

The Common Kitchen Culinary Incubator

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ABSTRACT

The Common Kitchen is a culinary incubator at Southern New Hampshire University's School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Management in Manchester, New Hampshire. The purpose of The Common Kitchen is to help low-income residents of the Manchester area gain improved financial self-sufficiency through the profitable ownership of small food-based businesses. This will be achieved by providing incubator participants access to various resources often difficult or prohibitively expensive to access on their own. This will allow participants to either start their own business, or allow them to grow an already existing business that needs an infusion of resources to move to the next level.

TCK (The Common Kitchen) offers participants' use of a low-cost commercial kitchen provided by the Hospitality School the ability to cut operating costs by ordering raw inputs in bulk through the incubator, and guidance in the licensing and permitting process. Through its networks within the University and throughout the Manchester area, TCK will help clients make the connections necessary to give their businesses the best chance of success. TCK will help them to access valuable training in business through the SNHU School of Business, to get help with marketing and promotion through the SNHU Ad Lab, to help them apply for funding through banks and microfinance institutions and to gain improved knowledge and skills in commercial food production and processing by working with the SNHU School of Hospitality.

With these new tools at their disposal, incubator participants will greatly improve their chances of successfully incubating their small food businesses and will after which be ready to move on to their own or shared facilities elsewhere in the community.

Graduates of the incubator will move towards experiencing a long-term and sustainable increase in their incomes through profitable small business ownership.

The first step in this process is to establish the need for a culinary incubator in the Manchester, New Hampshire area. Are the residents of Manchester ready for this sort of project, and will it help them to gain financial independence? The following sections will establish the existence and degree of need for a culinary incubator within the community.

I. COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Manchester, New Hampshire area is generally considered to have a bright economic outlook. Unfortunately, hidden below the surface is another story. It is a story of a low-income population consisting largely of women, minorities and immigrants unable to find the employment necessary to allow them to keep pace with the area's rapidly escalating cost of living. For many New Hampshire residents small business ownership has been the road to economic freedom and self-sufficiency. These opportunities have largely bypassed many low-income community members, however, because of a lack of financial and other resources to get started in business and the knowledge and skills needed to be successful entrepreneurs.

While there is has been little research done to directly establish the need for entrepreneurship programs, the simple fact is that most of the area institutions addressing the problem, either through microcredit or offering training and resources in incubators, are at or near capacity. To paraphrase Robert Riley, the director of Microcredit New Hampshire:

It's not as if the people in our programs are doing nothing and then decided to apply for micro-business loans when we made them available. These are community members who are actively engaged in a struggle to feed their families. They had valid business ideas and are enterprising enough to make them succeed. When we are able to help them remove some of the financial barriers to realizing their ideas, they jumped at the chance. We have been growing every year, and helping huge numbers of low-income New Hampshire residents become small business owners. The majority of our clients experience dramatic income growth. This for me is the strongest possible evidence of the overwhelming need for small business assistance programs in the state of New Hampshire (2006)."

Manchester is a small but rapidly growing city with a population within the city limits of 217,602 according to the 2000 census. Because it sits in the midst of outlying areas where the average drive time to work is between 26 and 29 minutes, the target community is considered to be within a 50-mile radius of Manchester center. The population within 20 miles of Manchester is 577,414 and 4,140,257 within 50 miles (US Census, 2000). Manchester is mostly white/Caucasian (94.49%), with the non-white population made up mainly of people considering themselves to be African American, Hispanic/Latino, or Asian. The population is divided evenly between male and female, with the majority between 26 and 44 years of age.

For education, 14.34% of residents have less than a high school diploma and less than 8% hold a graduate degree.

In 2000, 10.73% of households survived on a household income of less than \$15,000 per year and 21% of households survived on less than \$25,000. At a 50-mile radius, 13% lived on less than \$15,000 and almost 23% on less than \$25,000. 44% of households earn between \$35,000 and \$99,000. Though incomes have increased in the years since the 2000 census, they have been outpaced by the cost of living. This is especially relevant with the high fuel prices combined with cold winters and long drive times to work.

Of those living below the federal poverty level, most are female householders with children. This group hovers just below 3% of the total population with 1,464 within city limits and 28,226 within 50 miles.

Sales personnel, office staff and service industry workers make up the largest share of the workforce, making up over 40% combined.

Manchester is quickly becoming a more racially diverse area. It has by far the highest number of immigrants coming into the state. In 2005, 2,564 of the 3,565 immigrants to New Hampshire since 1998 live in Manchester. The percentage of whites dropped from 97% in 1990 to 92% in 2000. There has been an across the

board increase of Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, Asians and other groups from 3,017 to 8,828 over the same time period, and foreign born residents have increased from 6.8% to 9.4% (Heritage United Way, 2006).

Most of the economic indicators for Manchester look very positive on the surface, but a deeper investigation reveals some very serious issues. The most glaring of these is the unusually high cost of living in the area.

Housing is getting more difficult to afford, historically this is especially true for immigrants and non-whites, women and single parent households. There are now more single parent and non-family households in Manchester than married couple households (25,404 vs. 18,843) (Heritage United Way, 2006).

In Manchester, the income needed to afford the average purchase price of a home increased 103% between 1990 and 2005, from \$37,900 to \$76,800. Almost all the increase was concentrated in the last five years. The income level needed to buy a home was under \$40,000 until 2000, but it began to increase rapidly after 1999. By 2005 it reached nearly \$80,000, which far outstripped the median family capacity to purchase a home (Heritage United Way, Community Indicators Project 2006).

