

Growing Home Co-op

Refugee Micro-Farm Cooperative

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Abstract

Growing Home is a pilot program designed to create living wage employment for refugees resettled in the area of Trenton, New Jersey. This project in partnership with the County of Burlington, New Jersey (BURLCO) and Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSMNJ) will assist refugees in the development of a worker-owned farm cooperative. The intention of this cooperative is to develop a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) venture on a ten acre portion of farmland leased to the cooperative by Burlington County Community Agriculture Center which will produce organic vegetables for retail sales. The Cooperative will utilize a unique method of intensive growing called SPIN-Farming (**S**mall **P**lot **I**ntensive.)The Cooperative will enable refugees who are currently low income due to an inability to obtain living wage employment, become business owners, while fostering a supported work environment. This will be the first worker owned cooperative in the State of New Jersey, the first farm to utilize the SPIN-farm method and the first CSA to be developed on public property in the state.

I. Community Context

New Jersey's state capital of Trenton is the largest city in Mercer County. It is also one of the most impoverished. Designated as an Urban Enterprise Zone the city none the less continues to struggle with the effects of economic disinvestment. Once a leading manufacturing venue which employed thousands of residents in the production of steel, ceramics, rubber, linoleum and wire rope, (Hutchins, 2006) it is now a city in distress. The loss of these industries to globalization; exacerbated by white flight and suburban sprawl have left behind a city with a declining population and a high rate of poverty.

The Current population in Trenton, New Jersey is estimated at over 77,000 residents, the majority of which are Black and Hispanic. Of the current population estimates, over 16,000 of these residents are Foreign Born, only 3,262 of which are U.S. Citizens. With a 13.8% unemployment rate over 20% of families in Trenton live below the Federal Poverty Level. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006)

Community Needs

Immigrant and refugee families are vulnerable to more extreme levels of poverty than native born low-income families. Nearly half of children in immigrant families live at approximately 200% below the Federal Poverty Level. Higher rates of poverty for these children are attributed to immigrant parents accounting for over 20% of the nation's low-wage workforce. These workers are 50% more likely to be earning less than the current minimum wage. Lack of English language skills, education, social isolation and geographic segregation are contributing factors to low-wage employment and increased food insecurity issues among these families. (Haskins, Greenberg, & Fremstad, 2004)

Project Target Community

The project targets the communities of refugees and asylees currently being served by Lutheran Social Ministries in Trenton, New Jersey. Refugees are defined as persons living outside of their native countries due to "a well founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion." (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2003) Refugees are granted status prior to entering the United States. Though status can be granted to a group of people, each individual must still qualify for refugee status. Asylees are persons who enter the country no authorization however if the individual can meet the same criteria regarding the fear of persecution, may be granted refugee status and allowed to remain. Government data indicates that 70,000 to 125,000 refugees and asylees have immigrated to the United States yearly since the 1990's. (Capps, Passel, Perez-Lopez, & Fix, 2003)

II. Problem Analysis

Problem statement

Refugees entering the United States are fleeing from areas of persecution, war and unstable economic conditions. Admitted into the United States under entirely different circumstances, refugees, unlike economic immigrants, are not required to provide evidence of their ability to become self-supporting, nor have sponsors in the United States to assist with interim support. As a result of these special circumstances, refugees often arrive to the United States with limited or no skills in English, few or no assets, and little preparation for life in the United States. (Bollinger & Hagstrom, 2004)

Willing to work hard to achieve security, refugees generally take any available job after their arrival. These positions however, are usually low wage. When refugees attempt to secure higher paying positions after a period of acculturation, employment barriers become apparent, the most significant of which is a lack of language skills in English. Even marginally better paying jobs require that an employee be able to follow oral instructions from supervisors. Though lack of education is an obvious barrier to better employment for many refugees, a lack of acceptance for degrees from outside of the United States can also hinder employment opportunities. Many refugees were professionals in their own country, yet are struggling in low wage jobs such as cab drivers and security guards because employers are more familiar and comfortable with qualifications given from American universities. (Lake Snell Perry Mermin/Decision Research, 2006)

