

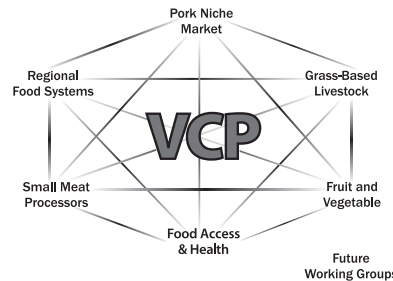
Value Chain Partnerships



An Iowa-Based Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups

Value Chain Partnerships is an Iowa-based network of food and agriculture working groups. These groups bring together a diverse ensemble of producers, processors, and private, non-profit, and government organizations across a variety of market-driven food and agriculture issues to deliver social, economic, environmental and health benefits to clients and communities.

The working groups in Value Chain Partnerships provide four core functions: acting as information hubs, catalysts for cooperation, magnets for funding, and scouts for new opportunities (see below diagram).



Value Chain Partnerships Core Functions

Information Hubs	Catalysts for Cooperation	Magnets	Scouts
Provide an information clearinghouse	Create solutions collaboratively	Attract funding	Identify food and agriculture challenges
Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to larger portfolio of knowledge and expertise • Greater awareness of available programs/expertise • Research opportunities available 	Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate more effectively • Coordinated use of resources • Deconstruction of organizational boundaries • Access to a support network 	Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to leverage resources within the private and public sectors • Increased probability of funding because network is established 	Benefits include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better grasp of emerging challenges • Improved decision making to modify strategies • Ability to bring in new partners and champions

In addition, the Value Chain Partnerships leadership team relies on its broad experience with a wide range of food and agriculture working groups to educate others who are interested in utilizing this model.

Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG): initiated 2001

This working group is comprised of niche pork companies and supporting groups. The group works to create and maintain more competitive and viable operations for smaller-scale players in the pork sector.

Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG): initiated 2003

This working group is comprised of practitioners and community leaders organized by geographic location. The group works to increase the investment in and support for local and regional food businesses in Iowa.

Small Meat Processors Working Group (SMPWG): initiated 2006

This working group is comprised of small meat processors, state agencies, and producer groups. The group works to improve the vitality of small-scale meat processing plants in Iowa.

Fruit and Vegetable Working Group (FVWG): initiated 2007

This working group is comprised of fruit and vegetable growers and buyers and their assistance providers. The group works to build the production, handling, and marketing capacity of Iowa's fruit and vegetable industries.

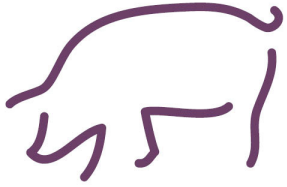
Grass-Based Livestock Working Group (GBLWG): initiated 2008 – a Leopold Center cross-initiative group

This working group is a network comprised primarily of producers, educators, and agencies with diverse grazing philosophies that work to inform Iowa's grazing community about the economics and ecology of grazing management.

Food Access and Health Working Group (FAHWG): initiated 2010

This working group is a statewide network of food and nutrition assistance program providers focused on establishing a regionally-based food system that ameliorates hunger and improves the health of Iowans by increasing access to fresh and nutritious food.

Contact Rich Pirog at rpirog@iastate.edu or Beth Larabee at blarabee@iastate.edu, or visit us on the web at www.valuechains.org.



Pork Niche Market Working Group

Background/Date Founded

Founded in January 2002.

Objectives

The group was formed to foster the success of niche pork value chains that are profitable to all participants, that incorporate farmer ownership and control, and that contribute to environmental stewardship and rural vitality.

Members

- Niche pork companies (N=12)
- Commodity groups (National Pork Board and Iowa Pork Producers Association)
- ISU (Leopold Center, Extension, Iowa Pork Industry Center, Value-Added Ag, AgMRC, Vet College)
- Non-profits (Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, Center for Rural Affairs)
- Others (USDA Rural Development, Hubbard Feeds, individual producers)

Audiences

Iowa State University, commodity organizations, government agencies, non-profit groups, hog producers, niche pork companies, other businesses.

Leveraged Funding

Since the group was initiated, a combined \$550,000 from the Leopold Center and Value Chain Partnerships has been used to leverage a total of \$1.37 million.

