

# 2016 Year End Regional Food System Grant Report

The Regional Food System Grant Program supported a dozen exciting projects in 2016, including nine competitive grants and three strategic initiatives. The amount awarded for these projects totaled \$857,683, of which \$324,879 was spent in 2016. Grant funds expended, leveraged an additional \$391,261 in cash and in-kind match.

Project accomplishments are briefly summarized below.

## **A Hedgerow Trial to Attract Beneficial Insects to Farm Edges, 21 Acres**

- Developed Beneficial Insect Planting Plan
- Ground clearing and plot preparations
- Canadian goldenrod and Douglas aster attracted many different beneficial insects, including:
  - Bumblebees
  - Sweat bees
  - Hover flies
  - Honeybees
- Species that established quickly and have strong potential to provide early season forage and habitat:
  - Coyote brush
  - Henderson checker mallow
  - Big leaf and riverbank lupine
  - Manzanita
- Over 200 volunteer hours for site preparation, invasive plant removal, and planting 270 native plants representing 30 different species, weed control and watering
- Hosted Farming with Native Pollinators: Creating a Place for Bees and Bugs
- Hosted 2 WSU's Northwest Pollinator Initiative, WildBee Sense Biodiversity project

## **Beefing Up Infrastructure Needs for King County USDA Meat Processing, King County DNRP**

- Issued an RFP for a livestock education coordinator. Reviewed and scored applicants. At the end of December, the County is close to having a signed contract.
  - Received five very good proposals and are pleased with the skills and talented consultants from which we made our selection. Contractor and workshop progress will be announced in Q1 2017.
- Pursued lead on livestock paneling from a property being bought by King County
  - Visited site, assessed panels
  - Started working with KC acquisitions group
- Outreach with stakeholders, included Pierce Conservation District, project team (four times), project partner individuals (six to eight times), Puget Sound Processing, LLC (two times), owner of the Enumclaw Sales Pavilion

## **Experience Farming Project Infrastructure Upgrades, SnoValley Tilth**

- Bridge improvements designed
- Estimate from Puget Sound Energy for electricity installation

## **Farm King County Promotion ([farmkingcounty.org](http://farmkingcounty.org)), King County DNRP**

- Conduct promotional activities that raise awareness of the Farm King county website and the information and services it provides. Significantly, the promotional activities are designed to include collaboration and partnerships with farm and food organizations across the county so that these organizations become vested in developing, improving, and promoting the KCD resources
  - Procured 25 photographic images of King County farms and food for the website
  - Develop 2 short videos marketing and promoting the new website to non-English speakers (Hmong and Spanish). One video will serve as a technical guide that walks the user through the website ('how to') – the second will be more promotional and feature Hmong and Latino farmers and familiar faces from the farm community explaining how the website can be helpful. 5 videos in total, three technical guides (English, Hmong, Spanish), and two promotional guides (Hmong, Spanish)
- Develop and implement a series of traditional print marketing strategies and internet-based outreach, including targeted online advertising in local newspapers.
  - 2,500 tri-fold brochures shared with stakeholders and at community events. An additional 2,500 will be printed
  - 5 banners distributed to partner organizations for use at farm and food events
  - 1,000 bumper stickers and 500 magnets. An additional 1,000 bumper stickers will be printed
  - Newspaper publications include Seattle Times, SnoValley Record, Redmond Reporter, Kent Reporter, Maple Valley and Covington Reporter, Auburn Reporter. Seattle Times ads were 'smart ads' that targeted zip codes in rural farm areas and behavior, including a 'smart audience' geared toward people interested in natural resources, agriculture, etc. Additional advertising in these publications will occur in Spring 2017.
  - 153,926 households and businesses reached; 36,073 ad server impressions
  - Farm King County web – 6,101 page views, 4,552 unique page views, 1:33 average time spent on page
- Provide stipends to partner organizations that promoted the new FKC website to their constituents and stakeholders. Organizations participating included:
  - Pike Place Market, Tilth Alliance, SnoValley Tilth, SAgE, Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance, University District Farmers Market, Vashon Island Growers Association, American Farmland Trust, and Renton Farmers Market
- 107 hours of King County staff time in support of project, estimated value \$7,383.00