Effects of Problem

Bollinger and Christopher (2004) found that refugees have a higher rate of poverty than other types of immigrants due to fluctuating unemployment rates which place refugees at higher risk when changes occur in the economy. Though refugees are less likely to be lower-income than other immigrants when unemployment rates are low, when unemployment rates rise in their cities of resettlement, refugees move into poverty at a considerably faster than other immigrants. (Bollinger & Hagstrom, 2004)

For refugees with limited skills, job training programs are often available, yet standard job training programs often require that immigrants and refugees be job ready prior to program admission. Those requirements often include that the trainee have a least a ninth grade education, yet approximately 28% of the low-wage immigrant workforce have not completed ninth grade, while 45% have not completed high school. Job training programs also require some amount of English proficiency, yet 46% of foreign born workers are classified as "limited English proficient" (LEP). (Capps, Fix, Passel, Ost, & Perez-Lopez, 2003)

Though federal refugee assistance programs provide cash and medical benefits they are limited to 8 months after arrival. Cash assistance is \$428 per month for the first person, with an approximate \$100 per month increase for each additional person; thus a single refugee entering the country receives \$428 in cash assistance, a married couple receives \$531 per month, and a family of four receives \$731. Medical benefits are also available for refugees for their first eight months of residency provided their income level is 100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline or less. For 2007 this means that a single refugee cannot exceed an annual income of \$10,210, nor have more than \$2000 in assets. Refugees must also participate in an employment program to maintain these benefits. Employment cannot be turned down without serious reason as long as it meets the minimum wage. (Community Resources Information, Inc., 2007) Yet once low wage jobs are accepted, the resulting poverty trap is visible in poor housing conditions (Lake Snell Perry Mermin/Decision Research, 2006) food insecurity, (Haskins et al., 2004) and underutilization of additional services that might help ease these conditions, due to the social isolation created by long work hours which leave little time for other pursuits. (Lake Snell Perry Mermin/Decision Research, 2006)

Project goals in CED

Refugees in the Southern New Jersey region are unable to secure living-wage employment for a variety of reasons. This project offers an alternative to traditional job training by the formation of a worker-owned farming cooperative which will allow refugees the opportunity to own a business with little initial training or job readiness qualifications.

Cooperatives are not-for-profit business enterprises which are democratically controlled by their members. Each member receives a share of the business and decisions are made on a "one vote per share basis". Cooperatives promote values of self-help, democracy, equality, and solidarity while promoting social responsibility. (National Cooperative Business Association) In a cooperative business model, the structure is overseen by both a board of directors and a cooperative director. This structure eliminates the need for all worker-owners to have a complete inventory of the skills required to establish and maintain a business at the time of its inception. Worker-owners can gradually build these skill sets while simultaneously earning a living wage in a supportive environment. In addition, reliance on other cooperative members allows for a more flexible work schedule, yet still provides structure and discipline for those who might have difficulty adhering to tasks.

The Office of Refugee Resettlement has funded and monitored microenterprise development projects specific to refugees since 1991. Since its inception the Microenterprise Development Program has assisted over 5,000 refugee businesses with start-ups, expansions, and stabilizations of existing business. Of the businesses assisted, 4,750 are still in operation giving these refugee microenterprise businesses an average survival rate of 90%. (Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), 2005)

III. Literature Review

Immigrants in the United States account for over 12.5% of the nation's population. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006) The majority of these immigrants are economic and required to have proof of support from relatives or employers before being permitted to emigrate. However, 10% of the foreign born populations entering the country are classified as refugees.