Impacts

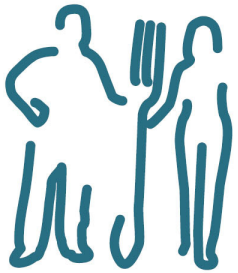
- Helped bring a tight focus on priority challenges facing both individual producers and niche pork companies.
- Addressed these challenges with over 30 different completed projects.
- Developed significant new knowledge (i.e. 2006 through 2009 niche pork production costs and returns reports, niche pork herd health study, etc.)
- Helped develop and deliver effective research and educational programming for a segment of the pork industry that was not being adequately serviced.
- Provided an on-going forum to share information regarding industry developments, challenges facing individual businesses, opportunities for collaborative projects, etc.
- Enabled the development of strong relationships founded on mutual interests and trust that have led to specific examples of collaboration between companies on topics of shared concern (such as potential competitors sharing trucking to markets).
- Value demonstrated by financial contributions totaling over \$18,000 received from participants (including niche companies) in 2009 for operations.

Future Plans

Finalize and gain approval of a business plan for the PNMWG that includes its organizational structure, products and services, staffing needs, and budget.

Contact

Gary Huber, Working group leader, Practical Farmers of Iowa, (515) 450-6812, gary@practicalfarmers.org



Regional Food Systems Working Group

Background/ Date Founded

Initiated in 2003 and coordinated by the Leopold Center, the Regional Food Systems Working Group (RFSWG) is an umbrella network for all Iowans working to build a more resilient regional food system. In 2006 RFSWG shifted focus to provide better assistance to geographic-based local food groups across the state. RFSWG is the “meta-group” member in Value Chain Partnerships, the Iowa Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups (www.valuechains.org). Through the group community-based needs and challenges arise that can be served through technical and other assistance offered by other working groups, organizations, and consultants.

Objectives

RFSWG maximizes the potential for community-based, economically sustainable, and environmentally and socially responsible regional food enterprises by supporting education, conducting research, and facilitating partnerships.

Members

RFSWG offers a collaborative environment for a diverse group of farmers, community leaders, and non-profit, government, and private organizations to share resources and support. Currently RFSWG has 14 different local food groups covering more than 70 of Iowa's 99 counties actively participating; in addition there are many educators, researchers, and technical specialists with state-level responsibility who participate in the group. On average 100 Iowans participate in the quarterly meetings of RFSWG. These members also communicate through a social network site between meetings (<http://regionalfoodsystms.ning.com>).

Impacts

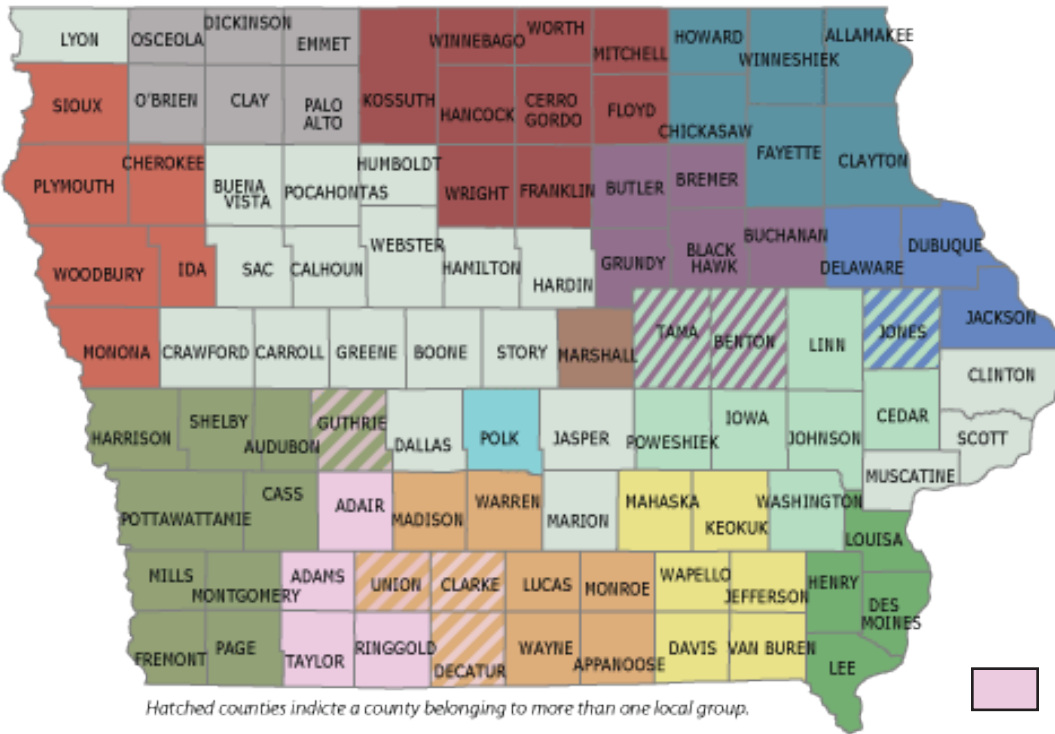
- RFSWG serves as the a key Iowa learning community to share knowledge that address community-based challenges in local food systems.
- The Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition, the first geographic-based RFSWG group, was able to secure more than \$1.7 million dollars from the Kellogg Foundation starting from an initial \$10,000 grant from the Leopold Center to develop the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative.
- Participation in RFSWG has led to increased grant support for local groups; in 2009 the Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnerships and the Hometown Harvest Group in southeast Iowa each received \$90,000 from the Wellmark Foundation to expand its Farm to School efforts.
- Four Iowa counties have invested dollars to increase capacity of local foods work in their counties –all four participate in RFSWG.
- RFSWG local partner success and the Leopold Center's social capital gained through providing leadership for the group were in part responsible for the Iowa legislature requesting that the Leopold Center develop a Local Food and Farm Plan for the state, complete with funding recommendations.