## Food Hub Development for King County Farmers, Northwest Agriculture Business Center

- Snoqualmie Valley Farmers Cooperative. Provided technical assistance and financial support, highlights include:
  - Formation of interim board, bylaws and articles of incorporation
  - Staffing
  - Legal and accounting fees
  - Spearheading 521 Agricultural Cooperative status
  - Established aggregation site at Goose and Gander Farm. 20 farm members successfully aggregated produce to service 70 CSA customers
  - Created weekly box plan for CSA season
  - Assisted with restaurant sales and coordination for Bounty Week, with 15 Snoqualmie Valley restaurants purchasing local products (many of whom had not purchased before)
  - Established consistent sales to a number of Valley restaurants
  - Sales to a number of ag-related events – SVT dinners, SVPA Taste of the Valley, CHOMP
  - \$46,482 in total sales (regular season CSA, Fall CSA, Thanksgiving boxes, Turkeys, Bounty Week), of which \$35,840 paid directly to farmers
  
- Cascadia Cooperative Farms. Provided technical assistance for organizational and business development, highlights include:
  - Introductory meeting for recruitment of members – 14 farms expressed interest in becoming members of the co-op
  - Formation of Steering Committee
  - Supporting 521 Agricultural Cooperative status
  - Assisted with drafting of bylaws and articles of incorporation
  - Assisting in locating operating facility and permitting guidelines for egg processing
  
- Vashon Island Growers Association
  - Completed a food hub and value added processing feasibility study for VIGA, including business plan, economic model, and budgeting tool that will assist them in developing cooperative aggregation and value added processing
  - 20 Vashon farmers and 15 buyers responded to information gathering survey – the Vashon School District, 2 Island markets, 2 Island restaurants, and 3 off-island businesses (owners live on-island) committed to buying 42 cases a week of product for an average price of \$42/case (\$1,746 weekly) from a Vashon farmer’s cooperative venture should one form
  
- Puget Sound Food Hub Cooperative
  - Expanded participation in the Hub, including 6 new King County farms and 35 new King County buyers
  - Held local food show at 21 Acres in collaboration with 21 Acres, FORKS, WSDA, NABC, and KCD. Over 80 farmers, chefs and buyers came together to network
  - 21 Acres and FORKS organized a food preservation workshop for chefs before the show
  - Held Snoqualmie Valley Farm tour for PSFH buyers. 25 buyers toured two valley farm operations
  - \$27,029.70 in sales paid to King County producers through November 2016, representing an 86% increase in sales from 2015

- Farm-to-Table Program. Collaboration with City of Seattle and Human Links Foundation.
  - 61 participating sites of which 13 were first time participants
  - \$91,169.41 in purchases from Puget Sound Food Hub
- Falling River Meats
  - Working to provide technical assistance business planning services and access to capital for this King County-based livestock producer and butcher. Falling River raises their own animals and aggregates product from other livestock providers for sales
- SnoValley Tilth
  - Serving on advisory committee in their efforts to perform a feasibility study on bringing value-added processing facility to the Snoqualmie Valley
- Small Scale Poultry Processing Equipment. In partnership with KCD equipment loan program, NABC coordinates scheduling and rental at the Issaquah Grange
  - Equipment rented 35 times

## **Growing Potential: Bringing WSU Extension Expertise to King County Farmers, WSU**

- Cultivating Success: Sustainable Farming and Ranching Class was completed
  - 23 Farms, 40 students attended
  - Evaluation responses indicate the following items were developed or improved:
    - Whole Farm Plan (89%)
    - Marketing Plan (61%)
    - Soil Management Plan (78%)
    - IPM Program (72%)
  - 10 farms have signed up for the Ag Entrepreneurship Course to be held in early 2017, offered simultaneously in Carnation and Everett
- Soil workshop held on Vashon, 25 attendees
- Composting workshop held at Oxbow Farm in Carnation, 20 farms represented, 28 people attended
- Farmwalk held at Carnation Farms, 26 farms represented, 36 people attended
- Participated in One Stop Shop, linking WSU online resources to Farmkingcounty.org

