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New Hampshire State Plan
Final Report
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Submitted by the
New Hampshire Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
In cooperation with selected Project Partners

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Activities Performed

The New Hampshire Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food received funding under the 2015 Special Crop Block Grant Program in October 2015. Five projects were approved for funding. Individual final project reports follow for the grant term.

Project 1

Project Title: Expanding Specialty Crop Growers' Access to Local Weather Data and Agricultural Pest and Crop Models

Submitting Organization: UNH Cooperative Extension

Final Report

Project Summary

The goal of the "Expanding specialty crop growers' access to local weather data and agricultural pest and crop models" project (NEWA Project) was to expand NH specialty crop growers' access to environmental and weather data and real-time models that directly help them make informed decisions about crop pest management. We proposed to expand an existing multi-state network of weather data and decision-making tools (NEWA, the Network for Environment and Weather Applications) to include the entire state of NH. The NEWA model has worked well in neighboring states and has an excellent track record. We anticipated that specialty crop producers would benefit when they accessed up-to-date information about the development and potential risk of infestation or infection by key pests and diseases. With this information, growers could manage pests at the right time, avoiding unnecessary pesticide application. They could also be alerted to potential problems before they occur and therefore prevent crop loss and damage through timely action.

The NEWA Project enabled New Hampshire's specialty crop community, and UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) Food and Agriculture staff to access real-time weather data, and predictive pest models.

Specialty crop producers were introduced to the Network for Environment and weather applications (NEWA) at meetings, seminars, workshops, mass media and in one-on-one sessions. In a post-project survey, growers reported numerous benefits of using the NEWA network and tools including reduced pesticide application costs, improved IPM decision-making, and avoiding losses caused by pest and diseases. Savings per acre ranged from \$25 to \$4000. Unplanned outcomes included access to real-time environmental conditions and access

to recorded, and down-loadable environmental data from each station location via Rainwise Pro.

The project has led to future collaborations aimed at developing training materials to help specialty crop producers, extension staff and others learn about NEWA and how to utilize the data and tools available through the NEWA Network.

Project Approach

This project spanned a two-year, three-month period. The intended goals and outcomes of the project were to enable New Hampshire vegetable & fruit growers utilize weather data and predictive models to inform pest management decisions, and to have UNH Extension staff utilize the same weather resources to advise growers and assist in their decision-making. The weather data and predictive models utilized were available through the Network for Environment and weather applications (NEWA) [<http://newa.cornell.edu/>].

During the initial phase of the project, the PI (Cheryl Smith) assumed role as NEWA State Coordinator, NH was enrolled as a NEWA member, and ten NEWA-compatible weather stations (Rainwise Agromet IP-100) were ordered. Locating the weather station in each county involved collaboration with UNH County Specialists, and growers or County Farm Managers. There were requirements for high-speed internet access, bandwidth minimums, and line-of sight between the stations and indoor receivers. Once the appropriate sites were selected, installation of the ten stations occurred from November 2016 through May 2017.

In the second phase, UNH Extension staff, received training in use of the NEWA system and tools via workshops, webinars, and one-on-one sessions. Specialty crop producers and workers received training on the access and utilization of the NEWA system and predictive tools via meetings, workshops, newsletters, and mass media. A weather information page was developed and posted to the UNH Extension website. Fruit growers and Extension staff utilized the NEWA system and resources to inform pest management decisions, monitor pest and disease development, and monitor weather information for cropping decisions.

Contributions from project partners:

- UNH Extension staff
 - Helped select suitable sites for weather station installation
- Growers and County Farm staff at weather station locations
 - Assisted with station installation
 - Helped to trouble-shoot station outages and problems
- NEWA Coordinator (Dan Olmstead, Cornell University)
 - Provided guidance for station installation, troubleshooting, surveys
- Rainwise Technical staff
 - Provided technical assistance during station installation (initial connection via internet)
 - Provided technical assistance for troubleshooting, and station maintenance

- Growers who provided apple growth stage updates (via text messaging)
 - The data they provided allowed accurate use of the apple scab and fire blight predictive models. Risk of disease outbreak was accurately monitored, and the collaboration allowed alerts to all apple producers when disease risk was elevated.

Goals/Outcomes

Goal 1: Current and future vegetable and fruit growers in NH will use NEWA to access weather data and agricultural forecasts to make IPM decisions.

TARGET: At least 120 growers will attend workshops, meetings and/or read newsletter articles about how to access and use NEWA data to manage pests and diseases, and at least 75% of the growers that attend will have a knowledge gain as a result of these meetings.

- 56 Attendees at NH Fruit & Vegetable Growers annual meeting (C. Smith, 2/18/17)
 - 12 Attendees at Northern Nursery Conference (C. Smith, 3/3/17)
 - 70 Attendees at NH Fruit Growers annual meeting (C. Smith, 3/22/17)
 - 60 Attendees at NH Cucurbit School (C. Smith, 1/11/17)
 - 5 Attendees at NH Farm Bureau annual meeting (talk on weather issues and pests - G. Hamilton) (11/11/16)
 - 52 Attendees at New England Vegetable and Berry Growers meeting (talk on weather issues and pests - G. Hamilton) (12/3/16)
 - 32 Attendees at Northeast Harvest Conference (talk on weather issues and pests - G. Hamilton) (3/22/17)
 - 50 attendees at Tree Fruit Risk Management Seminar (with NEWA presentation by Mary Conklin [CT NEWA coordinator]) (1/18/18)
 - 202 Attendees at free fruit, vegetable and grape twilight meetings (C. Smith, 2017-2018)
-
- 479 total attendees.

Surveys at the beginning of several of the delivered presentations indicated:
 Only 23% had heard of the NEWA Network
 (13% of those had used at least one component of the NEWA Network)

As a result of the presentations, 77% of attendees learned of NEWA for the first time or learned additional information about accessing and using NEWA information and data.

Outreach articles: Information on the NH NEWA network was conveyed via the NH IPM Newsletter and The NH Market Bulletin (March 2017). Additional outreach information on the NH NEWA network were included in the Extension Vegetable and Fruit News (2017) and the Landscape and Greenhouse Horticultural News (May 2018).

Mass Media: Information on the NH NEWA network was conveyed to a very broad radio listening audience during an interview. (WPTL, Keene, NH, 8/16)

TARGET: Over the course of the project, we expect to see an increase of 50 NH growers annually that access the NEWA web interface repeatedly through the growing season.

NH-specific metrics (access by NH IP addresses) provided by the NEWA website administrator indicated the following:

Date Range	Website Hits	All NH Users	New NH Users
9/1/16 – 12/31/16	1077	228	200
1/1/17 – 12/31/17	5368	771	650
1/1/18 – 9/30/18			

Full analytics for the 1/1/18 – 9/30/18 period was not available at the time of the submission of this report. Available data (only for the individual NH station pages via the NEWA Network pages) indicated there were 1,326 hits by 314 users, 27 of them new users. (data and predictive models can be accessed through additional gateways on the NEWA site without first going through the station pages). It is assumed that at least an additional 23 (in addition to the 27 new users that accessed the station pages) users accessed the NEWA site in 2018.

(Pre-meeting surveys (mentioned above) indicated 13% of growers had used at least one component of the NEWA network)

A post project survey (Fall 2018) indicated: 56% of the responders had used the NEWA network and tools since May 2017 (only 44% had heard of or used NEWA prior to May 2017).

A weather information page was developed and posted to the UNH Extension website late in the project (delays due to web site redesign (completed in February 2018), and lack of web-editing skills by the PI, C. Smith). The [‘NEWA in New Hampshire’](#) information is available through the UNH Extension website. The page provides very general information on the NH NEWA Network, links to the NEWA Network, and provides links to each of the NH NEWA-compatible weather stations. The ‘NEWA in New Hampshire’ page can be accessed from multiple UNH Extension web pages ([Fruit & Vegetable Crops](#); [Greenhouse, Nursery & Garden Centers](#); [Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\)](#); [Landscape Installation and Maintenance](#); and [Plant Disease and Diagnosis Services](#)). The site(s) have not been active long enough to accumulate site-specific analytics.

Goal 2: UNH Cooperative Extension Food and Agriculture specialists will use NEWA to access weather data and agricultural forecasts to stay informed about potential pest and disease outbreaks and provide alerts and assistance to growers in their IPM decision-making process.

TARGET: At least 80% UNHCE Food and Agriculture state specialists and field specialists with responsibility for providing recommendations for pest management will attend one workshop about how to access and use NEWA data to manage pests and diseases and will have a knowledge gain as a result of these meetings.

100% of the UNHCE Food and Agriculture state specialists and field specialists with responsibility for providing recommendations for pest management have attended at least one workshop and have learned how to access and use NEWA information. (85% of state specialists and field specialists, including those without direct responsibility for providing recommendations for pest management, attended at least one workshop and learned how to access and use the NEWA system and models).