Support

Financial support currently is provided by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and a grant from USDA Rural Development. A previous funding partner included the Wallace Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Contact

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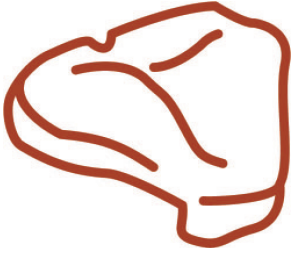
Regional Food Systems Working Group



An umbrella network for all Iowans working to build a more resilient regional food system

-  **Flavors of Northwest Iowa:** Working in Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth, Sioux and Woodbury counties
-  **Iowa Great Lakes Local Foods Network:** Working in Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, O'Brien, Osceola and Palo Alto counties
-  **Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition:** Working in Allamakee, Chickasaw, Clayton, Fayette, Howard and Winneshiek counties
-  **Northern Iowa Food & Farm Partnership:** Working in Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Grundy and Tama counties
-  **Harvest from the Heart (COMIDA):** Working in Marshall County
-  **Southwest Iowa Food & Farm Initiative:** Working in Audubon, Cass, Fremont, Guthrie, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie and Shelby counties
-  **Healthy Urban Food and Farming Group:** Working in Polk county

-  **Farm Fresh, Local Harvest Food Alliance:** Working in Adair, Adams, Clarke, Decatur, Guthrie, Ringgold, Taylor and Union counties
-  **South-Central Iowa Area Partnership:** Working in Appanoose, Clarke, Decatur, Lucas, Madison, Monroe, Union, Warren and Wayne counties
-  **Hometown Harvest of Southeast Iowa:** Working in Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Mahaska, Van Buren and Wapello counties
-  **Dubuque Eats Well:** Working in Delaware, Dubuque, Jackson and Jones counties
-  **Iowa Corridor Food and Agriculture Coalition:** Working in Benton, Cedar, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn, Poweshiek, Tama and Washington counties
-  **North Central Iowa Local Food Partnership:** Working in Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, Worth and Wright counties
-  **Great River Food Alliance of Southeast Iowa, Inc.:** Working in Des Moines, Henry, Lee and Louisa counties



Small Meat Processors Working Group

Background/Date Founded

Small meat processing plants are necessary for the vitality of Iowa's agriculture and rural lifestyle. In 1965, Iowa had more than 550 small meat plants; less than 200 remain today. The Small Meat Processors Working Group formed in 2006 to help address this decline by investigating, mapping, and coordinating resources at the local, state, and national levels. The group joined Value Chain Partnerships in 2007.

Objective

The Small Meat Processors Working Group seeks to help small, Iowa meat processors expand, upgrade or build new facilities in order to promote rural development—directly via the processors, and indirectly by helping offer greater market access for livestock producers and greater purchasing options for local and regional household and industrial buyers.

Members

The Small Meat Processors Working Group is a collaborative effort to support small meat processors. The group includes state agencies, producer groups and the Iowa Meat Processors Association (IMPA).