## **King County Farmers Market Access Coordination, City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment**

- EBT/Fresh Bucks used to improve business practices, customer service, and marketing to expand sales and improve operations at King County farmers markets
  - 9 new King County markets onboarded in 2016
  - In-person trainings on transactions tracking, customer data collection, and invoice/contract requirements

- Developed systems and tools for markets to more efficiently track and report transaction information
- Provided ongoing technical assistance to markets through quarterly meetings
- Convened farmers markets for quarterly meetings
- Increased customer base for King County farm products by increasing the number of first time and repeat SNAP shoppers at farmers markets through outreach and marketing
  - Adapted marketing materials such as posters (English and Spanish) and brochures (13 languages) to include King County farmer market information. Also adapted based on SNAP eligible community member focus groups of different ethnic/cultural groups including Spanish speaking, East African, and Refugee/Immigrant communities
  - 14,481 posters and brochures for farmers markets
  - 50,448 posters and brochures for community groups and organizations
  - Partnered with 4 community based organizations to provide peer-led outreach, including farmers market tours, assisted SNAP shoppers with Fresh Bucks transactions, and cooking demonstrations. Latino Community Fund trained youth promoters to outreach in low income Spanish speaking communities for promotion of FM events. Somali Health Board provided peer-lead health education workshops to promote Fresh Bucks, integrate cooking lessons using fresh, seasonal produce into traditional dishes, and hosted farmers market tours. Horn of Africa Services used their existing childcare provider network and senior gardener network to ‘ask a friend’ to participate in healthy cooking classes. Got Green promoted Fresh Bucks as part of their on-the-ground door knocking campaign, integrated Fresh Bucks into their Green-a-thon annual event with healthy cooking workshops, and hosted events at FMs to encourage Fresh Bucks usage
- Farmers markets have greater capacity to serve low income SNAP shoppers through technology, technical assistance, and market coordination
  - Developed an online system for markets to collect, report and track transactions and shopper information
  - Trained markets on the use of the data entry system and developed a ‘cheat sheet’ for market to use as a training tool and reference for staff and volunteer processing EBT/Fresh Bucks transactions, provided technical assistance for market to navigate system challenges, and adapted system based on market feedback
- Participating farmers markets have resources and a learning network to identify and address market, vendor, and customer needs
  - Convened quarterly joint Seattle – King County farmers market meetings where new King County markets could learn from seasoned markets on how to navigate Fresh Bucks program implementation

- Successful examples that were shared include customer/vendor signage showing different market currencies and what they can be used to purchase, collaboration with local community groups, and customer-friendly market/manager booth set up
- Farmers Market SNAP sales increased because marketing and outreach are effective for specific low income communities
  - 2,517 transactions King County FMs, 12,864 transactions Seattle & King County FMs (14% increase over 2015)
  - \$31,612 SNAP distributed King County FMs, \$159,151 SNAP distributed Seattle & King County FMs (10% increase over 2015)
  - \$23,127 Fresh Bucks distributed King County FMs, \$120,126 Fresh Bucks distributed Seattle & King County FMs (9% increase over 2015)
  - \$19,851 Fresh Bucks redeemed King County FMs, \$101,666 Fresh Bucks redeemed Seattle & King County FMs (5% increase over 2015)
  - 81%, percent of first time shopping at King County FMs, 20% Seattle & King County FMs (22% increase over 2015)
- 2016 year-end market survey results:
  - *Nutrition incentives funded by FINI help our market achieve its mission and goals.*  
83% strongly agree, 17% agree
  - *Nutrition incentives funded by FINI add value for our vendors.*  
66% strongly agree, 17% agree, 17% don't know
  - *Nutrition incentives funded by FINI add value for our shoppers.*  
83% strongly agree, 17% agree
  - *The Device Magic app has made our data collection process easier.*  
50% agree, 30% strongly agree, 20% neutral, 10% strongly disagree, 10% don't know
  - *The Device Magic app collects data that is useful to our market.*  
70% agree, 20% neutral, 10% don't know
  - *I see Device Magic as an integral part of tracking transaction data for our market.*  
60% agree, 10% strongly agree, 20% neutral, 10% don't know
- 2016 market shopper information:
  - 91% of customers surveyed said that they are very likely to use Fresh Bucks again
  - When using the Fresh Bucks program, 50% say that they eat more fruits and vegetables, 34% feel that they eat more healthfully in general and only 13% felt that their diet didn't change.
  - 44% of customers surveyed say that Fresh Bucks helps them to save a lot of money (27% some, 23% a little, 6% doesn't help).