Unplanned Outcomes

Several of the growers or County Farm managers have reported using the NEWA site (and the specific Rainwise page for their station) in some unexpected ways:

- A Christmas tree grower (Coos County) accesses the specific station page to monitor the weather forecast, and also checks the NEWA precipitation data to determine how long to water the seedling nursery.
- The NH State Forest Nursery (Merrimack County) uses the weather data almost daily during the growing season, primarily for accurate rainfall totals. They reported it has saved unnecessary use of irrigation and helped us plan irrigation. In addition, they have timed pesticides applications around rainfall amounts and anticipated amounts.
- A vegetable producer in Belknap County reported they monitor the amount of rainfall to determine irrigation needs and determine if certain parcels will be too wet to work. They also compare the temperature records (from their specific station) to the general forecasts in the state.
- The Rockingham County Farm Manager indicated they accesses the specific station page to monitor weather forecasts and plan hay harvests accordingly.
- The PI (Cheryl Smith) worked individually with a landscaper in Carroll County. The landscaper learned how to use the NEWA degree day calculator and apple disease models. The landscaper reported using the information to time pesticide applications.

The PI (Cheryl Smith) collaborated with 6 apple growers to monitor apple fruit bud growth stages. The growers texted the bud stages as they occurred. The information was entered into the NEWA predictive models for apple scab and fire blight. The information provided a real-time assessment of the risk for fire blight and apple scab. When the risk was elevated, an alert was texted to the six collaborating growers, and state-wide alerts were sent via email and web blogs to all growers on the fruit and vegetable contact lists and to Food and Agriculture staff.

Webinars (Zoom meetings) were held to train UNHCE Food and Agriculture state specialists and field specialists in the use of disease and insect models for potatoes, tomatoes and onions. The training sessions were instructed by Cornell University Vegetable specialist Abby Seaman. 71% of the state specialists and field specialists with responsibility for providing recommendations for pest management participated in the sessions. The sessions were recorded and will be edited and posted for future reference.

Through conversations with Extension colleagues and growers, we identified the need for short tutorials on the use of several pest and disease models available through the NEWA Network.

We purchased the Rainwise Pro subscription for each of the individual weather stations. This allows full access to the real-time and recorded weather data for each station. Users can view the data in real-time or view graphs for 24 hours, or seven or thirty days. The data can also be downloaded. Data from the time the station went on-line is available. Producers, extension staff and researchers will be able to analyze data from any of the stations.

A grower in Maine has contacted the PI (Cheryl Smith) about installation of a weather station at their farm in Maine. This has identified a need to expand the NEWA Network into Maine.

In a post-project survey (Fall 2018) growers indicated:

- 33 - NEWA helped them time their pesticide applications
- 24 - NEWA pest forecast information helped them reduce the number of sprays they apply to their crops
- 27 - NEWA pest forecast information helped them time spray applications to their crops
- 39 - NEWA pest forecast information alerted them to the risk of pest damage
- 27 - NEWA pest forecast information enhanced their IPM decision-making for their crops
- 30 saved money by reducing spray inputs (amounts ranged from \$30-\$2500/year)
- 22 prevented a crop loss a direct of using NEWA pest forecast tools (savings ranged from \$300-\$3000)
- Savings per acre from reducing spray inputs and preventing crop loss ranged from \$25-\$4000

(We also learned that the majority of growers who did not use the NEWA tools reported they did not know of the NEWA Network)

Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the NEWA Project were NH specialty crop producers. Specialty crop producers have reported (through surveys and personal communication) that they weather data, degree day information and pest and disease models have enabled them to better time pesticide applications, and irrigation. Their use of the predictive disease models has enabled them to time pesticide applications to avoid significant crop loss due to fire blight and apple scab infections. Many growers reported the state-wide alerts we sent helped them avoid losses, particularly due to fire blight on apples.

UNHCE state and field specialists also benefited from the project. Several have indicated (via person communication) that they accessed the NEWA site during the growing and use the data to assist growers in timing pesticide applications, and review data (both during the growing season and after) to determine where pest management decisions could be improved, thus decreasing risk and increasing productivity and profit.

Lessons Learned

One of the primary lessons learned during this project is the value of accurate weather data and information to the specialty crop community. Growers and others in the specialty crop community (extension staff, crop advisers, landscapers) rely on accurate weather data and information to make informed cropping and pest management decisions. Access to real-time data and information can make the difference in timing pesticide applications to avoid crop loss, timing irrigation, and timing crop harvests.

Another lesson learned is the challenge of maintaining a working network of high-tech electronic weather instruments and the necessary internet connections. A few of the sites originally selected for weather station location were not suitable due to slow bandwidth, or lack of high-speed internet availability. Data flow from the stations to Rainwise (data was 'packaged' by Rainwise in Maine, then sent to the Northeast Climate Center at Cornell in Ithaca, NY) was often interrupted. Radio signals from the stations to the indoor receivers was frequently interrupted due to power outages, storms, accidental disconnection by workers, or system interruption by the internet service provider. Most of the interruptions were of short duration and were corrected by simply calling or texting the station collaborator (grower or county farm manager) and having them perform a series of system reconnection steps and checks.

We learned that it is best to have an additional station available to 'swap-out' if a station goes down for an extended period due to equipment failure. This happened twice. Once when a station was damaged during farm construction, and when the rain gauge sensor failed on another. A replacement station was ordered after the construction incident, the damaged station was repaired and then used to replace the station with the malfunctioning rain gauge. The latter was repaired, and now will be available for a swap-out, should it be needed.

And finally, we learned that we needed to do much more outreach and education about what the NEWA Network is and how to use the NEWA tools and resources.

479 growers, producers, and extension staff attended various outreach programs to learn about, and how to use the NEWA Network.

Number of users accessing the NH NEWA pages:

NH-specific metrics (access by NH IP addresses) provided by the NEWA website administrator indicated the following:

Date Range	Website Hits	All NH Users	New NH Users
9/1/16 – 12/31/16	1077	228	200
1/1/17 – 12/31/17	5368	771	650
1/1/18 – 9/30/18		416	27 (full data not available)

100% (19) of the UNHCE Food and Agriculture state specialists and field specialists with responsibility for providing recommendations for pest management for specialty crops have attended at least one workshop and have learned how to access and use NEWA information. All have indicated they use NEWA on a regular basis to help them assist growers/producers in pest management decision-making.

In a post-project survey (Fall 2018) growers indicated:

33* - NEWA helped them time their pesticide applications

24 - NEWA pest forecast information helped them reduce the number of sprays they apply to their crops

27 - NEWA pest forecast information helped them time spray applications to their crops

39 - NEWA pest forecast information alerted them to the risk of pest damage

27 - NEWA pest forecast information enhanced their IPM decision-making for their crops

30 saved money by reducing spray inputs (amounts ranged from \$30-\$2500/year)

22 prevented a crop loss a direct of using NEWA pest forecast tools (savings ranged from \$300-\$3000)

Savings per acre from reducing spray inputs and preventing crop loss ranged from \$25-\$4000

* Numbers are the total number of growers indicating the outcome in the post-project survey

Contact Person

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Additional Information

NEWA brochure (see appendix)

Project 2

Project Title: Upper Valley Buy Local Campaign for New Hampshire Specialty Crop Producers

Submitting Organization: Vital Communities

Final Report

Project Summary

Upper Valley specialty crop farmers are reporting a saturated early-adopter market for direct-sale produce. Our project, "Upper Valley Buy Local Campaign for NH Specialty Crop Producers," approached market expansion through promotional activities on behalf of producers, who have limited time for promotion and marketing within their business. Vital Communities produced marketing materials, undertook marketing activities, and offered farm business advising for New Hampshire Specialty Crop producers in our service area (within Sullivan and Grafton Counties).

Project Background

In 2014 Vital Communities conducted a sophisticated comprehensive market assessment to identify the region's untapped opportunity, as farmers were reporting a nearly saturated early-adopter market for specialty crops grown in our area. Findings revealed that the market is nowhere near exhausted. Three quarters of the region's consumers indicated they would like to buy more locally grown vegetables and two thirds more locally grown fruit. Farmer respondents feel that the key to growth lies in expanding their customer base, and 56% sought assistance with direct sales, connecting with consumers through farm stands, farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and similar outlets. Vital Communities is addressing capital/infrastructure through technical assistance that connects farmers with resources and labor through our Farm Worker Learning Collaborative and other support for beginning farmers. Our Buy Local campaign, working title Valley Farm Fresh, the focus of this request, addressed the marketing/consumer education aspect. We requested funds for events, materials, and activities that would engage consumers directly with New Hampshire farmers to mutual benefit.

This project did not build on a previous SCBG project.

Project Approach

Campaign activities were planned in conversation with producers, who indicated that point of sale materials, including recipes, and in-person promotional assistance as well as general advertising of New Hampshire specialty products were priorities. We also offered farm business advising on marketing to enhance farmer marketing capacity over the long term.

Vital Communities designed and produced marketing materials for New Hampshire farmers' markets, farm stands, and specialty crop farmers using existing templates based on a toolkit designed by Good Egg Marketing (the toolkit was funded by the USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Program). The materials were given to farmers and points of sale and used in promotional activities.