Refugees enter the United States under different circumstances than economic immigrants. Some leave their countries of origin due to political conflicts, war and violence, occurring in Somalia, Vietnam and Ethiopia, while others leave due to ethnic or religious persecution, such as the Albanians and Sudanese. This manner of migration creates wider implications for economic and social integration. Though some refugees may have relatives living in the United States, or possess language or employment skills applicable to American life, many do not. (Singer & Wilson, 2006)

The United States has always offered a safe haven to those fleeing war and persecution. Though media exposure to the plight of certain refugees and public opinion has had some influence, historically, the U.S. refugee policy has been shaped by foreign policy. (Newland 1995) as cited in (Singer & Wilson, 2006) Initial refugee legislation, the U.S. Displaced Persons Act of 1948 followed the admission of 250,000 displaced Europeans following WWII,

and made provisions for an additional 400,000 entries. By 1956 resultant legislation focused on persons fleeing communist regimes. By the 1960's and 1970's hundreds of thousands of Cubans sought asylum as well as Vietnamese after the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese. Currently the Refugee Act of 1980 statutorily defines refugees admitted to the United States. Set every year by the President after consultation with Congress, this act designates the maximum number of refugees to be allowed into the U.S. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 temporarily immobilized refugee entries into the United States. As refugee admissions resumed, however the numbers have been significantly reduced. The maximum admission number for the FY2006 has been capped at 70,000 refugees for all regions with 30,000 designated to Africa. (Singer & Wilson, 2006)

Resettlement of refugees in the United States is only the first step in the complicated process of acculturation. While some refugees are settled with preceding family members, the majority, approximately 80% have no social ties in the U.S. (Singer & Wilson, 2006) Additionally as the humanitarian crises around the world and U.S. policy shift, so do the countries of origin for newcomers. While European refugees dominated the entries into the United States through the 1990's, by 2004, Africa and East Asia dominated the entries. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2007)

Historically, acculturation of immigrants and refugees in American society was done by process of assimilation. By the early 1900's Sociologist Robert Park (1914; reproduced in Park and Burgess 1924: 757-758) (as cited in) (Rambaut, 1997) pointed out that by the second or third generation *European* immigrants could not be distinguished from American's born of native parents. This process however, has always been more difficult for immigrants and refugees with obvious "*racial differences from the dominant group.*" (Rambaut, 1997) Warner and Srole (1945) determined in their treatise *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* in which the "*progressive advance*" of immigrant groups were studied that status hierarchy "*explicitly linked upward social mobility to assimilation.*" (as cited in) (Rambaut, 1997) However, Warner and Srole also determined that:

The factor of race, or rather the strong negative evaluation of it by American society is sufficient to explain most if not all the difference in ranking...It is the degree of racial difference from white American norms which counts most heavily in the placement of the group and in the determination of its assimilation. The place of the English-speaking Protestant Negro in our life yields the most eloquent testimony for this proposition.

Thus research confirms that different outcomes of assimilation exist for different groups of immigrants in the United States as paths to assimilation depend not just on the resources of the immigrant, but also the context of their exit from their country of origin, and the socioeconomic sector of American society to which they assimilate. Immigrants "*account for the highest and the lowest rates of education, self-employment, homeownership,*

poverty, welfare, dependency, and fertility, as well as the lowest rates of divorce and female headed single-parent families and the highest proportions of children under 18 residing with both natural parents.” Consequently while some immigrants may follow the path of assimilation into “*the White middle-class majority*”, others paths of acculturation can lead to “*downward mobility*” with assimilation into the poverty traps of distressed urban areas. (Rambaut, 1997)

IV. Project Overview

Methodology

This project proposes to utilize an initial 10 acres of land to develop a small farm micro enterprise owned and operated by refugees resettled in the region of southern New Jersey utilizing the SPIN-Farming method.

SPIN-Farming is the first method to adapt commercial growing techniques to sub-acre land masses. Developed in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan twenty years ago the production technique can be adapted to small farm properties, residential backyard plots, or vacant city lots. This style of intensive farming was brought to the Philadelphia region by the Institute for Innovations in Local Farming. It is currently being used in northeast Philadelphia at Somerton Tanks Farm, a prototype farm located on a ½ acre plot owned by the Philadelphia Water Department. Established in 2003, by 2006 the gross sales revenue for the farm totaled \$68,000. (Institute for Innovations in Local Farming, 2008)

Growing Home proposes to utilize the same proven farming method to establish a cooperative (worker-owned) micro-enterprise which will allow low income refugees the opportunity to own a business collectively. A ten acre parcel of property will be the focus of the cooperative’s farm revenue. This acreage will be used to develop a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) venture, in which community residents purchase “shares” of a farm prior to the initial planting. This allows the farm cooperative to cover planting expenses without debt financing. Community shareholders also assume a shared risk with the farmer in regard to possible crop failure.

