



Pleasant Hill Food Center: Exploring a Shared-Use Kitchen Project

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ABSTRACT

The Food Center Shared-Use Kitchen project brought together a team of ISU Extension and Outreach professionals from the Farm, Food and Enterprise Development (FFED) unit, the City of Pleasant Hill's community development director, entrepreneurs in the culinary and ag business, and economic development professionals. This team used a process that included surveys, site-visits and interviews to understand potential community kitchen locations as well as food business needs. This research assessment details the primary topics that arose from this project and potential next steps.

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Pleasant hill food center: shared-use kitchen

Introduction:

In 2017, the Grow Pleasant Hill coalition selected five [\(5\) priority projects](#) to work on in partnership with the ISU Community Food Systems program. The "Food Center" concept was one of the prioritized projects. The Food Center project focus started as a design project for an activity hub for food-related business development with hopes to include a shared-use kitchen and culinary business offerings while also showcasing outdoor amenities and creative solutions for healthy living, gardening, and community collaboration. The original goal for developing a food centric location was not accomplished, the focus shifted to identifying existing licensed kitchens within Pleasant Hill and the surrounding region and understanding needs of food entrepreneurs who would benefit from access to a community kitchen. The information gathered through this research can inform licensed kitchen spaces about the needs of potential users and how to update or expand their current site to meet those needs.

There are many different terms and models used to describe kitchens. Below are key terms used in this report:

Commercial Kitchen: "Any individual, business, or organization with legal access to space designed for the production of food and **licensed by a local health department** to produce food for resale or consumption by the general public" (Corridor, The Food, n.d.)

Shared-Use Kitchen: "A place of business for the exclusive purpose of **providing commercial space and equipment** to multiple individuals or business entities to commercially prepare or handle food that will be offered for wholesale, resale, or distribution" (Colpaart, Grahm, & Seymour, 2017).

Community-Based Kitchen: "Church, school, community center, culinary school, workforce training, food security program **kitchens rented to businesses when not in use**. Rentals are secondary to other uses, so hours may be limited, facility may not be designed for production, equipment may be limited, and on-site storage may not be available" (Meader McCausland, Miller, Colpaart, & King, 2018).

While the project was of interest and seen as a priority, there was little momentum and collaborating partners for the first 18 months of the CFS program. This then led to the research and investigation of existing community kitchen sites within Pleasant Hill and the surrounding neighborhood.

Within the food center concept, there was discussion around the development for a shared-use kitchen. As part of this, research and investigation of existing community kitchens were completed, including outreach to churches, schools, community centers, etc.

Following site visits, a public survey was shared through the Grow Pleasant Hill website and targeted audiences to understand needs of food business' and food entrepreneurs in relation to commercial kitchen space.

The Food Center project, primarily focused on community kitchen site research and assessment, which included:

- Identifying potential sites with access to existing kitchens for rent, or the development of a shared-use kitchen within the city of Pleasant Hill and surrounding area (five-mile radius of city limits)
- Create a food entrepreneur or "user survey" to understand amenities needed, appropriate times for renting space, approximate length of time for use, and other logistics and considerations for the site
- Develop a report to inform the City of Pleasant Hill and existing or potential kitchen sites on the needs within the city
 - Equipment and facility needs
 - Potential rental rates
 - Proposed updates
 - Need of kitchen space

While working on the project, the Food Systems team at Iowa State began partnering on a grant for Scaling-Up Processing, allowing for additional collaboration to support the Food Center project. One of the sites that participated in the initial survey and site visit,

was selected as a case study for the Scaling-Up project leading to design, food safety, and business technical assistance. Site considerations and proposals are shared in the appendix.

The following sections of this report detail the findings in the research and assessment of kitchen sites.

Process:

Outreach for the research project included communication to churches, schools, and community centers within the city of Pleasant Hill and a five-mile radius of the city.