The following activities from our work plan were completed:

Create 8 new Everyday Chef food profiles focused on NH Specialty Crops, to be posted on Everyday Chef blog, printed on point-of-sale support materials, and used in cooking demonstrations. We created 12 new food profiles. Having heard from farmers that point of sale recipes would be of use, we asked two farm stands to test the popularity of three recipe cards in fall 2016. The stands gave us feedback over the winter and we finalized 12 separate recipes featuring seasonal New Hampshire vegetables. This exceeded the amount anticipated in our grant proposal, as well as the way in which the recipes would be used (see recipe discussion Project Approach). Vital Communities designed and distributed recipe cards highlighting specialty crops. Twelve separate recipes were distributed to 12 farms, a total of 1500 recipe cards. The recipes were developed with input from farms and distributed to farm stands, pick your own operations, and farmers' markets which requested them. This total count of cards is separate from additional cards distributed at on-site tastings and samplings by our staff. The chosen recipes highlight vegetables and fruits, chosen either because they are a high value crop and/or based on farmer input during our test phase in fall 2016. The recipes were very well received and appreciated by farms. Farmers report that these point of sale materials attract customers to specific products, often affecting sales. Designing and printing recipe materials is time consuming and expensive, however, we believe it is well worth continuing to support producers in this way. Cards for popular crops and intriguing recipes certainly flew off the table during our outreach efforts (below) and can serve multiple marketing goals. This type of material might be something for the New Hampshire Food Alliance network to consider as a statewide marketing tool.

Photograph New Hampshire Specialty Crop farms, farmers, and consumers for campaign materials, food profiles, blogs, and other outreach. A volunteer photographer and an intern travelled separately to farms, farm stands, and farmers' markets in our New Hampshire service area to take photographs. A professional food stylist volunteered to help us take professional photos for the recipes and food profiles (above). All of these efforts bolstered our ability to represent and promote New Hampshire specialty crop producers with images that clearly show New Hampshire farmers, foods, and consumers.

Write 8 profiles of New Hampshire specialty crop producers/sales venues to post and promote on VFF blog: Our proposal anticipated blog profiles on our own website. We shifted this approach after assessing the potential audience of our blog vs other outlets, and cultivated relationships with the Valley News, our paper of record, and other media outlets. We used SCBG funds to promote NH producers and matching funds when writing and researching an article in the Enterprise magazine in the Valley News (published the final week of June 2017¹), highlighting commercial kitchens at two NH specialty crop farms and using matching funds to discuss a Vermont farm, which was necessary to balance the article for a regional readership. This article, though more effort than a blog post, reached a far wider readership. Vital Communities used SCBG funds for ongoing web and print promotion of New Hampshire

¹ [https://enterprise.vnews.com/2017/06/27/the-business-of-agriculture-on-farm-commercial-kitchens-give-growers-an-edge/;](https://enterprise.vnews.com/2017/06/27/the-business-of-agriculture-on-farm-commercial-kitchens-give-growers-an-edge/)

specialty crop producers. Our web promotion included promotion and essays on our website as well as social media postings on multiple platforms.

8 taste tests/cooking demonstrations at New Hampshire farmers' markets and food festivals. Tastings and recipes were suggested by farmers as a method for supporting their own on-site and community marketing efforts. We held tastings and tablings at nine venues. We attended farms and community events, setting up a tabletop display, giving out food samples, recipes, and discussing tips for using New Hampshire produce. We estimate interacting with 1600 consumers at the venues. We also promoted New Hampshire specialty crops and farms to 1000 people at our annual spring local food tasting expo, Flavors of the Valley. Again, this activity is something farmers wished they had time to do themselves as it builds relationships and sells product.

Marketing TA for 3 NH farm stands selling specialty crops: We budgeted to provide marketing technical assistance to three farm stands selling specialty crops. Our staff reached out to several farm stands to offer technical assistance with marketing, and made several formal appointments to offer assistance. Despite farm enthusiasm, in the end none were able to make time. With the relationships we developed, we were able to convince one NH producer to return to vending at the spring Flavors of the Valley event after a long absence, exposing his business to 1000 attendees.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Our project outcomes were 1) Increased purchase of New Hampshire Specialty Crops by customers in the Upper Valley; 2) Consumer education on food preparation increases New Hampshire specialty crop consumption.

Success and progress was measured via year end survey and interview feedback from farmers' market managers, farm stand operators, and reporting farmers. We asked whether marketing materials, activities, and support seemed appropriate to their needs and were effective in interactions with consumers (e.g., recipes were popular and/or sales increased for crops featured in cooking demonstrations); and whether cooking education impacted farmers.

Farmer electronic survey fatigue has limited the quantity of data we are able to collect (see discussion below). We sent paper surveys and self-addressed stamped envelopes to farms that received recipe cards and/or sampling events from Vital Communities. Ten responses were returned to us, a 95% response rate. All the locations appreciated the marketing assistance and indicated that recipes and sampling activities are popular with customers and vendors (if a farmers' market), or that they, the farmers, appreciated them. One respondent indicated that a tasting increased vegetable sales, others indicated "unknown," two were certain the tasting/recipe did not increase vegetable sales. Qualitative comments include: "We saw some increase in CSA choices [of different vegetables] when people would see the cards," "As a small business, managing all the day-to-day operations can be challenging and a quality marketing product, such as these recipe cards, are valuable and we would not have made them on their

own,” “Very effective in increasing customer activity,” “There was more interest in vegetables, hard to tell if sales changed,” “We sold more of the vegetables that were sampled. We received positive feedback from our customers,” “Some customers had cards and looked for more vegetables.”

We wished to quantify purchases of specialty crops from target producers, hence, our original work plan included a baseline survey of New Hampshire producers. We attempted to undertake a large electronic survey of Upper Valley producers and garner baseline sales data from New Hampshire produce growers. The survey was sent twice to our 3,000+ contact mailing list of farms and farm supporters and once to our 6,000+ contact list of Vital Communities-wide email subscribers. We received 11 responses. We knew that farmers are difficult to survey electronically due to many evaluation requests from many service providers, but this dramatically low response rate certainly indicates that electronic surveying to a general farmer audience can no longer be our approach. So, we were not able to measure increased sales of specialty crops except insofar as the respondents to the paper survey, above.

Another short term goal was to see overall regional consumer interest in New Hampshire specialty crops increasing, using the Vital Communities website visits as an indicator. Vital Communities manages the Valley Food & Farm Online Guide, a free, searchable listing of farms which has been the central portal through which the Upper Valley local food movement grew. Leveraging the popularity of the Guide, we aimed to increase visits from New Hampshire residents to our Valley Food & Farm campaign page (“Valley Farm Fresh”) in 2016 by 5% in comparison to the 2015 specialty crop season (May-October, measured in winter 2016).

Unfortunately a series of unforeseen events compromised our ability to gather data from our website. As discussed in prior reports, the separately titled “Valley Farm Fresh” campaign was a short-lived effort and we replaced this metric with general visits by New Hampshire residents to the Valley Food & Farm website. However, the Vital Communities website was redesigned in 2015, our data access changed and was lost altogether for several months, and Online Guide visits plummeted. The data below shows that interest likely increased, but due to the issues mentioned here we are not confident saying that it did.

	6/1-12/31 2015	6/1-12/31 2016	6/1-12/31 2017	% change 2016-17
Sessions on Vital Communities’ Valley Food & Farm pages by New Hampshire residents	1281	1363	3060	+124.5% change
New Users to Valley Food & Farm pages from New Hampshire	829	770	1832	+138% change

These numbers are very positive yet also reflect the reduced use of our website over the past five years, during which Facebook and individual websites have become dominant for farm and

food businesses. Prior to the rise of Facebook and individual websites, an organization such as ours served a vital information aggregation purpose.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of our project were New Hampshire Specialty Crop producers serving direct-to-consumer markets. Specifically we worked with farm stands, pick your own operations, and farmers’ markets serving New Hampshire vendors. In addition, some tastings promoted New Hampshire local produce in general, leaving the consumer to determine where they would purchase the products.

We are able to quantify the following direct and indirect beneficiaries

	Total	Comments
Farms receiving print materials, in-person assistance	13	
Farmers’ Markets	6	3 of the farmers’ markets have >50% agricultural vendors; the remainder do not keep track
New Hampshire Specialty Crop farmers listed in the Valley Food & Farm Online Guide and promoted by the project	21	

Lessons Learned

On-site sampling and recipe tasting is very well received by farms and customers. In some cases it increased sales, in others it was simply “appreciated.” Farm feedback indicated that we should continue to pursue sampling events as a support for farms in future projects, and we have folded those activities into all current farm marketing focused projects.

Determining data points for collection on marketing and promotion projects, in particular with this project, has been a challenge. Our desire to create population-level change in food purchasing habits and measure the impact of our third-party marketing support on farm sales is difficult, or a nut we have not cracked. Farmers are difficult to survey using the electronic methods cheaply available to non-profit organizations. Farmers with whom we work one-on-one are willing and able to discuss the impact of our activities on their bottom line but cannot draw direct lines between our activities and a quantifiable increase in farmer income.

As referenced in our 2016 Annual Report, we originally focused on using our own website to measure the impact of our New Hampshire specialty crop marketing and promotion activities. Our Valley Food & Farm Guide continues to have a role in local food promotion, but no longer is the central pivot for information about local farms that it was even in 2014. On the positive side, we recognize this allows us to remove ourselves as a pass-through beneficiary when promoting local farms, especially in person, and to present a simpler message and action step

to the consumer, such as “This can be made with any seasonal herb grown at Spring Ledge Farm.”

Our marketing technical assistance for three farm stands selling specialty crops was not completed as planned. The impediments may include that stand operators are too busy, or that they are not able to prioritize marketing technical assistance, or that our relationships with the operators were not yet at a point where they regard us as a helpful resource worth their limited time. Our staff member reached out by phone and in person, often scheduling meetings which were then cancelled, and once appeared at a meeting but then was told the person was too busy to have a long conversation.