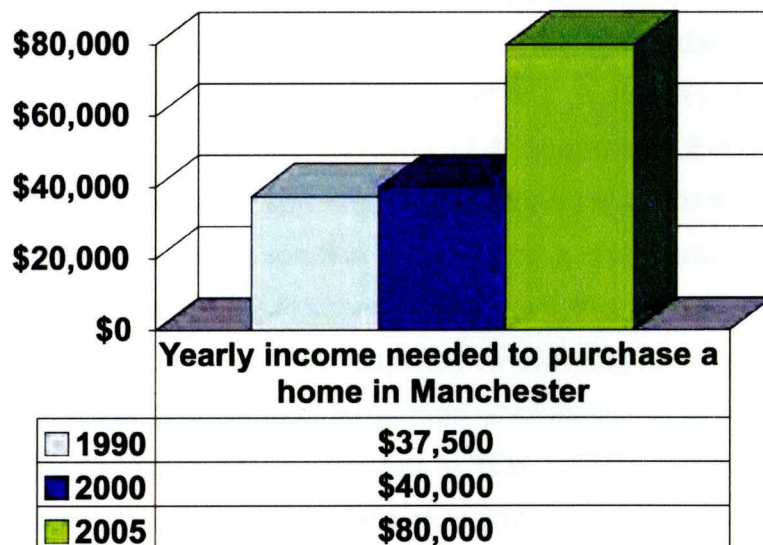
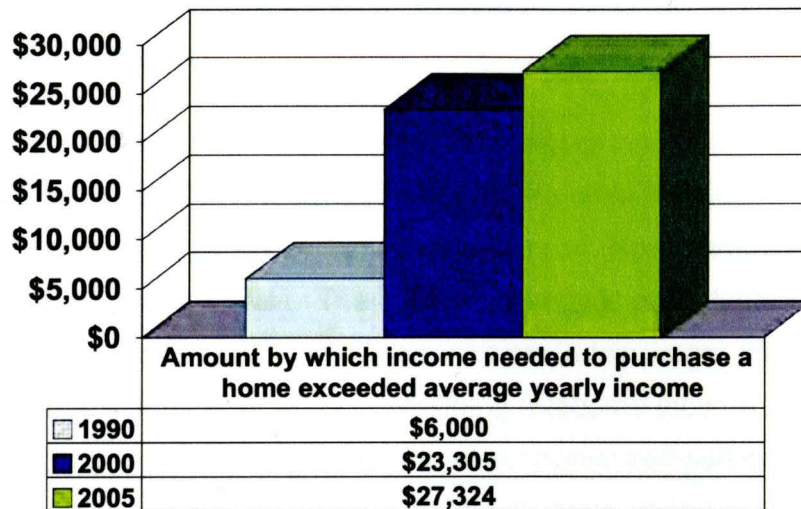
According to the United Way Community Indicators project:

“In 2000 the Manchester median household income was \$40,774 (lower than NH at \$48,904). By 2000 the median household income in Manchester was already \$6,000 short to buy a home -- a disparity that may be accommodated with a higher share of income to housing. By 2003 the NH MHI increased, so we can estimate Manchester at \$45,995, so median income households would be \$23,305 short too; and by similar estimation \$27,324 short to buy in 2005. This easily places a significant number of Manchester households unable to afford to buy at current prices.”

“This is a litmus test of affordability. Manchester median income households need 50% more income to afford to buy in this market. The notion that 75% of homeowners live in affordable housing relative to income (comparable to the U.S. average) is untenable.”
(Heritage United Way, Community Indicators Project 2006)

As the data suggests, small business ownership historically has had a very positive effect on income levels. In light of these indicators, it is fair to assert that providing a pathway to entrepreneurial opportunities and business ownership is an effective intervention in the low-income and immigrant community and would help facilitate positive economic change for participating Manchester residents.

The following tables show not only the dramatic increase from 1990 to 2005 in the yearly income needed to purchase a home, but also the rapidly widening gap between average annual incomes of Manchester residents in the same period, and the income needed to purchase a home in Manchester.



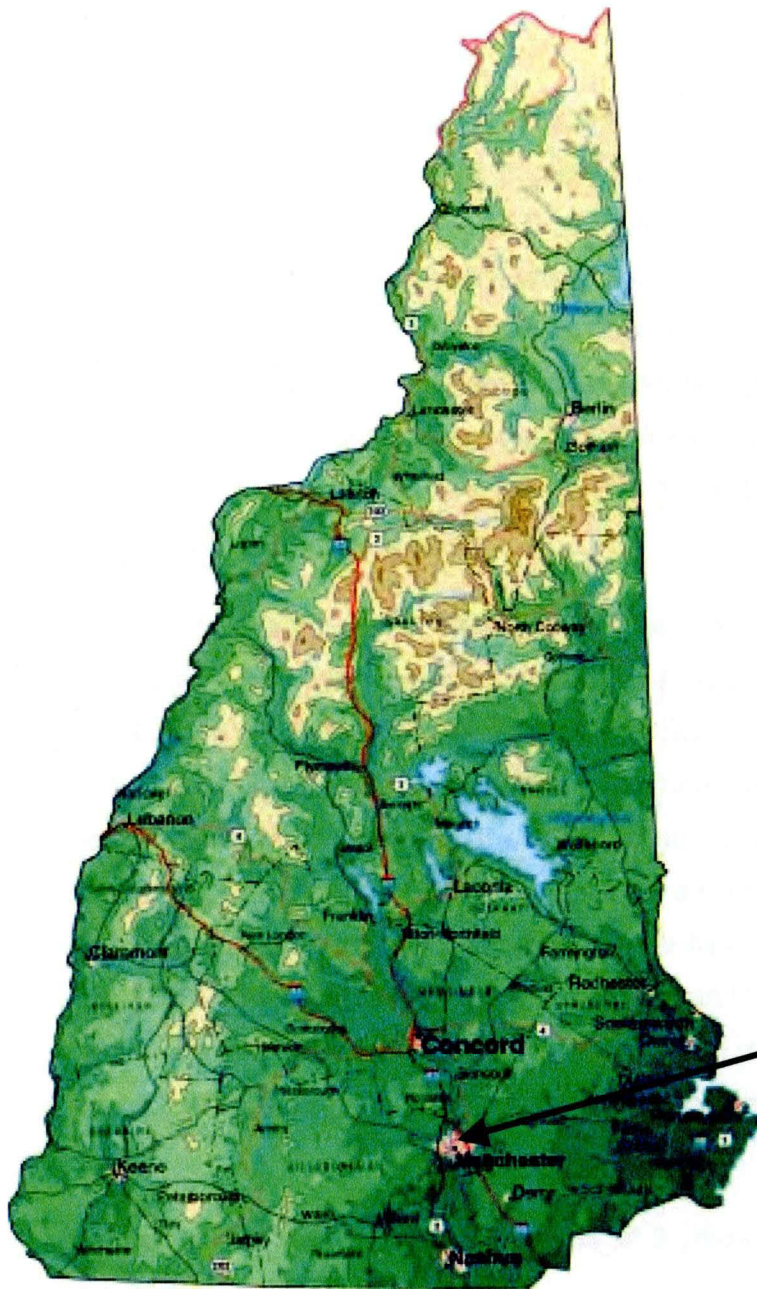
II. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

This section will focus on determining the existence, nature and degree of the problem. What is the problem exactly? How do we know it exists, and how severe a problem is it? Does it warrant the proposed project?