Initial outreach included fifteen (15) sites that had potentially had existing community kitchen space. Sites were asked about specifications of their kitchen if they would participate in a site visit with ISU Food Systems team. From the initial fifteen (15) sites, four locations responded, and two of those agreed to a site-visit, these included Eastview Community Center and Radiant Church. Southeast Polk High School and Southeast Polk Four Mile Elementary School shared they were not interested in participating in this project at this time.

Following site visits, an online survey was created and shared with individual food businesses, Pleasant Hill Chamber of Commerce, Pleasant Hill Community Farmer's Market, Pleasant Hill Parks and Recreation, the Mickle Center, Eastview Community Center and Radiant Church. Survey questions included identification of organization or business type, equipment needs, food business licensing and regulations, feasible rental rates and general interest in kitchen space. The survey was open from beginning of October 2019 through end of December 2019, resulting in five (5) responses.

As a result, Eastview Community Center was identified as a location to participate in the "Scaling Up Processing" research project conducted with ISU Farm, Food and Enterprise Development, Community Economic Development and Human Sciences. This project was funded through the Agricultural Marketing Research center to understand, identify and implement strategies for businesses or organizations interested in scaling-up their current food business/ organization. East View participated as the "community center" project seeking development of a commercial kitchen for both educational programming and potential shared-use kitchen incubator. From August to December, research partners met and consulted with East View regarding food safety, layout and logistics, and business development.

Findings:

Kitchen Sites

Site visits with Eastview Community Center and Radiant Church included interview questions and on-site observation. Questions were designed to understand the organization's daily schedules and rentable spaces as well as their future goals. Additionally, there were discussions on barriers and needs of the site. Overall outcomes of visits included:

- Assessment of existing conditions, including layout and flow of each site
- Understanding of needs amongst community spaces
- Identification of existing and needed equipment
- Identification of Scaling-Up Toolkit case study partners
- Understanding appropriate food safety considerations, regulations and licensing for commercial kitchen spaces

Eastview Community Center:

[Eastview Community Center](#)

David Harper

Phone: 515-809-2356

Current Conditions: This existing community center does not currently have a commercial kitchen but is looking to scale up the use of the kitchen and dining spaces available in their building. The building also has additional space, on the same floor, which can be utilized in the future for scaling-up kitchen spaces while continuing existing programming. This community center has a variety of programming for those residents in the neighborhood including a food pantry and meal donation refrigerator located in the

existing kitchen and dining spaces. The community center would like to first modify their kitchen space to begin culinary classes for those in the neighborhood and those who use the food pantry. The center would then like to scale-up their kitchen to become an incubator for small food businesses to start-up production.

Next Steps: Updates to equipment, food safety and design of the kitchen need improvements for use of space for educational and culinary purposes. Based on the needs and interest from East View, they were able to participate in the "Scaling Up Processing" research project and became a pilot for interventions regarding business development, interior design and food safety considerations. Through this project, they utilized the Business Model Canvas as a guide on feasible next steps as the center is pursuing a phase-based growth strategy and determined potential phasing for their organization's kitchen. This included an initial phase to update kitchen equipment, storage and countertops to food-safe specifications, to allow for educational classes and events to occur. Within the second phase, the kitchen could expand equipment and layout to offer rentable kitchen space for food-entrepreneurs and collaborate on small business and start-up production.

Radiant Church:

[Radiant Church](#)

Ben Mueller

Email: ben@radiantonline.org

Current Conditions: Radiant Church has a small, half-sized kitchen that is not commercially licensed and has little storage space. Under the current lease, modifications to the space cannot be made. There is interest in increased community engagement and programming if kitchen space is adequate in their next location.

Next Steps: Currently, there is no capacity for licensing and building the kitchen up to needed standards for food entrepreneur use. There was interest in learning more about rental rates if they pursued a licensed kitchen in the future, as the church currently does not rent out any spaces in their facility. Additionally, sharing of existing resources and toolkits such as the ISU Shared-Use Kitchen Toolkit and Scaling-Up Processing Toolkit, as well as other institutions and national best practices (see resource list at the conclusion of report for links).

