

Notes from Strategy Session 2: Building New and Beginning Farmer Capacity

Selected Strategy

- 1) Development of a mentorship placement program and expansion of residency and incubator programs providing bridge opportunities to new and beginning Farmers
- 2) Create more local capital accessibility by replication and expending successful farmer and leader education connections

Strategy Context

1) Tilian FDL (Farmer, Residency, Incubator)

- Barns and Beyond, Farmer Residencies in Traverse City
- Concepts Jim, Rob S. Susan C and Jeremy M put together for journey person mentor ship placement progress
 - (Training progress) OFTP & Earthworks and Greenling Programs
- Contribution- MLUI, CRFS, OFTP, FSEP, Earthworks, Edible Flint, DAN, Island, Seeds, Greening of Detroit, MOFFA, MIFFS,
- Obstacles: Good coordination (Hab and space)
 - i.e. Farmers who can serve as placement/ mentor sites
- Funding

2) Farmer- Lender education and connection efforts under way in NW MI and other states

- STEPS
- Share, material with local partner organizations
- Identify further technology and training partners i.e. SBTDC's and business development organizations
- I.D. funds, lenders, etc. available locally
- Education, lenders and farmers using materials from NW MI and other states
- hold sessions to bring together farmers and lenders
- Potential barrier: banks uninterested in lending

Implementation Steps

- A) Obtain funding to implement expansion and replication
- B) Replicate and expand existing programs (ABOVE) throughout state

Farmer-Education Initiative

Mission: Increase young/beginning farmer access to capital

- 1) Share existing resources
- 2) Identify stakeholders
- 3) Decentralized actions and common support

Lenders

(Draw in New/Existing Lenders from Diverse BGs, i.e. Slow Money, Banks, etc.)

Farmers/Borrowers (Partners and Audience)

(Identify Young/Beg F/R Who Need Capital & Would Want Help/ To Participate in Training)

Support Organizations/Partners

- i.e. BALLE/Local First, Local Organizations i.e. Growing Hope

Grant and Policy (partners and advocates)

- MSHDA, Food Policy Councils, CEDAM

Media & Consumers (Farmers and advocates)

- General Public helps support & spread the word, eventual advocate for policy change

Trainers (Partners)

- SBTDC Centers, Medic, Extension

Getting Started

*Start a Google Docs shared folder to post/access existing Docs and resources

*Create Google Group to communicate

* Share Back

Measuring Success

- Outcome: New Farm Business and employment opportunities (increase in sales)
- Measures:
 - # Number of people placed/participation in mentor progress
 - # of people employed at new farm businesses
 - % of product sold in MI
 - Increased improved food access-through sales at EBT F.M. etc.
 - # Of incubator farms and residency options
 - # farms serving as mentor sites
 - Existing data: Ag census- MI Works
 - Collection of stories to augment #'s i.e. tracking individual

Indicators

- # of training sessions in placement, of participants, of successful loans for lenders/farmers, of banks/lenders involved
- Types of loans, what type of market farms sell, Type/ size of farm

Data to collect:

- Demographic of farmers involved, Loan purpose and other indicators

Existing Data:

- Young farmer coalition survey, Congressional resource service survey-CRS Report, Case Studies, metrics, from current NW Michigan efforts
- #R42155
- Local data sets: data from local organization working with farms and farmers

Relating to Charter Goals

- 1) 2 & 3 (slightly #4)
- 2) Goal #3 (primary), goals 2 & 4 (secondary)

Next Steps

- Email to Session of organizations or farmers, etc. who might want to participate
- Session members send out to their networks
- Coordinate conference call/web conference to Move Forward
- Framing out program and boundary condition
- Develop strategy to recruitment Farmers/new farmers (web, pamphlets at CGOPS, Consrt Dist.)
- MIFM, COOP produce buyers/ conserve districts/ MRCS
- Develop program structure and program materials mechanism
- Check existing programs around country
- Land stewardship program and Maine Journey Program
- Hab (? CRFS) and spoke system
- What are qualifications of mentors and new farmers?
- Jim meets with Island and Seeds
- Timeline: 2 Years

Strategy #3

- foster existing relationship with officials and business people
- obstacles:
 - o keeping in tune with politics/ funding
- Continuing with foundation \$

Strategy #4 electronic card DUFB

Current efforts

- existing markets
- relationship b/t market managers, local gov and business

Feasibility

- depends on market location-data service
- vendor characteristics religious \$

Contributions:

- leverage networks locally/ market managers

Obstacles:

- distribution of cards (setup, registration)
- Feasibility issues
- Just another card-WIC Bridge, EBT

1) Establish Ag IDA trust fund

2) Create beginning farmer loan fund (MEDC to under write loans)

3) Utilize specialty crop block grant \$ for farm financial planning

4) Create Ag sector alliances in other regions

5) Farms enterprise community college curriculum

6) Expand Farm incubator, farmer residence and pathways to farm ownership programs.