Outreach and community education events will be done on a continuous basis to promote expansion of CSA and retail sales. Cooperative membership and acreage will be increased on an as needed basis, expanding to other available properties in the area as well as on the initial site.

Cooperative members will be evaluated on their initial skills and continuing education needs will be based upon this determination.

Logic Model

Long Term Outcome	Cooperative members obtain financial stability without dependence on public assistance programs.		
Intermediate Outcome	Cooperative applicants complete training in basic skills, micro-enterprise development and business management enabling trainees to successfully operate a cooperative farming business.		
Short-term Outcomes	Increase trainee knowledge of sub-acre agriculture techniques and small business development.	Worker-owned cooperative business is formed. Micro-farm is planted and maintained in the 2008 season.	Cooperative successfully maintains a 200 share membership in the first season.
Outputs	5 participants are selected and trained in SPIN-farming, micro-enterprise and cooperative development.	10 Acre micro-farm is leased, planted and maintained by trainees.	200 CSA shares are pre-sold to fund initial start-up; 1 farm market stand opened.
Activities	Screening criteria is developed for potential members. Participant's recruitment via outreach campaign in partnership with agencies serving the target population. Curriculum developed for farm and business training	10 acres of farmland identified for lease. Cooperative business entity established. Farm put into production. Sales plan initiated at BCCAC	Outreach to local vendors for donations of tools and farm supplies. Business plan written in partnership with Lutheran Social Ministries of NJ
Inputs	Classroom (2X weekly) Office supplies Functional office space	Tools Tractor or tiller Irrigation supplies(hoses, valves, lumber) Plant materials Compost	Fiscal sponsor with 501(C) (3) secured. Computer with internet access. Letterhead. List of applicable grants. Grant editor

V. Host Organizations

Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey

Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey (LSMNJ), based in Burlington, New Jersey, is committed to serving all those who hurt, are in need, or have limited choices. LSMNJ is an affiliate agency of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. LSMNJ is governed by a Board of Trustees, which includes representatives from the clergy, churches, businesses and other sectors of the New Jersey community.

Among the services LSMNJ provides are: immigration and refugees services throughout New Jersey; community residential services for those with disabilities and special needs; special needs housing for individuals who are mentally ill, in transition, or have multiple needs; affordable family housing; affordable senior housing; senior healthcare; retirement living; an adoption program; an assisted living program; counseling services; and statewide disaster response. (Lutheran Social Ministries of New Jersey, 2007)

Burlington County Community Agriculture Center

The Burlington County Community Agriculture Center is a public property owned by the County of Burlington, New Jersey. The property falls under the supervision of the Department of Resource conservation and is part of the Burlington County Division of Parks. The center is open to the public year round. Developed in 2006, the park currently houses a tailgate farmer's market and community gardens. The site was developed with the goal of fostering public awareness of agricultural issues in the region and to develop support for local agricultural economy. (County of Burlington, New Jersey, 2008)

VI. Project Staff

Cooperative Board

At such time as the cooperative is legally incorporated, members will choose a board to supervise the Cooperative Director.

Cooperative Director

The Cooperative Director will provide the initial training of program participants in agriculture and business management, oversee the initial farm start-up and sales plan, monitor program participants, and manage daily accounts.

Contractors/Consultants

The program will require the assistance of tax professionals on a quarterly basis. In addition technical consultants may be required periodically to assist with updating farming techniques and business training.

VII. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Program Monitoring

The deadline for the bid on the farm property was November 1, 2001. The project proceeded on time up until this point. Due to the upcoming holidays the award decision had minor delays as the Chosen Board of Freeholders had a limited meeting schedule during this time. As a result the decision of the winning bid was delayed until December 19, 2007 at which time notification was sent to the program of the acceptance of the bid.