Food Entrepreneurs

Information from five participants and users of kitchen sites were collected through an online survey over a two-month period. If desired, the survey could stay open and help inform the city and community kitchens on needs in the future. Due to the low response rate of the initial distribution of the survey, it may be necessary for community kitchens, or interested organizations, to seek out additional feedback.

Requested information in the survey included:

- Business structure and requirements
- Utility and equipment
- Use of kitchen and rental rates
- Existing licenses and certifications

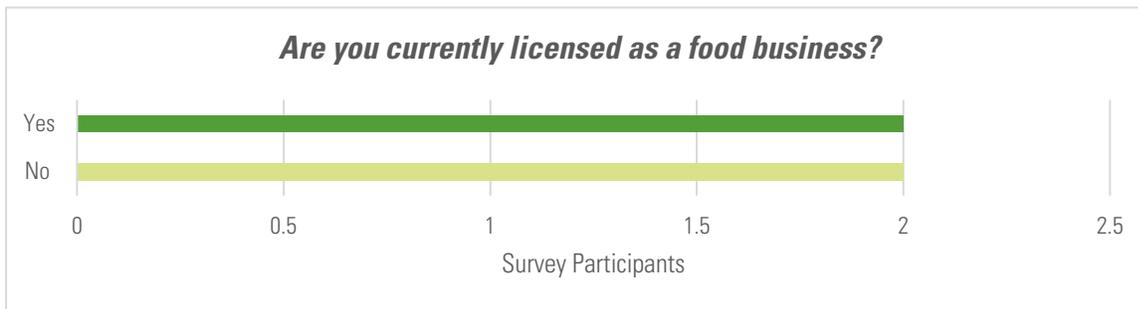
Business Structure & Requirements

Food business licensing and food safety regulation questions were asked to assess the current state of interested food businesses in the area.

Best practices for shared-use kitchens require their tenants to obtain food safety training and licensing before utilizing their kitchen space. Depending on the kitchen use, various business license and regulation requirements are needed; similarly, food businesses that rent out space at a community kitchen also need specific licenses in order to utilize the kitchen. The Food Corridor's [Shared Kitchen Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Planning, Launching and Managing a Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen](#), provides more information on regulations and requirements for shared-use kitchens and kitchen tenants.

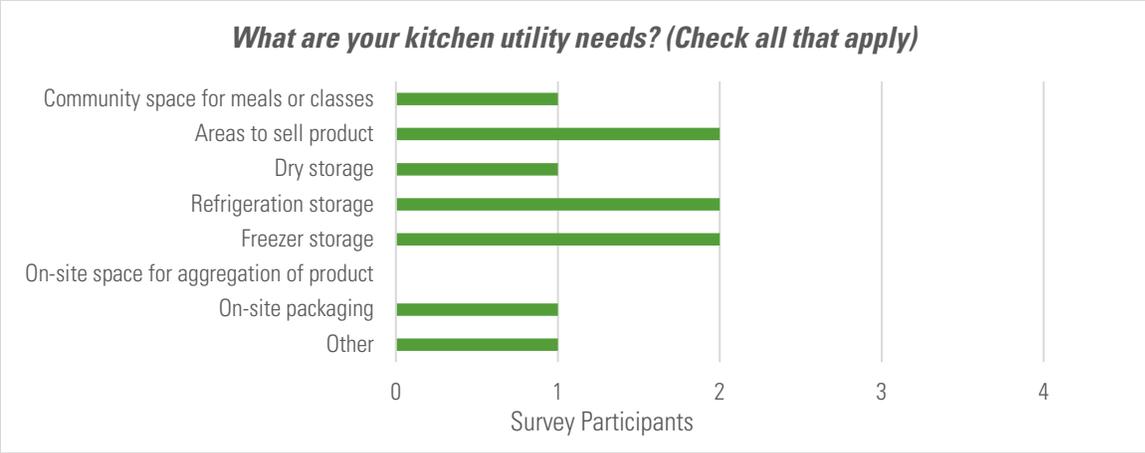
It may be helpful to pursue food safety trainings and information about certifications and licensing needed for both community kitchens and food businesses in the future.