We were pleased to partner with multiple farms and community venues in planning the activities and enacting them. Farms and markets advised us in identifying priority activities (Hemingway’s Farm, Edgewater Farm, Spring Ledge Farm, and Autumn Harvest Farm), in creating recipes that worked for the farms (Spring Ledge and Edgewater Farms), and hosted us as in-person promoters of their products (Wilmot Farmers’ Market, Claremont Farmers’ Market, Spring Ledge Farmstand). We worked with multiple community partners to reach consumers outside of a farm or market setting (Kids Magazine, The Coop Food Stores, Whaleback, Newport South Congregation Church). All our partnerships enriched and enabled the success of this project.

Project Partners

We were pleased to partner with multiple farms and community venues in planning the activities and enacting them. Farms and markets advised us in identifying priority activities (Hemingway’s Farm, Edgewater Farm, Spring Ledge Farm, and Autumn Harvest Farm), in creating recipes that worked for the farms (Spring Ledge and Edgewater Farms), and hosted us as in-person promoters of their products (Wilmot Farmers’ Market, Claremont Farmers’ Market, Spring Ledge Farmstand). We worked with multiple community partners to reach consumers outside of a farm or market setting (Kids Magazine, The Coop Food Stores, Whaleback, Newport South Congregation Church). All our partnerships enriched and enabled the success of this project.

Conclusion

SCBG funding enabled us to positively impact the New Hampshire producers in the Vital Communities service area, both during the project period and after project completion. Staff strengthened relationships with farms, media, and community agencies. These relationships continue post-funding and enable us to serve New Hampshire specialty crop producers in ongoing ways with other funding sources. Thank you for this opportunity.

Contact Person

Beth Roy, Vital Communities. 802.291.9100x105

Additional Information

See attached recipe examples in appendix

Project 3

Project Title: NH Harvest of the Month

Submitting Organization - Cheshire County Conservation District

Partner Organizations (9) - Antioch University New England, Contoocook Valley School District (SAU 1), Cornucopia Project, Fall Mountain Regional School District (SAU 60), Food Connects, Keene Food Service (SAU 29), Monadnock Regional School District (SAU 93), NH Farm to School, Vital Communities

Final Report

Project Summary

Harvest of the Month is a farm to school campaign that provides ready to go materials for the classroom, cafeteria, and community that promotes the use of local NH fruits and vegetables. Harvest of the Month promotes seasonal eating, encourages healthy diets and supports the local economy by connecting NH fruit and vegetable farmers with schools. The program engages students and their families, classroom teachers, food service professionals, farmers, and community members. The work completed through this project built upon the success of Harvest of the Month programs in neighboring states and brought this effective program to NH. The lead organization was the Cheshire County Conservation District along with nine (9) partner organizations: Antioch University New England, Contoocook Valley School District (SAU 1), Cornucopia Project, Fall Mountain Regional School District (SAU 60), Food Connects, Keene Food Service (SAU 29), Monadnock Regional School District (SAU 93), NH Farm to School, and Vital Communities. Key deliverables completed over the course of this project include: NH Harvest of the Month educational materials designed and disseminated to schools; program successfully piloted in SAU 1, 29, 60 and 93 of the Monadnock Region (southwestern NH) via teacher and food service staff participation in classroom and cafeteria trainings; creation of a NH Harvest of the Month website (www.nhharvestofthemonth.org); and roll out the program to schools statewide via webinar, workshops and conference presentations in the grant's final year with the leadership of NH Farm to School. Evaluation elements included formative and summative components to gauge program impacts and process quality from the perspective of participating school personnel, program staff, and other key stakeholders. New Hampshire Harvest of the Month Project goals outlined in the original proposal included:

- Increase fruit and vegetable procurement by schools.
- Increase demand for specific specialty crops first regionally and then state-wide by schools.
- Educate students about local foods and nutrition.
- Train teachers and school food service personnel in how to use the program materials.
- Adapt the Vermont Harvest of the Month materials to New Hampshire.

Project Need

The New Hampshire Harvest of the Month (NH-HoM) project offered New Hampshire schools with an array of tools to implement farm to school offering teachers activities connecting Harvest of the Month materials to math, science and healthy eating, recipes for the cafeteria and home, and recommended readings for children, as well as promotional materials such as

posters, calendars, and retailer ads. There is a need for this kind of program in New Hampshire to strengthen the farm to school connection, build on demonstrated interest in fresh produce for schools, and address nutrition-related health concerns for children. Harvest of the Month is a ready-to-go, farm to school program that schools can adopt and build on. It has been pilot tested and implemented successfully in Vermont for 3 years with 150 schools officially participating in the program. Specifically, Vermont compiled several Farm to School best practices into an easy to use Harvest of the Month package. These include a coordinated education and marketing campaign that include materials for the 3 C's: cafeteria, classroom, and community. While some schools have been able to connect the 3 C's, others are able to use the HOM materials to support work on one of the C's. These best practices have taken years of development and collaboration, which New Hampshire was able to capitalize on through this project.

Importance and Timeliness of the Project

There is growing demand for farm to school programs and school gardens in New Hampshire as evidenced by the development of regional local foods initiatives, increased implementation of school gardens, and growing attendance at school garden and farm to school conferences and workshops. The NH Food Alliance, a network working to create a strategic food plan for the state, has recently identified farm, fish and food enterprise viability as its focus area for phase one of the strategic plan. Schools in the pilot program area and then throughout the state who purchase specialty crops for this program would be contributing to farm viability. This program will also support the goals of HEAL NH's Healthy People Healthy Places plan to increase access to and consumption of healthy foods in schools and communities. The HEAL plan was developed in partnership with numerous organizations including NH Farm to School (NHFTS). Specifically in the Monadnock Region, where the pilot will take place, schools (SAU 1, 29, 60, & 93) have been purchasing through Monadnock Menu (a regional aggregation and distribution service for local farms) and clamoring for more resources to better implement their farm to school programming. This program will answer those demands and satisfy a need that NHFTS has identified across the state. In addition, Contoocook Valley (ConVal) School District, one of the four districts involved in the pilot, has been actively participating in The Cornucopia Project's school garden program for several years; teachers in that district are seeking supplemental curriculum materials to support learning about and consumption of fresh produce by their students. ConVal Food Service staff has also demonstrated real interest in bringing more local fruits and vegetables into the cafeterias.

Project Approach

The following are primary tasks performed during the grant period:

- Task 1:** Vermont HoM materials were adapted to New Hampshire and disseminated through pilot school districts as well as statewide through NH Farm to School networks
- a) Food Connects and Green Mountain Farm-to-School adapted educational and marketing materials to NH context and specialty crops (April –June 2016). Please see the additional information section sample materials.

- b) Distribution of HoM posters through Cheshire County Conservation District (CCCD) and key grant partner organizations occurred throughout the grant period. Please see the additional information section for examples of educational materials, posters and press releases.
- c) Held initial professional development training with all grant partners, facilitated by Vital Communities staff, to best ensure effective dissemination and HoM educational programming with schools.
- d) Statewide Farm to School staff built upon HoM pilot in Monadnock Region to complete statewide teacher professional development via webinar, website curation, workshops and presentations at regional and statewide conferences. Please see the additional information section for a copy of the survey and results.

Task 2: Developed and launched NH Harvest of the Month Website

- a) Web developer contracted with oversight from CCCD
- b) Bi-monthly meetings with key grant partners and contractor to inform design and adaptation of VT HoM materials to the NH-HoM website (June-July 2016)
- c) Communications to pilot schools regarding the availability of HoM educational materials, professional development and web-based materials completed in fall 2016 and each consecutive school year fall start.

Task 3: Leveraged and expanded partnerships with educational organizations, service agencies and community groups to implement HoM pilot program in Monadnock Region and encourage their use of HoM materials as well as purchase of local fruits and vegetables.

- a) Grant partners met on a continuous basis (in person and virtual) throughout the grant period to review NH-HoM materials, identify outreach strategies, provide updates and ensure synergistic efforts.
- b) Kick-off Forum in partnership with Monadnock Farm & Community Coalition held in May 2017. Engaged service agencies, educational partners and community groups to highlight availability of HoM in NH, emphasizing opportunities for educators, agencies and schools. Please see the additional information section for copy of event flyer and participating partners involved.
- c) Wrote press releases, social media posts, and web-based updates in partner newsletters/sites about NH-HoM.

Task 4: Designed, implemented and evaluated teacher professional development workshops in pilot schools and cafeterias of the Monadnock Region.

- a) Press release, mail and email communications regarding HoM training availability shared with pilot schools at the beginning of 2017 and 2018 school years to encourage participation. Follow-up phone and face-to-face communications completed by grant partners.
- b) Partner organizations identified key schools and associated responsibilities to ensure professional development was completed in the 2016-2018 school years by The Cornucopia Project, Vital Communities and Food Connects staff.