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem TCK intends to focus on with the culinary incubator is the lack of access to opportunities for profitable business ownership in the retail and wholesale food production markets in the Manchester, New Hampshire area. This is primarily a poverty issue. The cycle of poverty is perpetuated for lower income community members by working for others in low wage, often dead end jobs. These jobs almost always fail in providing adequate income for supporting a family and gaining any significant degree of economic self-sufficiency. Even though New Hampshire is a very business friendly state, many of those looking to get a small business off the ground lack the mechanisms to “incubate” their business ideas or small home-based food businesses in affordable environments. Also missing is essential support and expertise in the areas of business management, marketing and product development. Even for a fledgling food-based businessperson or someone with an idea for a saleable food product that does have some level of expertise in these areas, it is usually prohibitively expensive to outfit a commercial kitchen on their own that will meet state and local health and safety codes. They may also be ordering raw production inputs in quantities too small to order from large food wholesalers at discount prices. With these obstacles removed, participants in TCK culinary incubator will be able to get an essential leg up to the first rung of profitable business ownership and economic self-sufficiency.

But who and where exactly are these proposed participants, and what is the makeup of Manchester where they live?



**Target
Community**

2. TARGET COMMUNITY PROFILE

Manchester is the largest city in New Hampshire and was the first to reach a population of 100,000. It sits in the Eastern part of the state, 45 minutes from the seacoast and an hour from the metro Boston area. The 2004 census estimated the population of Manchester at 109,310 residents. With the state's highest population density, the outlying areas have become increasingly populated as well, driving the population of the greater Manchester area much higher. The Claritas census demographic overview for 2005 estimated the population within a ten-mile radius of Manchester center to be 229,173 within 20 miles it grew to 610,685 and within 50 miles, 4,240,364.

According to the 2000 census, Manchester is 94.49% white, with the remaining 5% fairly uniformly divided between African American, Asian, and Latino/Hispanic with other races making up a very small percentage. Following recent population trends, however, it is safe to assume that the minority population has grown significantly between the taking of the 2000 census and the present day. Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino population grew 114% to 6,827, the Black population was up 93% to 2,999 and others grew 444% from 1,002 in 1990 to 5,451 in 2000. This includes a large influx of African immigrants. Manchester has the largest immigrant population in the state with roughly 2/3 of the state's immigrants settling here. (Heritage United Way, Community Indicators Project, 2006)

The median age of Manchester residents is 34.9 years.

The annual per capita income in 1999 was \$21,244 and the median household income was \$40,744. Although this has increased in the last 6 years, as is shown in the community needs assessment, it has been dramatically outpaced by the cost of living in Manchester.

One of the most significant changes Manchester has experienced in recent years is that it has become virtually a bedroom community to Boston. Many of those

who work in the metro Boston area, choose to make their homes in Manchester and surrounding towns. This has no doubt been a major driving force in the rapid increase in housing costs.

The target community for the incubator is the growing number of residents that are finding it more and more difficult to make ends meet through their daily work, including many minorities and immigrants. Because these populations are on the rise, more and more people in the area are in need of a solution to their financial problems.

The data clearly shows that profitable business ownership is an effective way to increase income and accumulate assets, leading to sustained personal economic growth and long-term financial self-sufficiency.

Following are the basic goals to be achieved with successful implementation of this project.

3. PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The long-term goal for project participants is poverty alleviation and economic self-sufficiency. The Common Kitchen culinary incubator will strive to meet this goal through the fostering of profitable business ownership in the area of retail food production. This long-term outcome will be met with the participant's successful use of the incubator and its resources to help nurture and grow their small businesses and small business ideas into thriving enterprises, which can then move on to commercial kitchens of their own.

Several short-term outcomes are necessary for this successful incubation to occur. Participants will gain more advanced knowledge and skills in the areas of business operation/management and food production, as well as access to an affordable commercial kitchen space in which to develop and produce their product. They will also have the ability to cut production costs by ordering raw inputs at discounted bulk prices using the buying power of the SNHU School of Hospitality. By taking advantage of a need based sliding fee scale they will benefit from the links and connections provided by The Common Kitchen to other areas of support. These links include: the SNHU Ad Lab to help with marketing and promotion, the Business School to assist with business plans and strategies, as well as many other on- and off-campus resources. TCK will work towards the incubator itself becoming sustainable and economically self-sufficient.

In order for participants to take advantage of these resources, the aim in the coming 6 months is to have 6-10 participants complete training in business skills, food production and food safety. TCK aims also to introduce as many participants to the commercial kitchen provided by the Hospitality School, and help them to gain access to bulk food products purchasing through the incubator. TCK will create an ad-hoc committee within the program to manage the operation of the incubator and work towards making it self-sustaining and a permanent part of the SNHU School of Hospitality.

The activities necessary to make all these outputs and outcomes possible are as follows: In order to have participants that are trained in business, TCK will develop a training curriculum, hold trainings in basic business skills, and create and foster links with the SNHU Business School and other local business experts. TCK will also assist participants with promotion and marketing and create networks with the SNHU Ad Lab and other marketing resources.

To give participants the best possible training in food production, TCK will develop a concrete set of training goals, create a training manual and hold trainings and demonstrations in food production and safety. TCK will hold post-tests as a way to accurately assess the levels of knowledge participants have achieved.