Program Monitoring Schedule

Month	Activities	Dates	Status	Timeliness	Explanation for Delay	Alternative Action	Attainment of Output
September							
	Meet with host organization	9/10	Complete	On-time			Discuss program plans
	Meet with host organization	9/20	Complete	On-time			Identify farm opportunities
October							
	Attend pre-bid meeting for farm lease	10/2/07	Complete	On-time			Assessment of farm property
	Develop 5 yr. business	10/25/07	Complete	On-time			Business plan written for

	plan						farm bid
	Final plan approval by LSM/NJ	10/29/07	Complete	On-time			Bid signed and submitted by LSM/NJ
	Farm Operations Manager recruited from Refugee community	10/29/07	Complete	Ahead of schedule			Liberian refugee/ Professional farmer with Agriculture degree recruited for program.
November							
	Placed bid with Burlington County for farm property	11/1/07	Complete	On-time			On-time bid with business plan delivered to Freeholders
	Interview with Burlington County Freeholders and Ag. Center	11/19/07	Complete	Late	Freeholder unavailable on date	Rescheduled meeting for 11/21	Complete required interview for bid process
December							
	Lease signed with Burlington County	12/03	Incomplete	Late	Freeholder decision delayed until 12/14	Lease signing moved to January	Lease signed in March
	Meeting with LSM/NJ	12/08	Complete	Late	Freeholder decision delayed until 12/14	Rescheduled for December 27, 2007	Outline of coop by-laws; Outline of marketing plan; trainee outreach
	Meet with employment outreach division of LSM/NJ	12/15	Incomplete	Late	Freeholder decision delayed until 12/14	Rescheduled for 1/30/08	Outreach plan initiated
	Property secured as per Burlington County Freeholders	12/18	Complete	Late	Freeholder vote in favor of bid		Property secured for 5 years

Program Evaluation Plan

Outcomes	Indicators	Data Gathering Methods	Sources	Timeframe
Long-Term Outcome ❖ Participants no longer need public assistance ❖ Gross sales revenue reaches \$165,000	❖ Number of participants ineligible for public assistance	❖ Document review	❖ Patronage dividends ❖ Tax returns ❖ Weekly patronage wage	❖ Three years
	❖ Sales receipts	❖ Document review	❖ Accounting records ❖ Tax returns	❖ Three years
Intermediate Outcome ❖ Cooperative becomes a legal entity separate from the host agency ❖ Gross sales revenue reaches \$150,000	❖ Cooperative incorporated	❖ Document review	❖ State and Federal records	❖ Two years
	❖ Sales receipts	❖ Document review	❖ Accounting records ❖ Tax returns	❖ Two years
Short Term Outcomes ❖ Participants are trained in small farming ❖ Participants trained in Cooperative Development ❖ Gross sales revenue reaches \$100,000	❖ Participants versed in small farming techniques	❖ Document review	❖ Pre-tests and Post-tests	❖ One year
	❖ Participants versed in legal aspects of small business	❖ Document review	❖ Pre-tests and Post-tests	❖ One year
	❖ Sales receipts	❖ Document review	❖ Accounting records ❖ Tax returns	❖ One year

Program Evaluation Plan

As a result of development delays the evaluation plans were modified to fit the development timeline. The intermediate outcome of the initial legal cooperative formation was completed in February of 2008. The initial training required for short-term outcomes was not implemented until March of 2008. Participants are currently receiving on-going training in Cooperative development and hands on training in small farming techniques. An ongoing

marketing plan is in effect though at this time sales revenues have only reached \$23,000.00.

VIII. Results

Short-Term Outcomes

Worker owned cooperative business is formed; Micro farm is planted and maintained in the 2008 season.

In December of 2007 the Burlington County Chosen Board of Freeholders granted Growing Home Co-op the lease to 10 acres of farmland at the new Burlington County Community Agriculture Center in Moorestown, New Jersey for the purpose of establishing a Community Supported Agriculture venture in the local area. The cooperative entity was legally formed in the State of New Jersey as a Limited Liability Company in February of 2008.