- c) Food Service Professional Development completed in Monadnock Region via face-to-face meetings completed in 2016-2017 school year. Food Connects and Monadnock Menus was primary contact and collaborated with CCCD and program staff to offer HoM overview of benefits, training in HoM use and purchase of local fruits and vegetables.
- d) Summative evaluation instrument designed in collaboration with grant partners for use at HoM school workshops to gauge impact and future HoM directions. Please see the additional information section for a copy of the survey and results.
- e) Gift certificates for food to be used in educational activities and cooking kits provided to interested HoM professional development participants/schools to purchase food for HoM recipes in educational events and provide cooking supplies to encourage on-going HoM classroom engagement of teachers and students.

Task 5: Engaged two master's level students from local university program focused on sustainable agriculture and food security as interns to aid with the HoM project kick-off, dissemination of materials and evaluation.

- a) Created HoM-specific recipe cards, educational nutrition materials, and tasting and cooking events in partnership with UNH Nutrition Connections, Antioch University's Community Garden Connections, and Keene State College Dietetic Interns during summer-fall 2017 grant period. These efforts directly involved Keene Public Library, Monadnock Food Coop, university students and senior community members in HoM. See Report, "Seasonal Eating for Classrooms, Cafeterias and Community" for details.
- b) Compiled survey data of HoM workshop participants; designed and piloted online survey of HoM participants; developed interview guide to garner input of HoM participants who received cooking kits; completed literature review regarding Farm to School efforts and impacts. Please see the additional information section for a copy of workshop survey and results.

Task 6: Dissemination of NH-HoM throughout the state via trainings, presentations, webinars, and website.

- a) NH Farm to School (NHFTS) was lead organization beyond the pilot region along with assistance from other grant partners as feasible (i.e., Vital Communities, Cornucopia Project, CCCD, Food Connects, Antioch)
- b) NHFTS offered trainings on NH-HoM at the farm at a school state conference, regional environmental education conference, Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) NH Conference, NH Science Teachers Association Conference and through the NH School and Youth Garden network. Completed nine such programs in 2017-2018 school year.
- c) A joint webinar with NH Department of Education held in September 2017 is now archived and available for viewing anytime through the NHFTS website
- d) NH-HoM Program website and online presence maintained through the NHFTS website.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The NH-HoM accomplished or exceeded the outline project deliverables, including the successful pilot testing in four SAU's with teacher professional development workshops, food service training, collaboration with local farmers and farm organizations, and volunteer coordination. The results of this pilot informed successful state-wide dissemination of the program through NH Farm to School (NHFTS) and has worked to identify the best model NH, based on the pilot project in southwestern NH as well as ongoing communications and evaluation in concert with VT-HoM.

NHFTS continues to promote and offer trainings about NH-HoM program as part of regular NHFTS activities beyond this grant period. It will be incorporated into programming, trainings and events on a routine basis. In Vermont, HOM has become self-sustaining as it has been adopted by schools, food system support organizations, and other community organizations. Many groups have simply adopted HOM as a tool for them to use moving forward. Our hope is that the NH-HoM materials can continue to be shared widely for others to use, free of charge.

Evaluative feedback from organizational project partners highlighted that: 1) significant strides were made to introduce HoM to NH schools and it worked well to have the NH-HOM team representing different organizations and types of expertise; 2) NH-HOM posters and other educational materials were of really high quality; 3) Schools were creative with their teacher professional development approaches, which contributed to a broader range of school employee engagement; and 4) Incentives (e.g., cooking kits, financial support for classroom supplies) worked well—so much so that partners recommended including such incentives to on-board schools earlier.

Additionally, project partners recommended offering additional supports to facilitate school teachers' participation amid their budgetary and time constraints. Providing teachers with financial support and cooking equipment was a value-added development which led to greater school engagement. Consider other incentives such as stipends or graduate credit to encourage teacher participation in longer-term professional development opportunities (e.g., full day workshop, summer intensive programming, etc.). Having more than one staff person at a given school participate in HoM professional development also was important to this project's success. School participants ranged from classroom teachers, nurses, health educators, administrators and food service staff, to name a few key participants. Further engagement of teacher teams and/or all-school professional development is recommended to extend future NH-HoM programming.

The demand for HoM curricular revisions and associated professional development on a statewide basis involves significant time, resources and travel; further staffing and regional supports are recommended to ensure long-term success of this fairly new innovation only recently introduced to NH schools, cafeterias and communities. Additional staffing and/or regional hubs of support would help to ensure that curricular materials are updated over time to best meet school and community-based interests. There was varying degrees of success with the HOM pledge, which was a good way to collect emails though it took significant effort to recognize the value of such a pledge. As a result, project partners recommend the NH-HoM on-

line pledge be revisited for efficacy and compared with VT-HoM on-line pledge successes and challenges.

The project activities did not enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops because all of the NH-HoM materials focus on fruits and vegetables. This project has not been submitted for other Federal or State grant funds and there are currently no additional federal or state grant funds supporting this project.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

Original Measurable Outcomes Proposed and successful outcomes are outlined below. All activities were completed and additional details regarding unexpected outcomes and activities are described under “Lessons Learned” section.

Performance Goal #1: Students will have enhanced awareness of specialty crops through increased exposure of the Harvest of the Month (HOM) materials.

Performance measure: Teachers will be surveyed to share what components of Harvest of the Month have been implemented and how many students were reached.

Baseline: 0 students in the pilot area are currently exposed to the Harvest of the Month materials

Target: A minimum of 50% of student population in the pilot area will experience the awareness campaign through posters, handouts, and curriculum.

Accomplishment: A conservative estimate of 50% of the pilot area student population in target grades (PK-4) experienced HOM through posters, handouts, classroom HoM activities and teacher professional development completed in 2018. Initial interview findings suggest increased learning occurred among participating teachers and students, including more awareness of local foods, changes in buying and eating habits to include more local items, and interest among parents to have their children experience HoM in their classroom. The overall feedback has been positive in terms of professional development experiences, curricular materials and other HoM supports. One elementary school teacher in the pilot region summed up their experience of HoM this way: “I love how [NH Harvest of the Month] has been put out. I think you [HoM partners] have done as much as you can to really put it out for us, so I think that’s been great.” Additionally, summative evaluative responses indicated impact on awareness as well. For instance, 75% of respondents (n=52) were “not at all familiar” with HoM and 21% were “somewhat familiar” prior to their HoM professional development. Upon completion, 100% of respondents found that the session built their understanding either “a great deal” (50%) or “to some extent” (50%) which indicates increased awareness. Ninety-four (94) % of respondents indicated they gained new resources. When asked if they could apply what they learned to their professional efforts, 80% of respondents either agreed (24) or strongly agreed (18). When asked what they learned in the session, the majority (66%) of open-ended responses specifically mentioned HoM curricular resources. Sample comments include: “[I learned] how to relate to science standards, how to make group meal, [and] how to engage students” and “[I learned]...where to find resources online [and] how to try to incorporate this program in my curriculum.”

Beyond direct school awareness indicators, there were unexpected positive impacts of HoM in the pilot region of southwestern NH. For instance, Nutrition Connections (UNH Cooperative Extension) has been using HoM recipes in their county-wide newsletter along with HoM test-tastes in some pilot area schools. Healthy Monadnock School Champions staff person, through the local hospital in Southwest NH, is also actively promoting HoM with their school collaborators. These unanticipated activities reflect to the program's capacity to grow and its continued impact on nonformal educator awareness beyond a formal classroom or school context.

Goal #2: Increase teacher and food service staff awareness and familiarity with the Harvest of the Month resources through a pilot of New Hampshire Harvest of the Month in the Monadnock Region.

Performance measure: Provide approximately 10 professional development workshops to K-4 teachers and two trainings and one on one support to school food service directors and cafeteria staff in four school advisory units: Monadnock (SAU 93) 6 schools, Keene (SAU 29) 13 schools, Fall Mountain (SAU 60) 11 schools, ConVal (SAU 1) 10 schools.

Baseline: 0 teachers or cafeterias in the pilot area are using the HoM materials currently.

Target: 50% of schools in the pilot area will be represented in Professional Development workshops and 100% SAUs will be represented in food service trainings to learn how to use the HoM materials.

Accomplishment: The professional development for teachers and other school staff was completed in 2018. Of the 40 schools listed in the grant proposal, only 22 have teachers in the grade range suitable for HoM lessons (which is K-4): Monadnock (4), Keene (4), Fall Mountain (6), and ConVal (8). So a successful "50% of schools in the pilot area" reached with PD workshops would be 11. Thirteen schools (59%) received direct NH-HoM professional development workshops, along with one-on-one support and follow-materials; this number is conservative and does not include other ways educators may access HoM resources. Summative evaluations indicate trainings were well received and participants were motivated to share HoM with students in various venues (classroom, cafeteria, etc.). In addition, 100% of the SAU food service training targets were met over the grant period. These outcomes do not include other venues to learn about NH-HoM like the website, conferences and webinar participation. Likewise, Harvest of the Month was started during a 2017 launch at a kickoff event at Stonewall Farm in Keene, NH. Another 53 school administrators, youth educators, parents, farmers, food retailers and stakeholders from the pilot region participated in that event.

Goal #3: Disseminate NH-HoM throughout the state via NHFTS based on the outcomes of the pilot.

Performance measure: There will be presentations offered at one statewide conference as well as at 4 regional conferences and meetings. One webinar and three train the trainer trainings will also be provided around the state of NH through NHFTS.