To assure participant's ongoing and unrestricted access to the incubator kitchen, TCK will create an operations manual for the facility. TCK will have a work schedule allotting kitchen time to participants, an instruction manual for the equipment, a book of rules and bylaws, and detailed contact instructions in case of problems. TCK will hold trainings and post-tests in kitchen use, and will offer technical assistance in obtaining the required permits, licenses and insurance, as well as all aspects of kitchen operations.

TCK is currently reaching out to the community with a number of different approaches, in the interest of recruiting qualified applicants for the incubator. So far these approaches include surveys and questionnaires administered through the Stonyfield Farm Entrepreneurship Institute, posters and flyers put up in lower-income neighborhoods, a web page linked to the SNHU website and a mailing sent out to community members who currently hold an "at home" food production or catering license.

A primary goal of the incubator is to create more cost effective business start-up for entrepreneurs. To help participants take advantage of low cost bulk purchasing, TCK will maintain already existing relationships with wholesale food suppliers through the Hospitality School. It will develop a fee schedule for

incubator participants and determine eligibility requirements for reduced fees based on a participant's needs. TCK will collect fees from participants according to its determinations.

For The Common Kitchen to remain economically viable and self-sustaining, TCK will find ad-hoc committee members. These committee members will develop a comprehensive set of systems, methods, codes and missions in order to initiate and refine the incubator to insure a user friendly and trouble free operation. Committee members will also make periodic presentations to SNHU and other funding sources to petition for additional funds, if and when they become necessary.

The design of the project is critical to the success of the TCK's Project Team in being able to implement the incubator and to achieving its principle goals.

III. PROJECT DESIGN

These are some of the important findings from a study of the literature and scholarly writings on the subject of entrepreneurship and small business ownership as a road to financial independence as well as the use of incubators specifically. Other people's findings are critical to understanding the nature of the problems and solutions by looking at who has come before and what they have learned. The Project Team will use the work and writings of others to establish the need for the incubator and establish the most effective design for the project.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The state of New Hampshire is widely considered to be one of the more business friendly states in the nation. In 2003, the *Small Business Survival Committee* rated New Hampshire America's 4th friendliest state for small business and entrepreneurship. New Hampshire possesses one of the fastest growing economies in New England, and has the country's 2nd lowest tax burden as a percentage of income (Tax Foundation, 2003). Yet in spite of this friendly economic climate, 11% of New Hampshire residents still live below the poverty (US Census, 2000).

Manchester well reflects the business climate of New Hampshire as a whole, being ranked as the "#10 best small metro area for doing business in the country (Inc. Magazine, 2004), and the "#3 best economy" (World Economic Development Alliance, 2003)

Most of the relevant data suggests that in the country today and in New Hampshire in particular, entrepreneurship and small business ownership is one of the best routes out of poverty and to increased individual economic growth.

Here are some of the statistics related to microenterprise and entrepreneurship in New Hampshire:

- Microenterprise employment represents 18.5% of all private (non-farm) employment in the state. New Hampshire ranks the 9th highest microenterprise employment in the United States. (US Census, 2000)
- There are a total of 109,180 microenterprises in New Hampshire employing over 144,000 individuals. (US Census, 2000)
- 60% of all new jobs in New Hampshire in 2001 were created by microbusinesses (NH Employment Security)
- 60% of all profits from local businesses are circulated and retained in the community while only 20% from chain stores and 6% from discount stores stay in the community (National Main Street Center)

One of the most convincing demonstrations of the need for programs encouraging and assisting in small business ownership for lower income community members is the overwhelming growth in recent years of microfinance institutions such as Microcredit New Hampshire, targeted at helping fledgling entrepreneurs. Microcredit New Hampshire is one of the leaders in this area and one of our future partners in the incubator. Over the last few years, Microcredit New Hampshire has shown an impressive track record of awarding micro-loans and successfully supporting the growth of small business and microenterprise throughout the state. They are a wellspring of information that strongly supports the value of entrepreneurship and small business ownership in New Hampshire.

Between 2000 and 2003, Microcredit New Hampshire:

- Provided services to micro-entrepreneurs, with 890 participating as members in one of 109 Business Groups.
- Supported the creation/retention of 1500 jobs.
- Served participants from 250 communities.

- Loaned \$280,000 to micro-entrepreneurs.

This data seems to support the assertion that entrepreneurship is a very strong solution to the Manchester area workforce that still struggles under the weight of poverty and low wage employment.

In the same period, entrepreneurs accessing Microcredit New Hampshire services experienced:

- 22% average increase in family income (or \$5,500)
- 72% average increase in business gross sales (or \$9,750)
- 19% average increase in owner's draw (or \$900)

On incubators

One of the most effective ways for low- to middle-income aspiring entrepreneurs to break into the world of profitable small business ownership is through an incubator. The Amoskeag Business Incubator, which was created in partnership with Southern New Hampshire University, is a great example of the power of a successful incubator. They have helped numerous businesses start up and grow, and are now operating at capacity.

Business incubators like ABI have a remarkable success rate. While most new businesses are reported to fail within their first few years, 80% of new start-ups that are part of a formalized incubator program are successful in the long run.

(Jonathan Linowes, member of the ABI Advisory Board)

In 1980 there were 12 incubators operating in the United States, today there are over 2000.

“According to much of the information gathered, running a successful incubator requires providing a host of support systems for the beginning entrepreneur. There is little likelihood of success without

an on-site manager who can provide structure and guidance.”

(Chappell, D., & Sherman, H., 1998).

Much of the information to determine the extent of the need and design for The Common Kitchen was taken from site visits to Nuestra Kitchen in Boston and key informant interviews with its director. Although different in many ways from The Common Kitchen (inner city location, larger size and no university affiliation among others) there was certainly much to learn. Nuestra Kitchen engages in a policy of very little handholding, advocating a “sink or swim” attitude that quickly separates those with strong business models and the stamina to make them succeed from those who don’t. Nuestra Kitchen also works hard to connect its participants with funding sources to improve their chances of success.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are more likely to succeed when they operate in supportive environments. In their study of environments most conducive to entrepreneurial development, Gnyawali and Fogel (1994) identified several key dimensions to entrepreneurial development: minimal government regulations and taxes; institutions that provide loans, technical assistance, and information to new businesses; support from local community and business agencies; business skill training programs; and service organizations such as business incubators.