Activities

To my knowledge the State of New Jersey has no other worker-owned cooperative businesses, and therefore lacks a cooperative business registration category. As the refugees are not all currently US citizens the cooperative was formed as a limited liability company.

Though later than initially expected the short-term outcome was reached.

Cooperative successfully maintains a 200 share membership in the first season

CSA shares are in the process of being sold, and the farm will commence operation during the first week of April in 2008 placing the project within reach of accomplishing its initial short-term goals.

When the initial decision to lease the farm to the cooperative was made by the freeholders, the local newspaper released an article stating such on January 10, 2007. The immediate response from the community of Moorestown as well as supporters of LSM/NJ has been positive.

When the announcement was made, the cooperative entity had not yet been formed, nor did it have an office to field calls and questions. The county listed their contact information in the initial press release. By March of 2008

the county had compiled a list of 230 community members wishing to join the new CSA. As the cooperative has only recently begun taking actual sales, it is unknown at this time whether or not the 200 share membership will be reached.

Activities

Though the business plan was written and submitted to the county in a timely fashion, it was the responsibility of LSM/NJ to implement the marketing plan. LSM/NJ required control of the marketing materials because their name and branding would be associated with the program. Internal communication issues within the organization created major delays with this critical portion of the cooperative development which may cause further financial difficulties within the next year. LSM/NJ has taken responsibility for the delays and agreed to lend the cooperative enough funds to complete the activities necessary such as purchasing seed and farming tools so the farm would be planted on time even if the sales of CSA shares were late.

Increase trainee knowledge of sub-acre agriculture techniques and small business development.

Four (4) refugees, three (3) from Sudan and one (1) from Liberia have agreed to participate as worker-owners of the company. The candidates were screened by LSM/NJ and all of the refugees have been farmers in their own countries prior to resettling in the United States. During the first interview with the refugees, they readily admitted to having no knowledge of this type of intensive farming but displayed a willingness to learn.

Activities

Though the completion of the recruitment campaign and screening criteria was successful due to the lateness of the project start-up no formal curriculum for training or training activities has taken place. Training will have to be done the first season in the field as the planting commences.

IX. Conclusions and Recommendations

Prospects of obtaining intermediate and long term outcomes

Despite numerous delays by LSM/NJ the actual planting season will be on time. Once LSM/NJ fully understood the concept of the program, the organization became fully supportive, most likely due to the amount of positive feedback received from their donors. Should the cooperative not meet its initial sustainability goals in its first season, the organization will most likely agree to support the cooperative through a second planting

season. Regardless, even should the organization decide otherwise the cooperative will be in a position to move forward without their participation, making it likely that the intermediate and long-term goals of the program will be attained.

The criteria for the target population of refugees was also changed due to the considerable risk involved as the CSA share sales are still an unknown element. Had the initial timeline been adhered to full-time employment would most likely have been possible in the first year for at least one or two of the trainees. Because of the delays the criteria for the trainees was changed to part-time staff that would not need to rely on the patronage wages for their livelihoods. Despite the prospect of working two jobs, the refugees are willing to take the risk to build a future in farming.

X. Sustainability and Replication

The State of New Jersey is not as active in the development of sustainable, urban and small farming projects or community food security projects as other Mid-Atlantic states. Though Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey is the predominant agricultural leader in the state, their development of any significant programs addressing these issues has been noticeably erratic, preferring instead to focus on larger farmers and agricultural sciences. Though there is concern from non-profit organizations in these areas, particularly in food security, there has been no clear leadership in this sector.

In January of 2008 prior to all of the components of the program being in place, a meeting request came from Catholic Charities, Elijah's Promise (a prominent non-profit soup kitchen and culinary job training program) and Sacred Heart Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Having heard a basic outline of the program in passing from the Program Director representing LSM/NJ the organization the group inquired about replicating the program in the New Brunswick area on a 70 acre farm bequeathed to Sacred Heart Church.

Though the current target population of this project is refugees and legal immigrants, the program was originally designed to serve any hard to employ population making it highly flexible with regard to sustainable employment as well as community food security and sustainable agriculture.