Baseline: 0 teachers or cafeterias in the state of NH are using the HoM materials currently

Target: 20% of SAUs in the state of NH will be represented in professional development workshops during the grant period where teachers and food service professionals will have the

opportunity to learn about adopting HoM resources. In the two years following the end of the grant, the program is expected to be adopted by up to 60% of SAU's in the state, similar to Vermont's current participation rates.

Accomplishment: Statewide trainings and presentations continued through 2018 grant period, primarily through the NH Farm to School (NHFTS). Currently there are 24 schools and school districts employing HoM materials across NH. An additional nine trainings, presentations and workshops occurred in collaboration with NHFTS from 11/2017-12/2018. Abbey Group—food service providers in SAU 6, SAU 23, SAU 36, SAU 29 and SAU 60—purchased 50 sets of HoM posters for schools statewide, which was beyond the pilot area and is one indication of statewide dissemination. Based on sign-in sheets, summative evaluative data, web and face-to-face contacts, a conservative number of 29 SAUs (27% of total) have been engaged and are now using HoM materials in school contexts. This exceeds the projected goal of 20% and school interest in HoM continues to rise.

Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries include NH specialty crop farms, students, their families, school food service, and the school community. The first year of activity of this grant is a pilot program. The pilot program will work with 40 schools through the four participating SAUs. These SAUs were selected because they are already working with Monadnock Menus to buy from local farmers. There are currently fourteen specialty crop producers selling products through Monadnock Menus to these schools. All fourteen of these farmers will benefit from this program as it will support the schools in purchasing higher quantities of specialty crops. During the second year of the grant the number of farmers benefiting from this work will greatly expand because we will be working to roll out HoM across the state. While the NH HoM classroom activities are geared towards elementary schools, the school food service reaches elementary, middle and high schools. The program has the potential to reach the approximately 76,000 students that are enrolled in public elementary schools in New Hampshire and more via the cafeteria's increased purchasing of specialty crops.

In NH, at the end of the grant period many schools are participating in NH Harvest of the Month, see attachment of SAU list. Additional participants include food co-ops, health care facilities, farmers markets and farm stands. This school and greater community involvement will create a greater demand for fruits and vegetables grown by NH farmers.

Benefit to NH students: By engaging and training classroom teachers on the implementation of NH HoM and the in-depth standards based Harvest Lesson students learn about New Hampshire agriculture, understand where their food comes from, learn about nutrition benefits of the NH specialty crops, eat more NH specialty crops, and more fruit and vegetables overall. Many of the HoM's Harvest Lessons also incorporate lessons that include activities in math, science and geography. When teachers learn these new ways of teaching more traditional subject students will also become more highly engaged in their own learning.

Economic impact: Sales of Harvest of the Month products increased during the development of the program in Vermont. Two food hubs, Windham Farm and Food and Green Mountain Farm

Direct reported increase in sales of the HoM during the highlighted month as well as throughout the year. Farmers have reported that HoM allows them to better plan for seasonal sales outlets as schools participating in HoM are essentially ordering ahead. We anticipate this will also be the case in NH once the program is established.

Evaluative data and associated project deliverables indicate that this CCCD initiative was implemented as originally planned and will be sustainable beyond the scope of the project. Summative workshop data indicate that school teachers, staff and other relevant stakeholders' participation in the Harvest of the Month trainings increased their awareness and motivation to implement relevant programming at the school level. Although there were some delays in scheduling the HoM professional development with schools, such training was fully implemented in the pilot region and then expanded statewide through the NH Farm to School staff.

Outreach and support to schools went beyond initially outlined expectations and included value-added supports for participating teachers and schools to include vouchers to purchase local foods to use in HoM recipes/activities. Additionally, 20 "cooking kits" were developed in consultation with project partners and distributed among pilot elementary schools, along with statewide schools through NHFTS. Also, \$50 Monadnock Menu fresh produce vouchers were distributed to all eight Contoocook Valley (SAU 1) Schools. An elementary school principal described these value-added aspects this way: "...when staff had the opportunity to participate in the [HoM] professional development and experience how to create lessons that would work for [their students], then that increased their confidence in delivering that kind of experience to our kiddos and then that directly benefits [the students].....it was great to get an initial gift certificate to purchase ...food and having the equipment [available to classrooms]..." This same principal indicated that HoM made an impact in relation with a federal program that provides local fruits and vegetables a few days per week. In conjunction with HOM this year, they purchased more local produce with less packaging, which was "...more appealing to our students to actually see the vegetables and fruits in their...raw form and experience them that way versus a plastic baggie."

Increased purchasing and distribution of NH specialty crops/fruits and vegetables occurred among pilot schools as measured by Monadnock Menu and Food Connects staff (personal communication, November 2018). Total local foods purchasing through Monadnock Menu was \$8,185 in 2015 and grew to \$20,000+ in 2017 and 2018. Monadnock Menu has won a bid to distribute the following local specialty crops to Abbey Group-served NH districts (Fall Mountain, Charlestown, Claremont) starting in 2019: Apples, Summer squash, Kale, Winter squash, Parsnips, Radishes, Spinach, Sweet corn, Potatoes, and Lettuce.

The NH HOM team worked with Food Service Directors (FSDs) from each of the four pilot school districts to increase sales of specialty crops through the distribution of HOM materials, administration of trainings on implementing HOM in the cafeteria, and facilitation of connections to the curricular arm of the project.

The four FSDs oversee very different school districts with unique needs, constraints, and existing interest and engagement in local food. Our outreach around HOM varied widely from one district to the next, as a result. The following is a report on each of the four pilot region school activities with food service.

Keene

Management: Independent

Existing HOM/local food work: Weekly local food-themed menu item, local/unusual food taste tests, purchasing from Food Connects/Monadnock Menus. All local foods activities have been designed independently within the Keene system, including by the current FSD.

Description of project engagement:

- Project staff distributed one full set of cafeteria-oriented HOM printed materials (posters, classroom flyers) for each school. The FSD has put up HOM posters at every school.
- The FSD refused formal HOM trainings for food service staff. She opted instead to meet with project staff on her own to get a high-level introduction to the HOM project, including ideas about how to make use of the printed materials and how to use HOM features to support the purchasing of more local foods.

Fall Mountain

Management: The Abbey Group

Existing HOM/local food work: The Abbey Group (Abbey) has implemented a region-wide internal HOM program based on the company's success with the VT HOM program in northern Vermont. Abbey prints and distributes company-branded posters and other materials to its cafeterias. HOM items are regularly built into lunch dishes and featured taste tests.

Description of project engagement:

- Project staff distributed one full set of cafeteria-oriented HOM printed materials (posters, classroom flyers) for each school. The FSD has put up HOM posters at every school.
- The FSD requested an official training on using NH HOM for all Fall Mountain site managers. Fifteen site managers attended a training on May 18, 2017. In the training, HOM staff introduced the HOM materials and website, discussed tips for building HOM items and activities into meals and taste tests, led an example taste test activity around the month's harvest (baby greens), and explained how the site managers could use Monadnock Menus to source local product for HOM activities.

Monadnock

Management: Independent

Existing HOM/local food work: Monadnock does not appear to have many formalized or regular systems for building local foods into food service. However, the FSD does regularly order local apples, lettuce, potatoes, and other basic produce from Monadnock Menus.

Description of project engagement:

- Project staff distributed one full set of cafeteria-oriented HOM printed materials (posters, classroom flyers) for each school. The FSD has put up HOM posters at every school.
- HOM staff held an early training with the FSD to introduce the HOM project, materials, website, and activities.
- The FSD then decided that he wanted to loop the school administration into the HOM pilot. HOM staff gave an introductory presentation to 7 members of the district's wellness committee. Later feedback revealed that this presentation planted a seed of recognition across many parts of the district that was then able to be built upon by other HOM program staff.

ConVal

Management: Fresh Picks Cafe / Cafe Services

Existing HOM/local food work: Contact around HOM has been difficult because of rapid turnover in FSDs. However, from the beginning of the NH HOM grant period, ConVal's overall local foods purchasing from Monadnock Menus has increased from almost zero to \$17000+ in 2018, including an increasing diversity and volume of fresh produce to ConVal district.

Description of project engagement:

- Project staff distributed one full set of cafeteria-oriented HOM printed materials (posters, classroom flyers) for each school. The FSD has put up HOM posters at every school.
- Project staff met with the FSD to give a high-level introduction to the HOM project, including ideas about how to make use of the printed materials and how to use HOM features to support the purchasing of more local foods.
- The new FSD is interested in HOM, but is still too early into learning the ropes at the district to want to commit to a larger training.

Lessons Learned

The kick-off planning meeting for this grant project was initiated in May of 2016. To ensure success, start-up time was spent clarifying responsibilities and designing program materials, especially the NH-HOM website and associated curricular materials. The professional development trainings for teachers was delayed to the 2017-2018 school year because completing the graphic design work on all educational materials and the website took longer than anticipated. With the educational materials and website completed, project partners were able to accomplish the professional development goals before the grant period's end. Associated lessons learned are to recognize initial start-up may take extra time and not align well with school calendars (e.g., professional development calendar, summer break). Building in flexibility into programmatic timelines helped project partners best ensure success. Similar flexibility in programming facilitated the team's development of HoM "Cooking Kits" and fresh produce vouchers to off-set school-based costs of HoM implementation. Evaluative feedback illustrated this need and the team was able to be responsive, which led to greater adaptation of HoM in school contexts.