Their study did not, however, examine variables by gender nor distinguish between urban and rural areas. (Sullivan, P., 1997)

On minority, immigrant and women owned businesses

“Women, minorities, and immigrants have all used self-employment as a vehicle for accessing the American dream and alleviating poverty. Minority- and women-owned businesses are an important part of the U.S. economy, outpacing the growth of other businesses.”
(U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2006)

“Between 1997 and 2002, the number of U.S. firms owned by minorities grew at three times the rate that of firms in general -- a fact that reflects the reality that ethnic communities in the United States are expanding rapidly. Indeed, more than 85 percent of the estimated population growth between now and 2050 will come from minority groups.” (U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2006)

A close look at the distribution of business ownership by race, gender and ethnicity reveals significant imbalances. Women, for example, are under-represented as majority owners of firms, and the under-representation increases as one goes up the ladder. Much the same can be said of Hispanics, who account for 13.5% of the population, but just 7% of firms and less than 1% of revenues. African-Americans make up 12.4% of the population, but only 5% of firms, and less than 1% of revenues. By contrast, for Asian Americans, the percentages of firm employees and receipts are in approximate parity to the group's percentage of the population as a whole, and they own a share of firm numbers higher than their share of population.

These imbalances raise questions about access and potential stumbling blocks to individuals in different demographic groups. The fact that many of these individuals are also in low- and moderate-income communities intensifies the urgency of such questions. To limit their individual entrepreneurial opportunities is to limit the chances for their communities to achieve prosperity (Barth, J.R., Yago, G., Zeidman, B., 2006).

Who will participate in the incubator project and what form will their participation take?

2. THE NATURE AND ROLES OF PARTICIPANTS

The incubator participants will be comprised of four basic categories. The Common Kitchen will provide the infrastructure and the tools necessary to get participants started and keep them on the right track, but their businesses and their roads to success will be entirely of their own design.

The first consists of low- to moderate-income residents of the Manchester, New Hampshire area who have a promising idea or vision for a food-based business but lack access to the resources needed to get it off the ground. These participants will benefit greatly from the incubator's ability to help them network with business professionals and food service consultants as well as promotion, advertising and marketing specialists. They will also be able to develop their products affordably in a fully licensed and well-equipped commercial kitchen.

The second group consists of those in roughly the same economic class who have an already existing home based business but have run out of room to grow, and cannot afford to rent and outfit a commercial kitchen for their own use. For them, access to a shared commercial kitchen ready for medium scale production will provide an affordable intermediate step between home kitchen production and their own full-scale commercial kitchen. They will also benefit from the ability to order raw production inputs through the SNHU Hospitality School and save money and time by having wholesale orders delivered directly to the incubator.

The third group is made up of those that have a currently operating food business and could afford to rent their own commercial kitchen, but see logistical and economic benefit in the shared and monitored facility at the Common Kitchen as well as the other services TCK provides. Whereas the other two groups will receive substantially discounted rates for kitchen use, this group will pay what the market will bear for their time in the incubator, and by doing so, help to subsidize the tenancy of the other two groups.

The fourth group is students from the Hospitality School. These students are a natural fit for the incubator, as they are on the premises already and many of them are looking for a way into the food production business. They are also often saddled with student loans and other expenses, and need a source of income. Students will also play the role of monitors and assistants to other participants in the incubator. Since many live on or near campus, they are in an ideal position to open and close the kitchen, and to help out as needed in the incubator.

The most important role in the incubator other than that of the Project Management Team will be played by the host organization, the Southern New Hampshire University School of Hospitality. The host organization will serve in large part to facilitate and underwrite the project.

3. HOST ORGANIZATION

The host organization for the Common Kitchen culinary incubator will be the Southern New Hampshire University School of Hospitality and the University at large. TCK has received commitments of funding from the Hospitality School as well as being granted the right to exclusive use of the kitchen housing the incubator. The kitchen used by the incubator is certified for commercial use, and the university pays the utilities. The kitchen comes complete with:

- One six-burner stove, flat top griddle, one convection oven, four single deck Blodgett ovens and a microwave oven.
- Two 20 qt. and two 5 qt. commercial mixers.
- Refrigeration and freezer units.
- Commercial steamer (perfect for canning), large jar fillers.
- Small wares: mixing bowls, measuring cups, stock pots et cetera.
- A three bay sink and food preparation sink.
- Four stainless steel worktables.
- A second room annexed to the primary workroom, for storage and smaller projects.

The Hospitality School will be featured at this year's Presidents Circle Dinner, and The Hospitality School will be highlighting the Common Kitchen at that event. The Hospitality School will have an ad-hoc committee that will oversee the operation of the incubator in the long term, and TCK hopes that it will eventually become a formalized part of the Hospitality School and Southern New Hampshire University. If so, it will become the second business incubator at SNHU, following in the footsteps of the successful Amoskeag Business Incubator. With this in place the Project Management Team is well on the way towards full implementation of the project.

IV. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

This section will discuss how the project will be implemented after the planning phase is completed. It will address the specific benchmarks and timelines and how they will be carried out according to the goals and objectives of the project.

1. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

John Knorr, Matthew Blau and Kria Sakakeeny comprise the Project Management Team. Their individual roles within the project are discussed further in the next section, Staffing Pattern. From early May to early June, 2006 John and Kria created a questionnaire for qualifying applicants and an application to be a participant in The Common Kitchen culinary incubator. John distributed these at the Stonyfield Institute Small Business Symposium at SNHU. The inputs required were the time of John and Kria, and the printing of the documents

In mid May John and Kria devised and wrote a set of kitchen rules and bylaws for use in the incubator. These tasks were completed by the end of June. The inputs required were the time of John and Kria and the printing of the documents. In the same time period, John began to create networks and business relationships with the staff and personnel at the SNHU Ad Lab and the SNHU Business School, requiring inputs of John's time, phone calls and letters.