Tables below identify characteristics of the types of food businesses that participated in the survey.

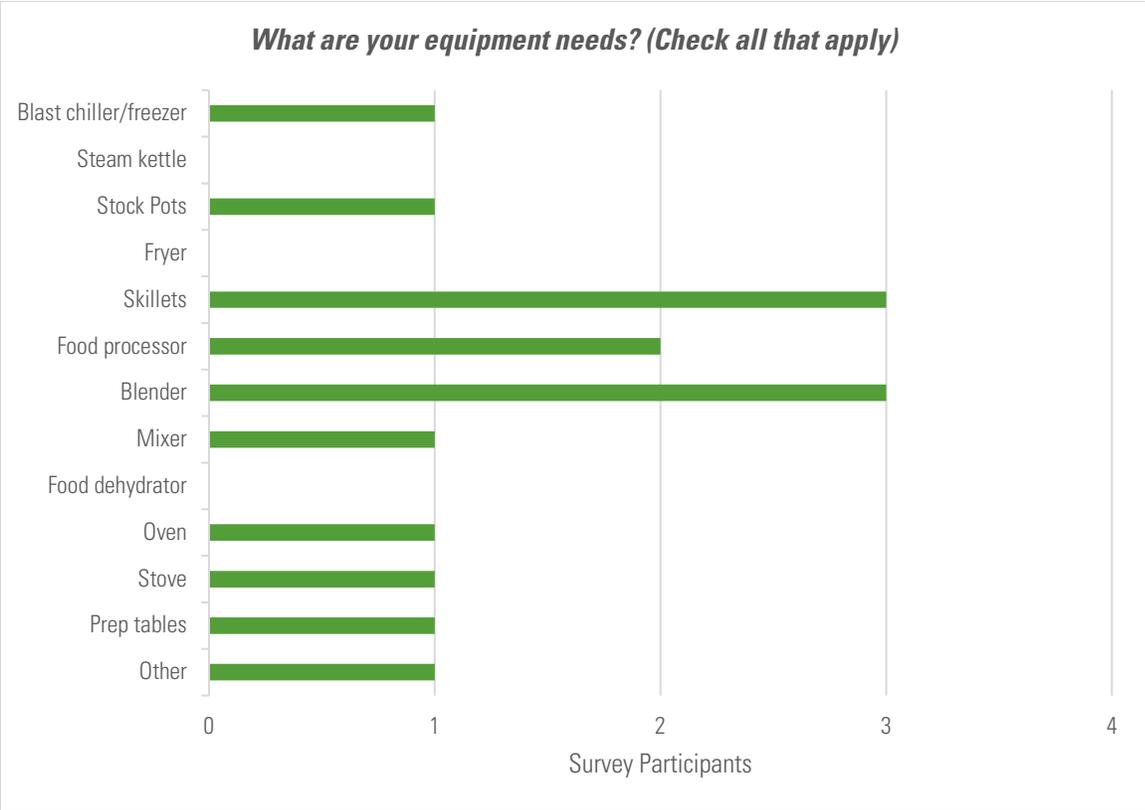


Utility & Equipment Needs

Questions on infrastructure and equipment needs were asked to inform kitchen sites on the different uses of the kitchen as well as potential equipment to invest in to retain renters. These results can inform sites as they consider renovating or updating their sites. Responses reveal that refrigeration/freezer storage, basic kitchen equipment and areas to sell product are the most needed kitchen amenities.



“Other” was chosen by one respondent but provided no written response.