## **King County Metrics Project**

- Agricultural and food system data are an important tool for assessing and sharing information about the health of our local food system.
  - Data can provide a baseline for assessing trends, tracking progress towards goals, and evaluating the impact of investments in the food system.
  - Presently there is not a system or organization in King County that is gathering the disparate sources of food system data into one collective resource
- The King County Metrics Project addresses the need for improving local food system data collection by creating:
  - A repository for local food system data.
    - Conducted review of parallel food system mapping and evaluation efforts in other regions of the US
    - Created online catalogue of King County/regional food system stakeholders
    - Created online data catalogue of existing secondary farm and food system data
    - Completed primary stakeholder outreach; integrated guidance and feedback into project activities
  - An interactive data map
    - Aggregated existing King County GIS farm and food system data; identified GIS data relevant to Food System Map
  - A dashboard of key performance indicators
    - Articulated goal statements for production, demand, and environmental goal areas based on King County Local Food Initiative
    - Topic areas include farmland access, farms, farmers, food production, markets and infrastructure, and environment and natural resources

## **Local Institutional Food Team (LIFT)**

- The Local Institutional Food Team made critical progress in 2016. Lead by King Conservation District, the team's partners included King County, Washington Department of Agriculture's Farm to School program, NW Agriculture Business Center, and Health Care without Harm. These partners met quarterly to:
  - share progress in their institutional sectors
  - develop a vision for expanding institutional food purchasing in King County
  - produce a report of national findings and recommendations, and
  - build a web-based tool to help institutional buyers navigate the pathways in the local food marketplace.

- For 2017, LIFT is pursuing USDA and other grant funds to form alliances with educational and business institutions by scaling existing programs to broader institutional landscapes, including WSDA and Health Care Without Harm's successful promotional campaigns.

### **Pastured Egg Cooperative, Cascadia Cooperative Farms**

- The idea for Cascadia Cooperative Farms (CCF) began to take shape as several farms realized that greater efficiencies in production and time could be achieved by working together. Moreover, there was a recognition of high product demand for ethically, pasture-raised eggs and poultry in the Seattle area and King County. Alone, none of the small farms in the region could produce a reliable year-round supply of eggs to satisfy the demands of retailers, restaurants, and other institutions
- In 2016, many of the organizational start up activities were completed. CCF applied for both a Washington State business license and a Federal Employer Identification number. In April, the organization formally incorporated with the Washington Secretary of State. CCF also began the process of completing the paperwork to file as an IRS 521 Farmer Cooperative and to receive an Exempt Organization Determination
- In September, Luke Woodward of NABC reached out to CCF board members to assist in coordinating with interested farmers and begin the necessary dialogue that would bring the concept to fruition. On October 17<sup>th</sup>, representatives from 12 family farms met at the Duvall library to learn about the cooperative and its future plans. From that meeting, a steering committee formed which has taken on all the tasks to create a viable organization
- The steering committee is motivated and energized to get everything in place by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Several farmers have already expanded or started flocks that will be laying eggs for CCF's aggregation and distribution this season
- The commercial egg washing machine has been purchased and a sub-group of the steering committee is in the process of gathering information on site upgrades that will be necessary to start operating. After reviewing possible locations for the cooperative's operations, the steering committee recommended Goose and Gander Farm as the selected site. CCF's board approved the recommendation in January 2017
- In addition to monthly steering committee meetings, the group has formed sub-committees to write the bylaws, create a business plan, member agreement, and member guide, as well as assess site development needs, and formulate a facilities plan