Impacts

- Developed Iowa Meat Processors' Resource Guidebook as a resource to help small meat processors expand, upgrade, or build new facilities. This collaboratively developed resource is used widely by state agencies and now in its 2nd edition.
- Two publications – Guide to Designing a Red Meat Plant and Whole Animal Beef and Pork Buying Guide – have been widely publicized and used. Both documents have been reprinted by the USDA and distributed free of charge.
- Meat processing vocational training program feasibility study with Webster City Area Development, Mid Iowa Growth Partnerships, and Iowa community colleges.
- Taught cost accounting to 30 small-scale meat processing firms in Iowa.
- Led to the development of the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (www.nichemeatprocessing.org), Cooperative Extension's national network supporting small meat processors.

Support

In addition to VCP and the Leopold Center, the group has been supported by the following organizations: North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, Iowa Meat Processors Association, Iowa Pork Producers Association, Iowa State University Meat Science Extension, Iowa State University Food Safety Research Laboratories

Contact

Arion Thiboumery, SMPWG Coordinator, arion@iastate.edu, 415-260-6890



Fruit and Vegetable Working Group

Background/Date Founded

The Fruit and Vegetable Working Group was formed to address issues limiting the growth of fruit and vegetable production and produce farmers' ability to deliver high-quality products to local and regional markets. The group was founded in 2007 and is co-facilitated by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Iowa State University Value Added Agriculture Program.

Objectives

The purpose of the Fruit and Vegetable Working Group is to work with fruit and vegetable growers and buyers and their assistance providers to help build the production, handling, and marketing capacity for Iowa's fruit and vegetable industries.

Members

Fruit and vegetable farmers; produce buyers; produce marketers; representatives from non-profit organizations, the ISU Horticulture Department, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; ISU Field Extension specialists; ISU County Extension Specialists; and RC& D representatives.

Support

Since its formation in 2007, the Fruit and Vegetable Working Group has received funding from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. The group has utilized this funding to leverage both money and human resources from Iowa State University and the Iowa Department of Agriculture.

Impacts

- Compiled initial five years of financial and investment data from early-stage Midwestern vegetable growers to assist beginning vegetable farmers in business planning.
- Developed a tool to help vegetable growers decide on improvements and upgrades to their postharvest handling system to improve their processing lines.
- Support food safety training for producer growers, including GAP training and certification, participation in the National GAP network based at Cornell University, involvement in the statewide GAP/produce safety committee, and participation in food safety training in Iowa.
- Provided input in support of new staff positions at Iowa State University to support the growth of fruits, vegetables, and local foods, including a faculty position in vegetable production, an Extension Field Specialist position in commercial horticulture, and a new farm management position which will work with produce growers.
- As a result of participation in the Fruit and Vegetable working group, the majority of members, specifically farmers, have changed practices or programs, have made new professional contacts, and are interested in additional information about a collaborative production, marketing, or distribution/aggregation project.

Contact

Malcolm Robertson, Working group co-leader, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, (515) 294-1166, malcolmr@iastate.edu; or

Margaret Smith, Working group co-leader, ISU Extension Value Added Agriculture, (515) 294-0087, mrgsmith@iastate.edu



Grass-Based Livestock Working Group

Background/Date Founded

The Grass-Based Livestock Working Group was initiated in the summer of 2008 with a multi-initiative competitive grant from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. It is one of a growing number of working groups within Value Chain Partnerships, which is Iowa's network of food and agriculture working groups. We also collaborate extensively with other grazing organizations in Iowa.

Objectives

The Grass-Based Livestock Working Group was formed to help the grazing livestock sector realize potential ecological and economic benefits by promoting innovation and information-sharing within a diverse and inclusive support network of grazing practitioners, outreach educators, and agency personnel.

We work to inform Iowa's grazing community about the economics and ecology of grazing management by engaging multiple grass-based interests including cow-calf production, grass-finishing, and grazing animals for land stewardship. The network's strengths lie in the diverse representation of our membership, both professionally and philosophically, coupled with a highly collaborative environment.

Members

- A wide variety of grazing practitioners (beef and sheep, part-time and full-time, organic and conventional, beginning and veteran).
- Educators (Iowa State University and ISU Extension, Iowa Beef Center, Leopold Center).
- Government agencies (Natural Resource Conservation Service, Iowa Department of Agriculture & Land Stewardship, Department of Natural Resources).

- NGOs (Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa Forage and Grasslands Council, Grazing Lands conservation Initiative, Iowa Cattlemen's Association).
- Other supporters (consultants, input suppliers, land conservancies, wildlife organizations).