In the first two weeks of June, TCK began to discuss and develop specific goals for the business training TCK wanted to offer its participants. TCK also determined and set a sliding fee schedule for participants according to their financial needs. John requested and received some additional funding from the School of Hospitality, in the form of student scholarships to be incubator assistants and a small discretionary fund to be used to purchase storage lockers, et cetera. John was also able to arrange with some of the bulk food purveyors used by the Hospitality School to extend wholesale discounts to incubator

participants. The resources required for this phase were the time of the stakeholders and John's industry contacts.

In the beginning of July, TCK began to advertise for incubator participants. TCK did this by selectively contacting respondents to the questionnaire distributed at the Stonyfield Institute in June. Since then TCK has produced and hung posters in lower-income neighborhoods advertising the incubator and sent letters to community members who hold the "home kitchen" class food production and catering license. TCK expects advertising for new participants to be an ongoing process. The inputs for this have so far been the time and energy of the Project Managers, as well as printing and postage.

In the second week of August, TCK began to create a training manual for food production in the incubator kitchen, and to develop a set of systems and methods for the operation of the incubator. TCK also recruited the first two participants into the incubator who were expected to begin production in late September. The inputs for these activities were examples from other incubators of their operating systems and training manuals, and the completed applications of the two chosen participants.

In September, TCK developed the curriculum for trainings in business skills and began to make requirements for eligibility to discounted incubator fees. Also in September, the Project Management Team created a schedule for kitchen use and began to hold demonstrations and trainings for the first participants in the incubator. When the first participants began the process, TCK was there to help them acquire the necessary licenses and permits, gave out checklists to make sure they were properly versed in kitchen operations and safety, and began to collect participant fees.

In late September, the first participants completed trainings in business, and TCK administered posttests to confirm their improved knowledge and skills in business. TCK also began to assemble a management committee from within the Hospitality School, for daily operation of the incubator.

On the 26th of October, The Common Kitchen was featured at the President's Circle Dinner at Southern New Hampshire University's School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Management.

Activities														Persons involved	Resources / inputs	Budget (cash)	Budget(in kind)			
	May wks.1-2	May wks. 3-4	June wks. 1-2	June wks. 3-4	July wks. 1-2	July wks. 3-4	Aug. wks. 1-2	Aug. wks. 3-4	sept. wks. 1-2	sept. wks.3-4	Oct. wks.1-2	Oct. wks. 3-4	Nov. Wks. 1-2	Nov. wks. 3-4	Dec. wks. 1-2	Dec. wks. 3-4		The time of stakeholders was given a value of between \$25 and \$40 per hour.		
Create questionnaire for qualifying applicants and application																	John Knorr and Kria Sakakeeny	time of stakeholders and printing	\$ -	\$ 250.00
Develop and write kitchen rules & bylaws																	John Knorr and Kria Sakakeeny	time of stakeholders and printing	\$ -	\$ 400.00
Create networks with business school, Ad Lab and other resources																	John Knorr	time of John, phonecalls, letters etc.	\$ 20.00	\$ 200.00
Develop specific goals for business training																	John, Kria and Matthew Blau	time of stakeholders	\$ -	\$ 300.00
Determine fee schedule for participants																	John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders	\$ -	\$ 150.00
Request supplemental funding from SNHU & others																	John Knorr	time of John, phonecalls, letters etc.	\$ -	\$ 200.00
Arrange cheap bulk food sources																	John Knorr	hospitality school contacts	\$ -	\$ 80.00
Advertise for qualified participants																	John, Kria and Matthew	questionnaires, time of stakeholders, promotional mterial design and printing	\$ 220.00	\$ 450.00
Create training manual for food production																	John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders, sample training manuals and printing	\$ -	\$ 400.00
Develop systems and methods																	John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders, examples of other incubator systems	\$ -	\$ 600.00
Recruit applicants																	John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders and completed applications	\$ -	\$ 450.00