Topic Orientation

Need/Opportunity

- Aging Farmers, decreasing farm #'s, low fruit and vegetable consumption
- For enough consumption, need 10k acres fruit, acres veg
- Need to create career paths into farming
- Need Farm and business training
- Need bridge step into the training
- Need post-training bridges
- Need land and capital acres

Things that are happening:

- Farmer Residency, OFTP, Incubator Programs, Journey person programs, IDA programs for \$ and Farmer and lender matching and co-education

Mentorships on urban farms

- interest in rural communities to do urban farms in town (This Strategy)
- Bridges both urban and rural
- Mentorship match-making should include ?'s such as scale of interest; areas of interest
- Michigan Works: Workforce development
- (Gap)- Talking to existing farmers- then farmers learning how to be a better mentor
- ? Too many associations to keep up with MATA many offer training opportunities through tracking jobs and how many employed in MI
- Story telling= compelling; don't lose
- Missing: Implementation Steps to support selected strategy #1
- Instead of a few big training/education programs, why not many small groups focused/attuned to local culture? Create a replicable template

Flip Chart Notes

Page 1:

Farming → Start in school (connecting to urban Ag programs)

- Access to training
- Bridge steps
- Production training
- Business training
- Current efforts that could be leveraged

Student Organic Farm, MAEAP (environmentally friendly), EAT (Earthworks), Greening of Detroit, WOOF, Lansing Urban Farm

After the program: Assistant instructor/leadership positions

Connecting with Farmers

Career path, expertise, mentorship program, match making (Business middle man) and website

- expanding existing incubator programs
- Place-based programs
- development of a mentorship-based placements program and expansion of residency and incubator programs providing bridge opportunities for new farmers.

Page 2: Intended audience?

- Opportunities for people with formal training and those without (like a journeyman relationship)
- No way to connect farmers with land and people graduating from existing programs?
- Help facilitate new farmers to get land capital
- incubator programs are closest to farming
- financial barriers to getting formal Ag experience
- Recovery and urban ag-training for farmer offenders and place for them to work
- Collaborative incubator programs-different hosts and experiences
- “need to utility” that training provides AIBA in CA in order to be in the incubator, you do a 6 month internship training beforehand
- Many paths to start a farm business. How does the service work? Flexibility is key
- Mentorship program could expose new farmers to new diverse experiences
- Financially inclusive?
- could operate on a spectrum
- Mentorship programs are a lot of work for the old farmer- how to compensate? Time, diligence and commitment (something material?)
- more active, less passive mentorship

Page 3:

- ad on craigslist? Something less passive?
- directing traffic to sites is critical
- how to make more accessible to everyone?
- how does this apply to rural Ag? For urban Ag it’s like any other job (how can we apply this in a rural area?)
- rural farms, this could be a way to get these farms more diversified, bring people out to the farm
- could be a way to connect grants to rural farms, like on urban farms
- does a mentorship opportunity make incubator farms/training programs more attractive?
- By working on a farm, you could learn that farming doesn’t appeal to you
- new and beginning (up to 10 yrs.) farmers

Feasibility

- farms/farmers are interested in mentoring new/beginning farmers

- what motivation to mentor? Retaining, no successor
- not every farmer wants to participate or is eligible
- consider compensation (time, money) for farmer
- Cost-share to implement practice on the farm
- membership fee (like WWOOFing) coming from potential farmers
- award made to mentoring farmer?
- imp to distinguish btwn farm hand and a valuable person to the farm
- labor laws: cant work on a farm and not be paid (community service hours to make up for payment)
- mentorship wouldn't be a training program necessarily
- how feasible is this? Not a craigslist program. Has to be an initiative by a regional program
- could be coordinated by a central agency, and then regionalized
- feasible if coordinated and executed

Page 4: what are you willing to do?

Coordinate local resources: inventory of farms in Ingham and Eaton County

Obstacles: funding (cost/ compensation), appropriate farmer mentors, measuring success.

How to measure success?

- Success stories
- Interactive blog
- feedback from potential farmers
- What is a concrete measure of success?
- ultimate goal is new successful farms
- look @ # of new incubator farms
- # of mentors and mentees
- new farm businesses
- reduction of farmland lost
- # of people employed by new farm businesses, salary report for 5 years on sales. Employees etc. (is this info already being collected)
- National Ag census- could we add questions? (lots of good data)
 - o make sure mentors participate in this census
 - o getting small farmers to identify as farms for the census
- What counts as mentorship? Size of farm?