- CCF will partner with 21 Acres to market and deliver eggs during the first season of operation. Goose and Gander Farm will also serve as an aggregation and pick up location for 21 Acres, and 21 Acres already has both an established customer base and the staffing to market CCF eggs. Partnering with 21 Acres to deliver our eggs will also eliminate the carrying costs of maintaining and insuring a vehicle. CCF will acquire a delivery vehicle when product supply and demand outstrip 21 Acres' capacity to make the deliveries
- In 2016 the steering committee, board members, and volunteers contributed 107 hours of time valued at \$2,946.78

### **Snoqualmie Valley Water Improvement District Launch, Snoqualmie Valley Preservation Alliance**

- The WID has the opportunity to be a powerful tool to address the twin chronic problems of too much or too little water for successful farming. But getting a new unit of government up and running is very resource intensive. It takes staff, consultants, and a sustained, consistent presence to overcome the initial inertia needed to get to the point of being able to implement on-the-ground solutions which enable Snoqualmie Valley farmers to improve production.
  - Formed December 7, 2016.
  - Regular meetings established, commissioners were trained, professional services procured, and the WID open for business with logo, website, and email database
  - Significant headway in developing a comprehensive water supply and drainage strategy
  - The first ever agricultural water bank is in the process of being established. This will help farmers grow more food by finding long term solutions to drainage problems on a network basis, rather than parcel by parcel
  - Good progress connecting with Tribes and stakeholders
  - Assessment level established without controversy
- Collaboration. Has been extensive, with the support of Ecology, KCD, King County DNRP Ag Program and Stormwater services, Snoqualmie and Tulalip Tribes, and WID Commissioners.
- Over 90 members on the WID email list, goal is to have direct communication with 100 of the 275 property owners
- 25 WID members have attended some activity of the WID
- Water rights were transferred from 10 farmers in 2016
- Significant additional funding to leverage the program – Ecology funding to acquire a water right and start a water bank (\$578,000), KC Flood Control District funding to

perform network drainage analysis (\$158,000), and WSDA funding to support technical analysis of existing water rights (\$89,000)

### **Urban Agriculture/Agroforestry/Food Security, Highline College**

- Recruited Advisory Committee including community members, industry partners, community organizations, and local farmers
- Developed curricula for courses in Agroforestry, Edible Landscape Design, and Permaculture
- Expanded growing area on campus – new orchard site has been designed and installed on lower campus, with additional trees planted in containers throughout campus
- Focus on recruiting students from immigrant/refugee populations, through:
  - Guest lecture and program pitches to various classrooms (ESL, ACHIEVE, environmental science, psychology, biology), posting flyers to local community organizations and across campus, Facebook advertising (28,000 people reached and 250 page likes from individuals in the South King County community)
  - More than 800 students on campus have become aware of the program through outreach activities
- Many members of the immigrant/refugee community are interested in the programs, but are typically unable to enroll because of lack of time, lack of comprehension of the English language, and/or lack of funding. To address these issues, creating online classes to allow for more flexibility, adding ESL co-teachers to courses, and awarding scholarships (8 awarded to date)
- Collaboration.
  - 15 community partners, including high school, middle schools, and youth agencies
  - New opportunities with Tahoma HS with new campus across from community partner Elk Run Farm; Elk Run has agreed to co-teach with Highline. Currently in the process of creating an articulation agreement with Tahoma HS to provide their students with college credit for taking courses in their agriculture program
  - Roughly 320 K-12 students, 50 specifically refugees arriving to the US in the last year, hosted at on campus events focuses on farming basics and sustainability