Impacts

- Producers and support personnel have a trusting, democratic environment within which they are confident in sharing information and experiences.
- Many producers have become more confident in their business decisions and gained a better understanding of markets.
- Several producers have implemented management improvements to increase their efficiency and decrease their environmental impact.
- Many support personnel feel they have gained new knowledge and connections, which have made them more qualified and more effective at serving their clientele.
- Practitioners have connected with organizations and agencies that can provide them support.
- The GBLWG has become a key learning community amongst the grazing organizations in Iowa.

Support

Financial support through 2011 is provided by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Research & Demonstration pass-through mini-grants have leveraged approximately 300% of their value.

Contact

Andy Larson, Co-coordinator, (515) 294-5875 or allarso1@iastate.edu; or Pete Lammers, Co-coordinator, 515-288-0460 or plammers@ncat.org.

Farm Energy Working Group

Background/Date Founded

The Farm Energy Working Group was founded in April, 2009 as a statewide working group of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture through one of the Center's competitive grants.

Objectives

The Farm Energy Working Group supports research, education, and the implementation of a variety of energy conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy practices from on-farm resources to meet the needs of Iowa's small and mid-sized farms. Relying on inherent internal renewable resources of the farm is a core principle of sustainable agriculture.

Members

The Farm Energy Working Group is a collaborative effort that brings together organizations that have not typically worked together in the past, including Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa Farmers Union, Iowa Farm Bureau, all sectors of Iowa utilities, policy organizations, ISU Extension, university representatives, Rural Conservation and Development staff, Iowa Energy Center, renewable energy organizations, National Association for Appropriate Technology, and others.

Impacts

- Developed a seed grant program for farm energy demonstration projects and made three awards in 2009 and eight in 2010. Project examples include: increasing insulation in a greenhouse and installing a wood chip burning furnace to heat it; replacing LP gas furnaces in a large greenhouse with geothermal air heating and an air-to-water soil heating system; conducting a detailed energy analysis to determine cost, energy, and CO2 emissions on the farm; and replacing an outmoded dairy milking system with a robotic system to reduce energy and water use.

- Held quarterly meetings that involved participants from diverse organizations across the state. Fifteen to 30 members attended each meeting. We increased communication among members who represent organizations that have not worked together in the past.
- Began collecting Farmer Success Stories/case studies of farmers who are using energy efficiency and/or renewable energy on their farms. Information is included on installers, costs, results, funding, and problems. These farmers are early adopters of ideas and/or technologies. They offer visible evidence to other farmers that these farming modifications to reduce energy can work.
- Co-sponsored with the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) three workshops for more than 70 farmers to learn the basics of writing a USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant for farm audits, energy efficiency, or renewable energy on farms.
- Highlighted existing local and national efforts that enable participating entities to intensify their work in meeting on-farm energy needs through conservation, efficiency and renewable energy.

Support

Support for the first two years of the Farm Energy Working Group comes from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at \$40,000 each year.

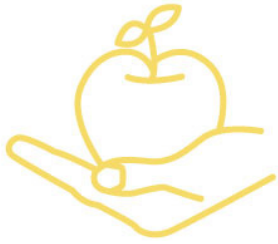
Future Plans

Share the outcomes of the demonstration grants through existing networks participating in this and other Leopold Center working groups in the form of field days, documented case studies, topic-specific workshops, reports, and other ways of engaging and reaching farmers, energy professionals, and extension staff.

Engage other VCP working group leaders and members about energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable energy from on-farm resource through workshops and presentations to enhance profitability and examine environmental factors that impact energy value chains.

Contact

Carole Yates, UNI Center for Energy & Environment Education, (319)273-7599, carole.yates@uni.edu



Food Access & Health Working Group

Background/Date Founded

The destiny of Iowa is greatly dependent on how we nourish ourselves. How Iowa feeds its people, especially children, determines the health, economic, ecological and social capacity to support future generations. The health of Iowans depends on a food system that makes healthful food the easiest choices.

Launched in March 2010, the Iowa Food Access & Health Working Group (FAHWG) is a statewide network of food and nutrition assistance program providers and health professionals focused on advancing regionally-based food systems that ameliorates hunger and improves the health of Iowans by increasing access to fresh and nutritious food. The goals of FAHWG are to develop and recommend program, research and policy options which support systems that produce safe and nutritious food for healthier Iowans and to strengthen food access and self-reliance among all eaters and communities in Iowa.

FAHWG is an emerging group within the Iowa-Based Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups (www.valuechains.org) of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and also serves as a subunit within the newly-formed Iowa Food Systems Council (www.iowafoodsystemscouncil.org). This dual purpose maximizes opportunities for Iowa to better address research, programs and policies related to food security and public health.