Partners working on the professional development have contacted and offered trainings to all of the schools outlined in the project proposal. Though behind our original schedule, there was sufficient time for the work plan to be executed during the grant period. Additional follow-up interviews and on-line survey among HOM participants is currently underway. However, these follow-up tasks go beyond the project grant's scope and are made possible through the efforts and interest of a current project intern and their advisor. These data will inform future HoM efforts among partner organizations in the Monadnock Region and statewide.

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Additional Information

- NH-HoM webpage screen shot and overview of materials available
- Sample Press Release
- Harvest of the Month Kick-Off Event Flyer
- Seasonal Eating for Classrooms, Cafeterias and Community Report
- NH HOM introduction letter
- Summative Workshop Survey Results
- NHFTS HoM data, Fall 2018 (Compiled by NH Farm to School)

Project 4

Project Title: Plant Something NH

Submitting Organization: NH Plant Growers Association

Final Report

Project Summary

The primary goal of the project under this grant was to join Plant Something, a public awareness campaign designed to promote the green industry. Plant Something is a national campaign, where rights to use are shared by individual participating states to educate consumers about the health, environmental and monetary benefits of plants. The campaign was adopted for New Hampshire under the grant to address the lack of a unified industry message in the state.

To help independent plant growers maintain their place in the marketplace, Plant Something NH was conceived as a statewide program that would unite their marketing message to increase sales and awareness of the green industry in New Hampshire.

As of the time of the grant application, the Plant Something campaign was utilized in 17 states across the country. With adoption under the grant, New Hampshire became the 18th

participating state. This was a new project to the New Hampshire Plant Growers Association and at the time of application, we had not submitted this project to any other State or Federal programs for funding.

Project Approach

As stated within the 2015 New Hampshire Specialty Crop Grant application, the primary goal of the Plant Something NH campaign was to create a Plant Something NH logo and develop a unified message that can be used by all members.

According to the approved Work Plan, the following objectives have been accomplished:

Work Plan Objective	Target Completion Date	Date Completed	Contributors
Join Plant Something	March 2016	May 2016	Steering Committee
Hire Project Manager	April 2016	April 2016	Steering Committee
Register URL / Create Facebook Page	May 2016	May 2016	Project Manager w/ Creative Support From Designer, Steering Committee Input & Approval
Create Website Content	June-July 2016	August 2016	Project Manager w/ Steering Committee Input & Approval
Create Marketing & Event Plan for 2017	Project Manager w/Steering Committee Input	August 2016	Project Manager w/ Creative Support From Designer, Steering Committee Input & Approval
Approve Marketing and Events Plan	Steering Committee	September 2016	Project Manager w/ Steering Committee Input & Approval
Decide on Promotional Materials	Project Manager	October 2016	Project Manager w/ Creative Support From Designer, Steering Committee Input & Approval
Joint Winter Meeting Announcement	January 2017	January 2017	Steering Committee w/ Project Manager and Creative Support From Designer
Contact Member Businesses	February 2017	February 2017	Project Manager with Creative Support from Designer
Contact Potential Members	March 2017	March – May 2017	Project Manager & Steering Committee

Distribute Promotional Materials To Garden Centers	April 2017	January - Ongoing	Project Manager w/ Creative Support from Designer and Steering Committee Input & Approval
Scheduled Events Children's Planting Programs at Public Events, Fairs	May – August 2017	May – Ongoing	Member Businesses and their Employees, Project Manager, Steering Committee
Public Service Campaign In cooperation with UNH Cooperative Extension's Programs	UNH Cooperative Extension Staff with NHPGA Steering Committee	January 2018- Ongoing	Project Manager in cooperation with UNH Cooperative Extensions programs and w/ Creative Support from Designer and Steering Committee Input & Approval

In addition to the stated Work Plan Objectives, the following campaign projects we also completed under the 2015 grant:

- Project manager established Plant Something NH project management via Basecamp, a secure online dedicated portal to facilitate transparency of action item status, manage assignments, share files and provide a forum for group member contributions.
- Project manager created and steering committee approved a secure, shared budget tracker for campaign related expenses.
- Designer created and steering committee approved official Plant Something NH logo*.
- Project manager developed content, designer created and steering committee approved: Plant Something NH industry Fact Sheet.
- Designer created and steering committee approved: Plant Something NH Table Top Promotional Poster for industry events.
- Project manager developed content, designer created and steering committee approved regular NHPGA member newsletters with regular campaign development updates and calls to action.
- Designer created a secure, central campaign library for deposit of marketing assets as they are developed for future population to an industry-wide accessible library.

- Project manager, with steering committee input, utilizes target market research to serve as a model to define appropriate and relatable messaging to our three valuable audiences: Consumer, Industry & Advocate.
- Project manager, steering committee and designer collaborated to define website development project scope requirements, and steering committee approved proposal for website design and development, to complete and launch plantsomethingnh.org as a mission supporting and engaging resource for both consumers and industry representatives alike.
- Project manager, with steering committee input and designer support, established and maintains the official Plant Something NH Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/PlantSomethingNH/?fref=ts> as a resource for sharing mission related messaging and NH grower/industry cross promotion using #PlantSomethingNH. Following on this page has grown to nearly 2,000.
- With website developer and steering committee approval, project manager activated a dedicated campaign email address and account: info@plantsomethingnh.org for member and consumer outreach and communications.
- Project manager, with steering committee input and approval, secured the first Plant Something sponsor. A NH FSC certified print and green marketing company who has pledged to extend an extraordinary 20% discount for Plant Something NH print and promotional materials and host an online portal for industry members to access free campaign materials or opt to purchase bulk printing with an exclusive 10% NHPGA member discount. While there is no pledged monetary component to the sponsorship, the company has remained invested in supporting the Plant Something NH message with ongoing collaborative initiatives. The relationship has proved valuable to the campaign and delivering extra value to NHPGA membership in support of our campaign goals.
- Project manager, with steering committee input and approval, secured subsequent Plant Something NH campaign supporting sponsors, invested industry members interested in promoting a shared mission.
- Launched the Plant Something NH campaign website at plantsomethingnh.org as a mission supporting and engaging resource for both consumers and industry representatives alike.
- Project manager, with steering committee input and approval, completed cash flow projections and marketing plan budget needs analysis through the end of the approved grant application activities timeline.
- Project manager has established and maintains an [Instagram social profile](#) for the purpose of promoting NH industry businesses and by sharing their plant image posts,

from a common feed using #PlantSomethingNH, as inspiration for consumers. This page has a high degree of consumer and industry engagement with 600+ followers.

- Project manager facilitated governor's proclamation of Saturday, May 20, 2017 as Plant Something NH Day and June 2-3, 2018 as Plant Something NH Weekend.
- Project manager wrote Plant Something Day Proclamation announcement press release and issued to 29 regional media outlets.
- Project manager and designer, with steering committee input and approval, promoted Plant Something NH Day participation resulting in requests and listings for 23 participating businesses on PlantSomethingNH.org in 2017 and 20 in 2018.
- Project manager established Plant Something NH Day and Plant Something NH Weekend event listings on 2 major NH online event sites: [NH365](#) (sponsored by NH Union Leader and feeds into most other small event sites) and [New Hampshire Magazine](#).
- Steering committee members facilitated news article interviews, television interviews and radio interviews.
- Project manager and designer, with steering committee input and approval developed and published content for 14 Plant Something NH eNewsletter editions and contributed guest articles on Plant Something NH to the NH Landscapers Association newsletter.
- Project manager developed and steering committee approved content for 19 digital ads and project manager developed content for and published daily organic social posts.
- Project manager with steering committee input as needed, fielded inbound inquiries via PlantSomethingNH.org contact forms and Facebook direct messaging related to Plant Something NH Day, educational opportunities, plant advice, hort business service recommendations or other generic public relations.
- Project manager and members of the steering committee hosted the Plant Something NH booth at the NHPGA /NHFA Joint Winter Meeting, NH Farm & Forestry Expo events, Seacoast Home & Garden Show, the NH Children's Museum and at Plant Something NH Weekend in cooperation with NH 4H and Bedrock Gardens.
- Project manager with design support and steering committee input and approval developed and distributed post event Plant Something NH Day survey to invite participation feedback.

- Project manager with steering committee input and approval, developed relations and established a mutually serving collaboration with NH4H to develop a Plant Something NH youth education curriculum and explore additional ongoing cooperative educational activities.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The primary objective during the grant period was to create awareness among industry members, the consumer and our advocates - members of the media and educational organizations. This was accomplished by developing branded and shared campaign materials, a website and social media presence and through a series of television, digital and social media ads, event exhibits and public relations communications.

Goal 1: We planned to survey our participating members to determine how the campaign affected their business in 2017 vs prior year, with a goal of a 10% increase. Since the grant period began in the middle of calendar year 2016, before the comparison sales year ended and prior to our campaign start on 1/1/17, the 2016 sales baseline was established during our August 2017 Renewal of Membership drive to capture the historical data needed to measure this expected outcome.

Outcome: With 43% of membership reporting, 15% reported a sales increase greater than 10%. 8% reported a 5-10% increase in sales, 23% reported a sales increase of less than 5%, while 8% reported flat sales, 8% reported a sales decrease of 5-10% and 8% reported a sales decrease of less than 5%. 30% of survey respondents opted not to provide sales data.