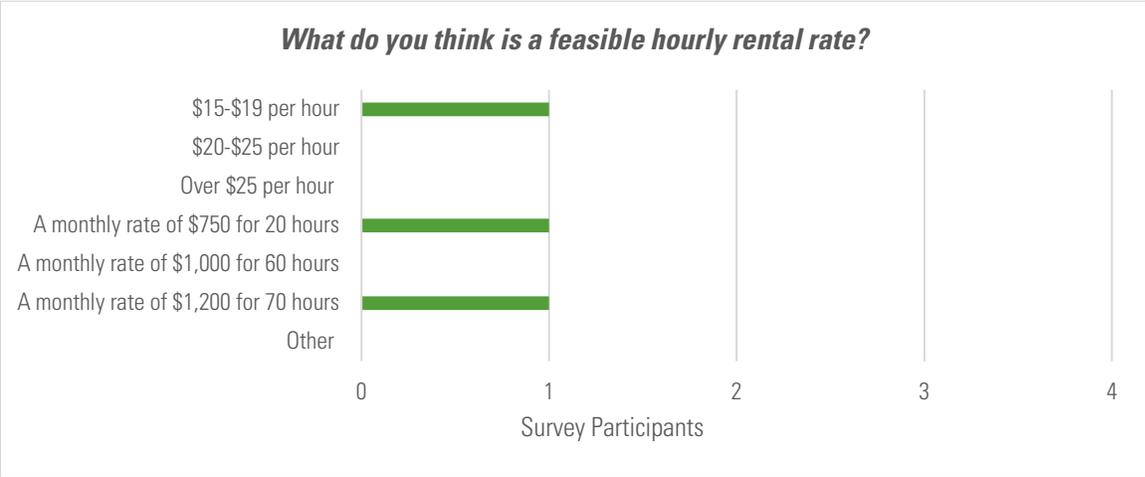
“Other” was chosen by one respondent but provided no written response.

Use of Kitchen & Rental Rates

Information on ideal availability and rental rates were requested to inform kitchens on potential hours of operation and feasible rental rates. Based on responses, food entrepreneurs within Pleasant Hill are looking to rent a kitchen 4-6 times a week for more than 6 hours at a time for a fee between \$15 per hour to a monthly rate of \$1,200 for 70 hours.



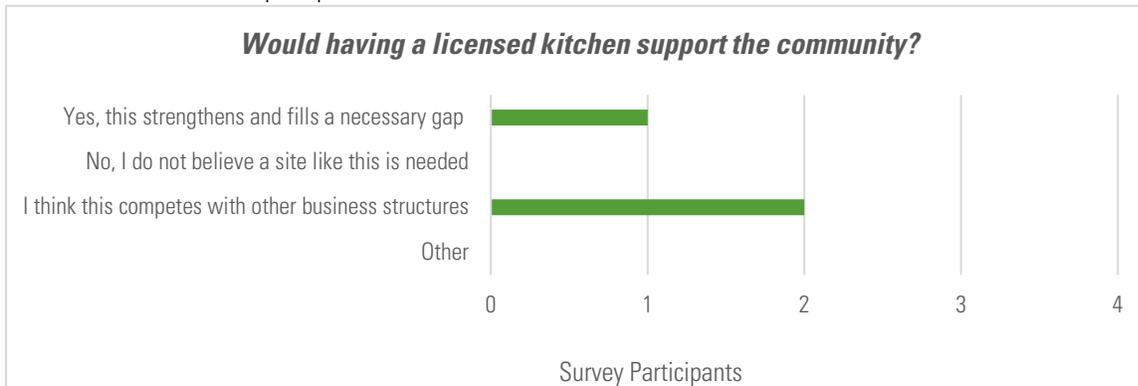
"Other" was chosen by one respondent but provided no written response.



Community Impact

Participants were asked to share their perspective on the potential community impact if licensed kitchens were available within the Pleasant Hill area. Additionally, there was a question regarding if a new kitchen may impact another business, and if so, to

provide contact information or site name so researchers could reach out for potential collaboration and inform on the study. Within the responses, there were two responses that thought this may compete with another business within the region. However, upon further research, it appears that there is a significant gap of licensed kitchen that are rentable, and there is a need for additional rental space provided within a sustainable business model.



Three of the survey participants shared that they were aware of existing community kitchens, of which the [Mickle Center](#) in Des Moines, Iowa. This is most likely the business in which there are perspectives of competition if a new community kitchen was opened. Iowa State reached out to Mickle Center to understand existing capacity for new tenants in their kitchen. Mickle Center currently has capacity to take on new tenants. Tenants are requested to provide information on their type of business and operation needs in order to determine if Mickle Center is a good fit.

