such, they were positive door-openers and the brand provided a signpost around which communities could organize. This was not the original intention, but may provide the most enduring benefit of the project work, in growing not only community awareness around local specialty crops, but more importantly, community action activities to help farmers produce and sell more.

Many producers indicated skepticism that these tools would be beneficial to their businesses, but appreciated their availability and were willing to participate in the program as a pilot. Buyers, likewise, appreciated that work is being done to make their jobs easier -- however, at the end of the day, they also indicated there's no substitute for picking up the phone and calling the growers they know, or going to the farmers market to meet farmers. Buyers' biggest feedback to coordinators was the need for Kansas to improve aggregation, processing and distribution channels for specialty crops, to make meaningful advances in the local food system, and to help producers pursue cooperative arrangements.

Central to the success of this project was having the local foods coordinators "on the ground," in the chapters, regionally. Of all aspects of the program, the project team feels the coordinators provided the most enduring progress toward growing specialty crop sales in the state, through their activities in growing awareness and making connections that local knowledge provides. A statewide effort kicked off without the local connection, they believe, likely would not have spread as quickly or formed such a solid foundation for local specialty crop markets development in Kansas.

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Survey results from Growing Healthy Families, Farms and Communities Through Farmers' Market EBT

Average Transactions for New EBT Markets

	April	May	June	July	August	Septemt	October	Novemt	Totals
Debit Transactions	0	0	3	1	0	1.5	2	0	7.5
$ Amount of Debit	$ -	$ -	$ 60.00	$ 10.00	$ -	$ 45.00	$ 40.00	$ -	$ 155.00
EBT Transactions	0	6	6	2	12	7	4	2	39
$ Amount of EBT	$ -	$113.50	$105.00	$ 38.00	$ 242.27	$ 120.00	$ 60.00	$ 34.00	$ 712.77

There were 2 new markets participating in the EBT program in 2012. Of those 2, only 1 market (Cottin's Hardware) produced any EBT transactions. Both markets did have debit card transactions. However Grinter Friends FM had very limited transactions; only during the month of September. The above chart shows the average amounts for the two markets.

Estimate the $ value of unredeemed EBT tokens at the end of the season.

Cottin's FM estimated $82 at the end of October, but their season was still going.
Grinter Friends FM reported that they did not receive any tokens this year.

Total number of vendors participating in your market

Cottins=	46
Grinter's	12
Average	29

Number of unique Debit card numbers at the market

Cottins=	7
Grinters=	2
Average=	4.5

Average vendors per week

Cottins=	18
Grinters=	7
Average	12.5

Vendors using "square" technology

Cottins=	2
Grinters=	2
Average	2

Vendors selling EBT compatible products

Cottins=	18
Grinters=	7
Average	12.5

Repeat customers attending market

Cottins=	100
Grinters=	4
Average=	52

Estimated weekly shopper count

Cottins=	150
Grinters=	25
Average	87.5

Estimated change in sales between 2011 and 2012

Cottins=	increase 30%
Grinters=	55%

Number of unique Vision card numbers used at the market

Cottins=	24
Grinters=	2
Average	13

Has attendance/sales been impacted by your ability to accept EBT/debit cards?

Cottins: Yes, we have many patrons who began shopping here only because we accept EBT cards
Grinters: more EBT visitors

What is your experience with educating vendors about the EBT program/rules?

Cottins: Token system is easy to use and understand
A "do's and don'ts" card would be nice
Grinters: Have used printed materials, and have been on site to answer questions for vendors and customers

What is your experience with educating shoppers?

Cottins: Outdoor sign and token brochure were great assets. Also distributed brochures to various spots around town.
Grinters: Mainly spent time explaining EBT and what the letters EBT meant to non-users

Additional Comments/Concerns

Cottins: This is a wonderful program. We are very happy to be able to participate!
Grinters: The list of items included with the program, we never received except for the banner and the fliers.
The flyer was just received 2 wks ago Sept. 24th. As manager, I used my own square card reader and enrolled Grinter's bank account with square.