Since the time of our original 2015 application and during the development of this survey, we identified the need to extend this survey beyond our membership to include broader beneficiaries of the campaign within the industry. A strategy to establish a statewide NH industry benchmark and ongoing sales tracking data for use as a measurement tool in program effectiveness. This work is ongoing as a stated activity under our subsequent SCBG grant work plan.

Goal 2: The campaign was originally thought to be linked to the NHPGA website, and we expected to measure a 10% increase in website visits, and thus increasing the message of the campaign. Through strategic planning with professional guidance from the project manager, it was determined that since much of our campaign content would already reside on PlantSomethingNH.org, it would best serve as the most economical and logical location to direct our audience for more information. As a result, we measured ad campaign performance by comparing visits to PlantSomethingNH.org during the grant period compared to the same period in for the NHPGA website. We expected a 10% increase in website visits for the campaign year, and actual results during the reporting period reflect a 221% increase in traffic (visits) to PlantSomethingNH.org vs. visits to NHPGA.org during the same period.

Goal 3: To increase membership in the NHPGA by NH businesses wishing to incorporate the Plant Something NH message into their own marketing.

At the time of the original application, the committee anticipated Plant Something NH would be a tool to increase NHPGA membership. Once funding was approved to allow for strategic planning, it was determined that program access should not be limited to NHPGA members and was designed to be accessible to all New Hampshire specialty crop growers and affiliated industry businesses. As a result of the change in strategy, this goal is no longer relevant and focus remains on proliferating the campaign message among all related businesses in the state.

Beneficiaries

Plant Something NH has been strategically designed to serve not only the state's specialty crop growers, but also those who support the grower supply chain, including: garden centers, greenhouses, landscapers, nurseries, florists, farmer's markets and other affiliated retailers or service providers.

According to the most recent state statistics available, the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service the New Hampshire ornamental horticulture industry (greenhouse and nursery) is valued at \$49.9 million (with 529 operations reporting, Agricultural Census, 2012).

The program is designed to benefit all 529 reporting operations in the 2012 Agricultural Census and potential economic impact is a \$4.99 million return on investment, based hypothetically on our goal of a 10% increase in industry sales, for a reported \$49.9 million NH industry.

Lessons Learned

Identifying attainable goals for a project at the time of application presents a challenge as a budget has yet to be approved to afford the proper strategic planning that allows for intelligent goal setting. It would be more appropriate for application to call for a stated objective with a contingent deadline for defined measurable goals to follow at a date certain. The committee has used the mid-year and annual reporting process to clarify any necessary adaptation accordingly.

In considering future plans, the committee is also cognizant of the following lessons learned:

- Industry engagement requires a significant amount of administrative time.
- Educational opportunities exist well beyond our current capacity.
- Market reach opportunity is far from saturation.
- Public relations avenues are under leveraged due to limited administrative resources.
- The industry faces a threat to future sustainability due to changes in the digital marketplace.
- Effective modern advertising, promotions and communications is driven by data and business intelligence that is sorely lacking in the industry. The competitive landscape requires local, relevant and current industry and consumer data that is non-existent for New Hampshire specialty crop growers and related businesses.

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Project 5

Project Title: Buy New Hampshire Specialty Crops Television/Internet Advertising Campaign in Partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development

Submitting Organization: NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food

Final Report**Project Summary**

The New Hampshire public continues to seek and buy local specialty crops. This project, in partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism worked to connect consumers with producers. The 2015 SCBG program funds focused on a targeted television and internet advertising campaign to promote New Hampshire specialty crops including vegetables, fruits, flowers/plants, maple, honey, wine and Christmas trees.

Through our previous work, television and internet advertising emerged as particularly successful avenues to reach the consumer. The funds provided by this grant were to focus on these key media. New television and internet (particularly social media)ad spots were created that feature the above mentioned specialty crop products. Our past work is making it easier for consumers to identify New Hampshire specialty crops products and their sources, as well as building demand for New Hampshire agricultural products. We built upon the previous campaigns to continue this demand, incorporating lessons learned to improve the campaigns. Our partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development (NHDTTD) has been successful in connecting the consumer to New Hampshire agriculture on many levels.

The New Hampshire's Own logo has become a recognized identification of New Hampshire agricultural products. This funding successfully built on previous SCBG funded activities that promoted and featured specialty crops using this common logo in various media:



We continued the use of this logo which helps producers showcase their products to a growing customer base. For this project, “specialty crop” taglines were developed and used by our marketing team to clearly promote NH specialty crops, as a group, as well as individual crops and used throughout the campaign. See appendix for examples of advertising.

This funding allowed us to try new media channels and expand our reach using new creative platforms.

Project Approach

Per our updated Plan of Work provided with our annual report in 2016, working with the NHDTTD and their contracted marketing agency, we identified the specifics of the campaign, including the focus, budget, timeline. Once the plan was established everything moved per schedule. The marketing agency developed the creative materials and arranged the ad placement per the budget and the campaign goals, with Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food approval. We received periodic campaign updates, as far as reach and effectiveness, and everything was summarized in a final report. Copies of the current plan of work and timeline/budget are attached in the Appendix.

The New Hampshire’s Own logo has become a recognized identification of New Hampshire Agricultural products. This project continued to use that logo with specific tag lines to emphasize seasonal crops. Advertising was placed on social media platforms and on regional television, featuring product imagery with the logo and changeable taglines.

The SCBG funds were used specifically for the benefit of specialty crops. Advertising paid for with SCBG funds featured fruits, vegetables, flowers, maple, honey, Christmas trees and a call to buy these local specialty crop products.

The SCBG funds have allowed us to establish an effective partnership with the NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development (NHDTTD) which has resulted in agricultural activities being featured when the state is promoted to potential visitors. Our partners see the value that agriculture brings to their state promotion efforts and have been willing to contribute financially toward the total “Buy Local” promotion program.

Goals and Outcomes Achieved

The overall goal of the Continuation of the Buy Local Agriculture Campaign partnership with NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development is to build upon the success of the program as it has been established and promoted in previous years with the ultimate goal of building awareness of NH agriculture and agricultural products, specifically specialty crop products, and to increase sales of these products. Ads focused seasonally on honey, fresh produce, plants and flowers and driving shoppers to farm stands and farmers’ markets and pick your own farms.

The campaign exceeded expectations as far as reach.

- TV: 2842 spots aired across nine key NH cable zones. 2610 were requested, but bonus spots were provided by the TV network as part of the partnership.

- Social: Facebook and Instagram impressions were 1,701,517 delivered while 700,000 impressions were planned. The campaign showed a highly engaged audience with over 70,000 post engagements, offsite link clicks and video views.
- Google Adwords: These ads supported the campaign by driving those searching for information to the social media sites where the ads were running.

As far as accomplishments toward our performance measure of a 5% increase in Specialty Crops cash receipts, it appears we accomplished a 5% increase as of August 2017 (data available from USDA ERS is reported for the previous season; 2018 data will not be available until 2019). Data from 2015 showed a value of \$87,313,000 for crops “all other crops” (excluding animal feed and hay). 2017 data showed a value of \$90,023,000. When we originally submitted our plan we were using data from USDA, NASS. This information was shifted to USDA, ERS and we have used this as our source, which we noted in our 2017 annual report.

We also planned to reach a 10% increase in visits to our website: www.agriculture.nh.gov over the term of the campaign. Annual website visits from May through July 2015 (time of project proposal) were 23,400. From May-July of 2018 (time of campaign) visits were 62,546. Annual visits as of December of 2015 were 90,428 and annual visits as of December 2018 are 203,538. We achieved a 63% increase for the campaign period of May-July, which far exceeded our goal.

Beneficiaries

The potential Specialty Crop beneficiaries for this project are listed below:

428 commercial tree fruit (138) and berry growers (347) marketing through harvest your own, farm stand operations and some farmers’ markets (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
 665 vegetable growers marketing through farm stands, harvest your own and farmers markets (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
 529 greenhouse and nursery growers marketing through on-site retail outlets, farm stands and farmers’ markets (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
 491 maple producers (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
 158 farms with colonies of honeybees (US Census, 2012)
 223 Christmas tree growers (US Census of Agriculture, 2012)
 18 NH wineries (NH Winery Association, 2015)

This television and internet advertising campaign featured imagery and seasonal promotion for many of these crops. The fact that New Hampshire has seen an increase in Specialty Crop farm cash receipts since our Buy Local campaign began illustrates the positive effect of the program on the above beneficiaries.

Consumers also benefitted from this campaign with new understanding of local agriculture and local specialty crops and being provided with the ability to identify local products to help them make choices and purchases. The huge increase in the visits to the website showed the reach to consumers and the desire to learn more about where to obtain these products. Dollars spent locally, circulate in the local economy, benefiting the local community as a whole.

Lessons Learned

The response to our advertising campaign particularly through social media channels was very exciting. The advertising contractor via our tourism partnership, brought new ideas to the campaign and greatly expanded our reach and interaction.

We have learned that the consumer wants fast and easy access to information and does not want to search a website to find key information. We began directing the consumer from the ads to as targeted website information as possible and have even developed a new searchable website, housed on the state tourism website (not paid for with the SCBG funds) to make this process easier.

Please see Appendix, for advertising examples utilized in this campaign.

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