Next Steps

Based on research and community discussions, the following are proposed next steps for the City of Pleasant Hill.

A quick strategy for continuing to support this work may include the City of Pleasant Hill hosting a directory of existing sites, which may include hosting the current survey for sites and food entrepreneurs to use. Additionally, resources may also be linked regarding toolkits and publications for community kitchens and potential connection points (see below).

Existing kitchen sites can continue to consider the goals of their kitchen space, increase their capacity by participating in educational workshops on food safety regulations and different licensing requirements, and be a resource for kitchen tenants for their own licensing and regulation requirements.

The City of Pleasant Hill:

- Develop a directory or space for community centers, churches, schools, etc. to share their availability for rental space of licensed kitchen
 - Opt-in opportunity for kitchen sites to be listed on website
- Share the [ISU Extension Shared-Use Kitchen Toolkit](#) on the City of Pleasant Hill's website once it is developed in the fall
- Share the user survey developed by ISU to a wider range of partners (host user survey on the City of Pleasant Hill's website)

Kitchen sites:

- Partner with Polk County Extension, Iowa State Human Sciences and other organizations on programming and education efforts
 - Education on food safety regulations for sites and tenants
 - [Iowa State Extension Food Safety trainings and materials](#)
 - Education on licensing and regulations for sites and tenants
 - [ISU Extension Shared-Use Kitchen Toolkit](#)
- Consider the goals of their kitchen
- Seek out collaborations and partnerships to support business growth and development

Food Entrepreneurs:

- Consider the goals of their business: [Iowa State Extension Business Model Canvas](#)
- Education on food safety and food handling regulations: [Iowa State Extension Food Safety trainings and materials](#)
- Education on licensing and regulations for kitchen tenants: [ISU Extension Shared-Use Kitchen Toolkit](#)
- Regulations for home-based kitchens: [Regulations and Licensing - Home Food Operations and Home Bakeries](#)

Resources

[Polk County Extension and Outreach](#)

[The Shared-Use Kitchen Planning Toolkit. Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University. September 2014](#)

[Shared Kitchen Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Planning, Launching and Managing a Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen. The Food Corridor. 2018](#)

Food Safety:

[Iowa State Extension Food Safety trainings and materials](#)

[Food Safety Modernization Act. 2011](#)

[Iowa Food Code. 2018. Chapter 137F](#)

[FDA, Guidance for Industry: Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Fresh-cut Fruits and Vegetables \(2008\)](#)

[U.S Food & Drug Administration, Food & Drugs, 21 C.F.R. §110.20, §110.35, §110.37, §110.40, §110.93, \(2019\)](#)

Business Development:

[U.S Small Business Administration- 10 Steps To Start Your Business](#)

[U.S. Small Business Administration – Learning Center](#)

[SCORE of SBA](#)

[America's SBDC](#)

[Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – Farm, Food and Enterprise Development](#)

[Resources for producers and other food-related businesses](#)

[Iowa State University Extension and Outreach – Community and Economic Development – Local Economies Team](#)

Layout and Logistics:

[Shared Kitchen Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Planning, Launching and Managing a Shared-Use Commercial Kitchen. The Food Corridor. 2018](#)

Appendix

Pleasant Hill Food Center Survey

Start of Block: Org and Business

The Iowa State University Community Food Systems program is partnering with Grow Pleasant Hill on a project to assess existing community kitchen spaces that are in a short driving distance from Pleasant Hill, Iowa. The goal of the project is to identify areas that can be used by community members, food businesses, and organizations for food preparation, education, and other value-added opportunities. We have identified a few sites that have kitchen space available and are now seeking information from food entrepreneurs on use of space and general needs. Your responses in the survey will inform the kitchen sites on community needs and desires as they consider spatial layout and programming requirements. This survey will take about 5 minutes to complete. If you have any questions about this project or survey, please contact Kaley Hohenshell at kaleyh@iastate.edu

Page Break

Organization and Business

This section will request information on your current business or organization that you operate.