The most recent contact with the group informed me that they were currently working to gain support for the program in their local area with the intention of replicating and expanding the program in their communities. The program will easily tie in with the culinary job training and feeding programs run by

Elijah's Promise as well as the micro-loan program and small-loan credit establishment programs for low-income residents (which is the exact amount of a CSA share price) run by Catholic Charities.

Though there is significant interest from other organizations it must be noted that the cooperative is a business entity the true sustainability of which depends on delivering a product to a consumer base at a competitive price. Should the cooperative be unable to acquire the necessary sales or fail to deliver a quality product the business will not remain viable.

XI. Personal Thoughts

This project touches on many firsts in the State of New Jersey. It will be the first CSA on publically owned land, the first to utilize the SPIN-farming method and the first worker-owned cooperative. As such, there has been no precedent set for the development of such a complicated design.

This project was designed as an asset based community economic development plan. Having no actual funding of its own, equity financing would come from the sale of CSA shares to the community prior to planting. Each of the host organizations, LSM/NJ, Burlington County and me as Cooperative Director would donate in-kind resources and skills to develop the program.

The Program Director who initially participated in the collaborative effort from LSM/NJ understood the concept of the design plan, as did the Program Director from Burlington County who represented the freeholders.

As part of the lease agreement the county would allow the cooperative to use farm buildings for storage, a portion of an empty farmhouse on the property for office space, pay all electric bills, and donate 70,000 gallons of water per day. Above and beyond the lease agreement the county offered to build an easily sanitized post-harvest area for the cooperative to clean and pack vegetables, loaned the cooperative general office staff, and assisted in securing greenhouse space from the Rutgers University EcoComplex.

The Program Director representing LSM/NJ was to find available participants from the refugee community, have the organization assist with the administrative issues such as the company formation, accounting, legal aid and if necessary some short term funding as well as handle the marketing plan, which is the most critical portion of the project, as it provides the equity financing from the community.

Though the freeholder's decision to award the cooperative the lease was slightly delayed due to the holiday season, it was still within reason for the project to move forward in a timely fashion. Unofficial notice of the award

was given to the collaborators on December 19, 2007. On January 10, 2007 the lease award was announced to the community via the local newspaper. The immediate response from the community was positive with several immediate inquires to the county offices as to the availability and purchase of CSA subscriptions.

With the acceptance of the bid package and subsequent notification to LSM/NJ and me, the project began to experience significant delays in development. The delays to the implementation timeline have been caused solely by the LSM/NJ organization.

With no grant funding the most critical portion of this program is the marketing of CSA shares to the community to gain the equity funding necessary to establish and maintain the cooperative. The LSM/NJ Program Director stressed the importance of LSM/NJ handling this portion of the plan due to the LSM/NJ name and branding being used on the marketing materials. With significant resources in marketing at their disposal both I and the freeholder's representative agreed. Unfortunately, the LSM/NJ Program Director did not have the autonomous control originally assumed by the other stakeholders.

After continuous delays in the development of the marketing plan as well as attempts by the upper management of LSM/NJ to change the design of the program, the freeholder's representative forced a confrontation with the organization and it was discovered the upper administration of LSM/NJ, despite having signed the business plan submitted to the county, did not fully comprehend the concepts of the plan, nor their obligations with regard to its development due to internal communication problems between the Program Director and her superiors. As a result the critical aspects of sales and marketing of the CSA shares was severely delayed.

After the organization understood their obligations to the project as explained by the freeholder's representative, LSM/NJ began to move forward with the project, however so much time had been lost to poor communications that the initial workload I expected to carry was doubled, with less than half the amount of time necessary to accomplish the short-term outcomes.

Despite the setbacks with the assistance of the freeholder's representative we have managed to recover enough time necessary to make the program workable. As the amount of CSA shares the program will sell is unknown at this time, I was unable to inform the refugees of an exact dollar amount that they would be earning, yet they have decided to move forward with the program anyway. The prospects of the long-term outcomes of the project being reached are good.

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