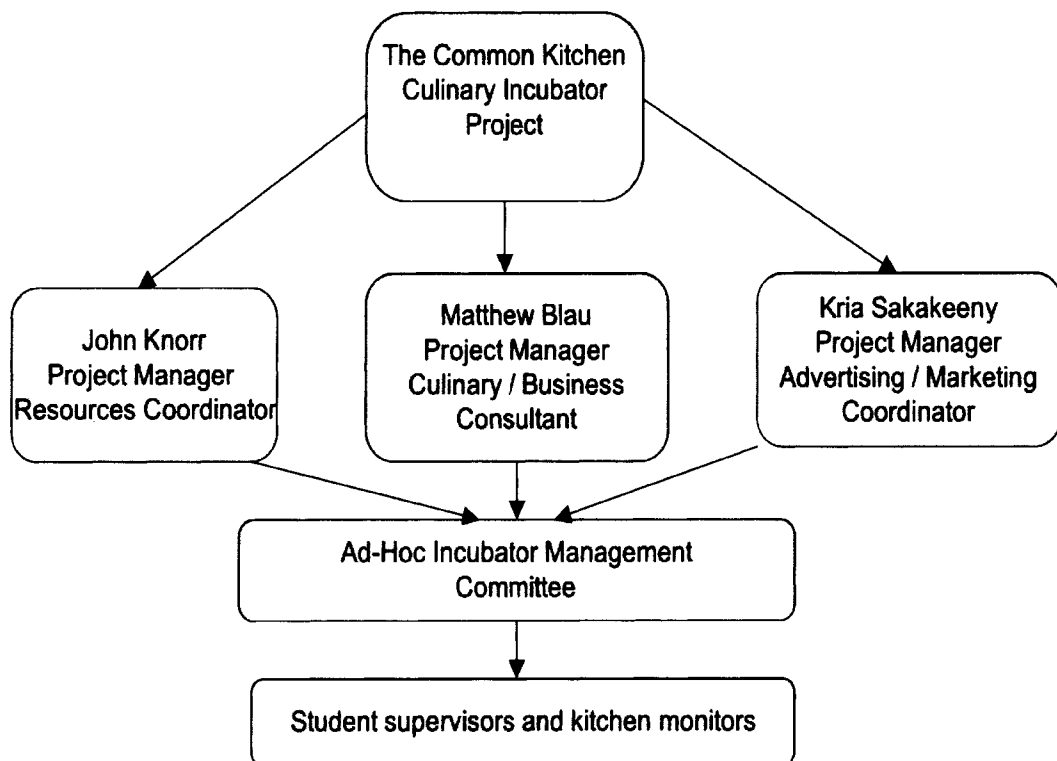
Activities														Persons involved	Resources / inputs	Budget (cash)	Budget(in kind)		
	May wks.1-2	May wks. 3-4	June wks.1-2	June wks. 3-4	July wks. 1-2	July wks. 3-4	Aug. wks. 1-2	Aug. wks. 3-4	sept. wks. 1-2	sept. wks.3-4	Oct. wks.1-2	Oct. wks. 3-4	Nov. Wks. 1-2	Nov. wks. 3-4	Dec. wks.1-2	Dec. wks. 3-4		The time of stakeholders was given a value of between \$25 and \$40 per hour.	
Prepare kitchen for incubator																John, Kria and Matthew	Time of stakeholders and new shelving and segregated lockers etc.	\$ 350.00	\$ 400.00
Develop curriculum for business trainings																John, Kria and Matthew and business school staff	time of stakeholders	\$ -	\$ 550.00
Determine eligibility requirements for discounted fees																John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders and templates from other incubators	\$ -	\$ 200.00
Hold trainings and demonstrations in food production																John and Matthew	time of john and matthew and TCK manual	\$ -	\$ 550.00
Create kitchen use schedule																John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders and templates from other incubators	\$ -	\$ 200.00
Collect participant fees																John Knorr	time of stakeholders and fee schedule	\$ -	\$ 300.00
Provide help in acquiring needed licenses and permits																John Knorr and Kria Sakakeeny	time of stakeholders, related information and funding in some cases	\$ -	\$ 250.00
Give post tests in food production & safety																John Knorr	time of stakeholders and testing materials	\$ -	\$ 340.00
Give post test in kitchen operations & safety																John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders and testing materials	\$ -	\$ 340.00
Hold trainings and posttests in business skills & marketing																John, Kria and Matthew, business school and ad lab staff	time of stakeholders and testing materials	\$ -	\$ 400.00
Find ad-hoc committee members																John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders & willingness of new members	\$ -	\$ 275.00
Feature TCK at 2006 presidents circle dinner.																John, Kria and Matthew	time of stakeholders, printing and design work	\$ -	\$ 250.00
																	Total Budget	\$ 590.00	\$ 7,535.00

2. STAFFING PATTERN

A staff consisting mainly of the three Project Managers will do the activities and perform the implementation of the project. Their roles in the incubator project are described as follows.

John Knorr, Matthew Blau and Kria Sakakeeny work together to manage the Common Kitchen Culinary incubator project. John who is currently the assistant dean at the School of Hospitality provides the connection to the facility at the Hospitality School and the resources connected to it, including the food wholesalers that supply incubator participants with bulk inputs. The incubator is John's brainchild, and he is responsible for the overall concept of the project and giving the incubator a home at Southern New Hampshire University. With many years experience in the creation and operation of food-based businesses, Matthew Blau will provide business leadership and culinary expertise in the development of the incubator and will help participants achieve success in the incubation their food businesses. Kria Sakakeeny, a journalist and anchorwoman at WMUR-TV, an ABC affiliate network in Manchester, will provide expertise in marketing and advertising, as well as working to identify new tenants for the incubator. Kria, John and Matthew will all have ongoing roles in the management and operation of the incubator. TCK will work to assemble an ad-hoc committee comprised of students and staff of the Hospitality School and others to look after and manage the incubator on an ongoing basis. TCK has received a small scholarship to pay culinary students to be kitchen monitors and supervisors to see that participants use the kitchen for the intended purposes, keep it clean, and always have access to adequate support for the growth of their businesses.

Staffing Pattern



3. BUDGET

In order to implement the project, a certain budget will be necessary. Some of the budget will be needed at startup and some in daily operation. Most of the inputs at startup are in-kind donations of time and resources from the Project Managers and those closely affiliated with the Managers and the Hospitality School. The project will require the creation and printing of various documents and resources both for promotion of the incubator and for use in its operation. We will require a small amount of money to complete the equipping of the kitchen, but most of the startup budget will be the time of the stakeholders.

The Common Kitchen

Startup Budget

For the startup of the project, a budget of \$9,125 will be required. This budget will cover all expenses incurred in the startup process. The largest expenditure in the budget (\$2,480) will go towards the development and creation of the curriculums of the various trainings and the implementation of those trainings. \$1800 will be allocated to the development and creation of the assorted questionnaires, manuals and other related printed materials for participants. Various other costs will be incurred for advertising, fundraising, printing and other areas of project development.

Start-up costs			
		Cash	In-kind
Create questionnaires, manuals, schedules, fee schedules and applications			\$ 1,800.00
Create networks with outside resources and suppliers		\$ 20.00	\$ 480.00
Develop training goals & curriculums, give trainings, demonstrations, tests and posttests			\$ 2,480.00
Advertising		\$ 220.00	\$ 700.00
recruiting (applicants)			\$ 450.00
Fundraising and marketing			\$ 400.00
Incubator development			\$ 600.00
Kitchen preparation		\$ 350.00	\$ 400.00
Process applications, determine eligibility, assist with licensing and fee collection			\$ 950.00
Assembling operations committee			\$ 275.00
Total start-up cost		\$ 590.00	\$ 8,535.00

The Common Kitchen

Monthly Operating Budget

To maintain operations, the incubator will require a monthly operating budget of \$1850, although very few of the expenses will actually be cash expenses on account of the fact that TCK is receiving so much of what it is offering in the form of donations from the Hospitality School. These expenses have still been accounted for in the operating budget, but they are all but \$150 listed as in-kind expenses. Any work that is done by project management staff is donated as well.