Do you currently operate within a business or non-profit?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Do you currently operate within a business or non-profit? = Yes

What is the name of your business or organization?

Display This Question:

If Do you currently operate within a business or non-profit? = No

What are the needs you have for a kitchen?

What types of products do you currently create or wish to create in a licensed kitchen space? (Value-added product, baked goods, meal preparation, catering, etc.)

Do you currently plan to sell the products you create in a licensed kitchen?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Do you currently plan to sell the products you create in a licensed kitchen? = Yes

Please describe your market outlets (direct sales to customer, farmers markets, other retail outlets, etc.)

Are you currently licensed as a food business?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Are you currently licensed as a food business? = Yes

What type of license do you have?

Display This Question:

If Are you currently licensed as a food business? = No

Are you interested in more information on food business licensing?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Are you interested in more information on food business licensing? = Yes

We would be happy to follow-up with you with more information on food business licensing, if you wish. You can share your contact information at the end of the survey.

Page Break

Have you gone through food safety trainings related to your business and food product development?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Have you gone through food safety trainings related to your business and food product development? = Yes

Which trainings have you attended?

Display This Question:

If Have you gone through food safety trainings related to your business and food product development? = No

Are you interested in more information on food safety training?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Are you interested in more information on food safety training? = Yes

We would be happy to follow-up with you with more information on food safety, if you wish.
You can share your contact information at the end of the survey.

Shared-Kitchen Facility

This section will ask questions related to your needs in a licensed kitchen facility.

What are your kitchen utility needs? (Check all that apply)

- On-site packaging
 - On-site space for aggregation of product
 - Freezer storage
 - Refrigeration storage
 - Dry storage
 - Areas to sell product
 - Community space for meals or classes
 - Other _____
-

What are your equipment needs? (Check all that apply)

- Prep tables
- Stove
- Oven
- Food dehydrator
- Mixer
- Blender
- Food processor
- Skillets
- Fryer
- Stock pots
- Steam kettle
- Blast chiller/freezer
- Other _____

Page Break

How often would your business or organization utilize a licensed kitchen? (Check all that apply)

- Daily
 - 4-6 times a week
 - 2-3 times a week
 - Once a week
 - Monthly
 - Sporadically throughout the year
 - Other _____
-

How many hours would you need the licensed kitchen each day? (Check all that apply)

- Less than 2
 - 2-4
 - 4-6
 - More than 6
 - Other _____
-

Page Break

What do you think is a feasible hourly rental rate?

- \$15-19 per hour
- \$20-25 per hour
- Over \$25 per hour
- A monthly rate of \$750 for 20 hours
- A monthly rate of \$1,000 for 60 hours
- A monthly rate of \$1,200 for 70 hours
- Other _____

End of Block: Shared-Kitchen Facility

Start of Block: Community

Community

This section asks questions related to the need of a licensed kitchen for the community.

Would having a licensed kitchen support the community?

- Yes, this strengthens and fills a necessary gap
 - No, I do not believe a site like this is needed
 - I think this competes with other business structures
 - Other _____
-

Are you aware of any other shared, licensed-kitchen spaces in the region?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Are you aware of any other shared, licensed-kitchen spaces in the region? = Yes

If you are able, please provide contact information or site name and we will be in touch to ensure we are not in competition with their market.

Page Break

On a scale of 1-10, where 0 = **Not at all Interested** and 10 = **Extremely Interested**,
How interested are you in renting spaces at a licensed kitchen?

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Page Break

If you would like to be informed of progress on this project or be in touch with licensed kitchens in this project, including licensed kitchens in your area, please share your contact information below:

Name _____

Email _____

Phone _____

City _____

Zip Code _____

Page Break

Thank you for completing this survey.

If you are aware of other businesses, organizations, or individuals that may be interested in access to a licensed kitchen, please feel free to share this survey link.

Additionally, you can have them contact **Kaley Hohenshell** at kaleyh@iastate.edu for more information.

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End of Block: Community