Objectives

- Increase communication, coordination and collaboration among a statewide network of food access, nutrition and health experts.
- Assess and monitor food access, health and food system indicators as a basis to develop and recommend research, program and policy strategies for advancing food and nutrition assistance programs and public health initiatives that support community-based food system efforts. This includes promoting innovative strategies for connecting low-resource households with healthy, affordable and locally-grown food.

- Function as an information clearinghouse including statewide food security and health knowledge and expertise, programs and research opportunities.
- Leverage funding and resources from private and public sectors for research, programs and policies that increase Iowans' access to healthy, affordable and locally-grown food.

Members

FAHWG partners include the Iowa Association of Food Banks; Des Moines Area Religious Council; Iowa Department of Public Health; Iowa Department of Education; Iowa Department on Aging; Iowa Department of Human Services; Iowa Workforce Development; Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals; Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; Iowa State University and Iowa State University Extension; Iowa Center on Health Disparities at the University of Northern Iowa; Local Foods Connection; The Soyfoods Council; and 1000 Friends of Iowa.

Impacts

FAHWG partners have met five times since March 2010 and have developed a logo, goal statement, and identified core food access and health indicators. Over the next two years, FAHWG partners will provide input and guidance on the comprehensive food access and health assessment; assist with data collection; propose research, program and policy recommendations; and make the results of the assessment available to their constituents and partners. Outreach and networking tools include a monthly electronic newsletter, The Forum, and partner spotlights included in meeting agendas. The FAHWG will soon be featured on the Value Chains and the Iowa Food Systems Council websites further increasing visibility.

Support

Funding for the launch of the FAHWG and the statewide food access and health assessment has been provided by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture (2 years at \$57,900) and partial support provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (1 year at \$137,600 for the establishment of the Iowa Food Systems Council and to conduct a statewide food system assessment). Both projects are administered by the Iowa Center on Health Disparities at the University of Northern Iowa.

Contact

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Value Chains Partnership Evaluation Summary and Highlights (9/1/10)

Highlights of Formative (Process) Evaluation Findings

VCP has leveraged or helped leverage:

- Over \$4 million for value chain and food systems work in Iowa
- Direct and active participation of more than 650 different stakeholders
- Continued interest of new stakeholders (29%: average percent of new participants attending each meeting; average RFSWG meeting attendance more than doubled to 86 participants per meeting in 2009 compared to an average of 36 per meeting in prior years)
- New relationships with new partners with new resources
- A continued stream of financial and non-financial resources from longer-term partners
- New credibility with various board members/administrators/supervisors for represented groups, organizations, etc. to do food systems work
- New/expanded human resources to focus on food systems work (in one subsample, a documented and statistically significant 12% increase in amount of time spent on such work)
- Positive changes in individual attitudes and deconstruction of group/organizational/business stereotypes (increased legitimacy of niche pork work at the vet college, field specialists for Extension among niche pork producers, respect between PFI and Extension at the field level, regional food system work, etc.)
- National, state and local interest in using the Iowa-based CoP model for addressing food system challenges

Highlights of Summative (Impact) Evaluation Findings

VCP has created:

- Better private sector access to no or low-cost public sector knowledge, support and services
- Better public sector support for private sector partners
- Improved skills and competencies among private and public sector participants
- Opportunities for “high level” cooperation where partners share some risk, resources and profits
- Improved and more functional working relationships between unlikely partners
- More viable value chains based businesses, particularly in niche pork
- More collaborative culture of value chains work statewide and locally
- More organization and coordination of value chains work statewide
- Increased recognition and credibility for value chains work
- Increased organizational capacity of value chains based and supportive groups to leverage and dispense funds, increase effectiveness, identify and invest in local partners, etc.
- Organizational and business change to support value chains based work, including changes in customs and practices, long-term goals, job creation and creation of new organizational policies
- Changes in public policy and enforcement (clarification on institutions buying local; Pottawattamie County local foods coordinator, Sioux City property tax policy, etc.)
- Legislative awareness of value chains based opportunities for Iowa’s communities and recognition of the Leopold Center as reputable leader in this arena
- Increased leadership capacity of CoP facilitators and emergence of new local leaders
- Transformation of grant recipients into local or regional food system funders
- Changing culture of funding within some groups to more equitably allocate limited equal resources to strengthen “weaker” partners to build a stronger collective effort