PROGRESS REPORT: Integration of Local Food System Development Projects – the Iowa Food System Working Group (IFSWG) and the Family Food Tour of Northwest Iowa

Objectives

**IFSWG:**
1. Increase awareness of resources available to ISU Extension and Outreach educators.
2. Increase networking and collaboration within ISU Extension and Outreach.
3. Increase ISU Extension and Outreach’s ability to attract funding and community support.

**Family Food Tour of Northwest Iowa:**
1. Host the annual Family Food Tour
2. Develop innovative ways to deliver and cross-market Extension and Outreach programs in “bite-sized portions”, as they relate to local foods, health and wellness.
3. Collaborate with the Iowa Food Systems Working Group on statewide food initiatives.

**Funding Awarded:**

**IFSWG:** $74,800  
**Family Food Tour of Northwest Iowa:** $51,776  
**Total:** $126,576

**Funding Expended to Date:**

As of October 1, 2013 (eData)  
Cash balance - $50,908.67  
Encumbrance - $36,597.99  
Free balance - $14,310.68

**Progress to Date**

**IFSWG:**

In its first year, IFSWG created a steering committee to guide its programming. The committee of 17 members worked to determine what Extension is currently doing and offering in the area of local food systems to identify the next steps to better equip all Extension units to participate in local foods. Five subcommittees were formed and performed the following duties:

1. Curriculum - Identified ISU Extension and Outreach programs with a curriculum component that relate to local food systems.
2. Grants - Developed resources related to local food systems to support IFSWG personnel for grant writing.
3. Professional development - Created and identified new and existing tools used in local food systems work.
4. Resource development - Created and maintained the ISU Extension and Outreach Local Foods Hub website to connect all internal organizations and on-line resources.
5. Partnership development - Increased ISU Extension and Outreach leadership capacity to support local food system work through networking and partnership development.
IFSWG steering committee members indicated their awareness of ISU Extension and Outreach resources and programs related to local and regional food systems development has increased. Additionally, steering committee members indicated they improved working relationships or made new connections with other steering committee members. Results of improved relationships ranged from a simple increase in awareness of what others on the steering committee are doing in their local foods work to collaboration on projects to applying together for new grant-funded projects.

Seven new programs or grant partnerships have been created through these relationships. Four of the seven new local foods system projects or programs were grant-funded projects. ISU Extension and Outreach has demonstrated an ability to attract outside funding, indicating that grant-funders see ISU Extension and Outreach as well-equipped to contribute to local food systems development efforts.

**Family Food Tour of Northwest Iowa:**

Flavors of Northwest Iowa hosted two Farm-to-Fork tours that generated increased involvement in the regional food network. The Ida County Farm-to-Fork Tour on August 23, 2013 involved 54 adult attendees. The event included tours of a local farm, shrimp grower, local meat processor and vineyard. The organizational team included 1 chef with a team of cooks, 4 planning committee volunteers and 8 additional growers. The Woodbury County Farm-to-Fork tour on September 15, 2013 involved 22 adult and 3 children attendees. The event included tours of a local farm, orchard and community garden. The organizational team includes 1 chef with a team of cooks, 1 restaurant, 4 planning committee volunteers and 9 additional growers. Flavors of Northwest Iowa promoted and cross-marketed ISU Extension and Outreach programs by providing literature to the attendees of the Farm-to-Fork tours.

Flavors of Northwest Iowa was present at the Sioux City Farmers Market in 2013 where the group delivered and marketed ISU Extension and Outreach programs related to local foods and wellness.

**Next Steps**

**IFSWG:**

In Phase II of its plan of work, the IFSWG will conduct strategic planning sessions to determine the future direction of the group. Intermediate-term goals are primarily related to work with external partners and will be the focus of Phase II:

- Increased networking and sharing of resources among groups with similar focus,
- Strengthening of networks, and
- Development of new partnerships.

ISU Extension and Outreach may need to overcome the natural tension that exists between Extension and some other groups that compete for the same sources of funding for local food systems development. This will allow the IFSWG to transition into Phase III of its plan of work, to create a cohesive network of local food coordinators in the state of Iowa.
Family Food and Tour of Northwest Iowa:

Project leaders involved in the Family Food and Tour of Northwest Iowa have developed the following time for the next steps of their plan of work:

- November 2013: Update the Flavors of Northwest Iowa website to provide current information to consumers.
- December 2013: Develop an evaluation and sustainability plan for future tours.
- January 2014: Establish an expanded planning committee including more Extension program specialists.
- February 2014: Develop a timeline for the 2014 tours, including cross-marketing of Extension workshops, programs, and events.
- February/March 2014: Provide “Veggie Series” training series to local growers and farmer’s market personnel from ISU specialists.
- Summer 2014: Host the annual tours and deliver the educational series.
- Winter 2014: Evaluate the project, further develop and implement the sustainability plan and continue delivery of local foods education.