Expenses		Cash	In-kind	
Kitchen rental cost			750	
Utilities			300	
Equipment Maintenance			200	
Cleaning			200	
Advertising		150		
Insurance			250	
Total Expenses		150	1700	
Total		1850		
Revenue				
Participant fees* (see explanation)		5200		
SNHU funding				
Hospitality School Funding			1700	
Outside funding				
Total Revenues		5200	1700	
Net cash Income		5050		
<p>*The participant fees are based on 90% occupancy. 50% of the time occupied by 1 tenant and 50% of the time occupied by 2 tenants. The incubator is open from 6am to 10pm Monday-Friday, and 8am to 4pm Saturday and Sunday and is booked in 5 hour time slots. At 90% occupancy there are 26 slots at \$10 per hour, equalling \$1300 per week or \$5500 per month.</p>				

V. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to achieve success with the incubator project, it will need to be subject to an ongoing monitoring process. The following section will outline the goals and benchmarks for the incubator as well as the systems for monitoring its progress and evaluating its outcomes.

1. LOGIC MODEL

The long-term goal for project participants is poverty alleviation and economic self-sufficiency. The Common Kitchen culinary incubator will strive to meet this goal through the fostering of profitable business ownership in the area of retail food production. This long-term outcome will be met with the participant's successful use of the incubator and its resources to help nurture and grow their small businesses and small business ideas into thriving enterprises, which can then move on to commercial kitchens of their own.

Several short-term outcomes are necessary for this successful incubation to occur. Participants will gain more advanced knowledge and skills in the areas of business operation/management and food production, as well as access to an affordable commercial kitchen space in which to develop and produce their product. They will also have the ability to cut production costs by ordering raw inputs at discounted bulk prices using the buying power of the SNHU School of Hospitality, taking advantage of a need based sliding fee scale and benefit by the links and connections provided by The Common Kitchen to other areas of support. These links include, the SNHU Ad Lab to help with marketing and promotion, the Business School to assist with business plans and strategies, as well as many other on and off campus resources. TCK will work towards the incubator itself becoming sustainable and economically self-sufficient.

In order for participants to take advantage of these resources, our aim in the coming 6 months is to have 6-10 participants complete trainings in business skills as well as food production and food safety. TCK also aims to introduce as many

participants to the commercial kitchen provided by the Hospitality School, and help them to gain access to bulk food products purchasing through the incubator. TCK will create an ad-hoc committee within the program to manage the operation of the incubator and work towards making it self-sustaining and a permanent part of the SNHU School of Hospitality.

The activities necessary to make all these outputs and outcomes possible are as follows: In order to have participants that are trained in business, TCK will develop a training curriculum, hold trainings in basic business skills, and create and foster links with the SNHU Business School and other local business experts. TCK will also assist participants with promotion and marketing and create networks with the SNHU Ad Lab and other marketing resources.

To give participants the best possible training in food production, TCK will develop a concrete set of training goals, create a training manual and hold trainings and demonstrations in food production and safety, and will hold post-tests as a way to accurately assess the levels of knowledge participants have achieved.

To assure participant's ongoing and unrestricted access to the incubator kitchen, TCK will create an operations manual for the facility. TCK will have a work schedule allotting kitchen time to participants, an instruction manual for the equipment, a book of rules and bylaws, and detailed contact instructions in case of problems. Trainings and post-tests in kitchen use will be held, and TCK will offer technical assistance in obtaining the required permits, licenses and insurance, as well as all aspects of kitchen operations.

TCK is currently reaching out to the community with a number of different approaches, in the interest of recruiting qualified applicants for the incubator. So far these approaches include surveys and questionnaires administered through the Stonyfield Institute, posters and flyers put up in lower-income neighborhoods, a web page linked to the SNHU website and a mailing sent out to community members who currently hold an "at home" food production or catering license.

The idea of the incubator is to create a more cost effective option for upcoming entrepreneurs. To help participants take advantage of low cost bulk purchasing TCK will maintain already existing relationships with wholesale food suppliers through the Hospitality School. The incubator will develop a fee schedule for incubator participants, and determine eligibility requirements for reduced fees based on a participant's needs as well as collect fees from participants according to its determinations.

For The Common Kitchen to remain economically viable and self-sustaining, it will find ad-hoc committee members. These committee members will develop a comprehensive set of systems, methods, codes and missions in order to initiate and refine the incubator so that it enjoys a user friendly and trouble free operation. They will also make periodic presentations to SNHU and other funding sources to petition for additional funds, if and when they become necessary. Following is a chart illustrating the logic model.

1(a). Logic model chart

<u>Long Term Outcomes</u>				
Profitable Business Ownership				
<u>Intermediate Outcomes</u>				
Successfully “incubated” existing or planned business				
<u>Short term outcomes</u>				
Improved knowledge and skills in business and marketing	Improved knowledge and skills in food production and processing	Improved access to physical production related resources	Improved access to production cost saving mechanisms	Availability of organizational support
<u>Outputs</u>				
#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
6-10 participants trained in business and marketing	6-10 participants trained in food production and processing	6-10 participants with access to commercial food production facilities at SNHU	6-10 participants with access to socialized fee schedule and discounted production inputs via bulk purchasing and other networked services	Creation of ad-hoc committee within hospitality school to run incubator

So that the management team can see the progress of the activities and outcomes outlined in the logic model, there will be a monitoring plan. The purpose of this plan will be to see on a regular basis whether project goals are being met according to schedule.

2. MONITORING PLAN

In order to monitor the implementation of the activities and outcomes at the Common Kitchen, the stakeholders and Project Management Team will have regularly scheduled bi-weekly meetings, discussing the progress that has been made implementing the activities necessary to achieve the desired outcomes. TCK has concrete benchmarks against which to measure the progress every two weeks. TCK will also use other data gathering techniques for this process, including regular scrutiny of attendance sheets, financial statements, and pre and post-tests, as well as regular meetings with trainers and participants and affiliated departments and organizations.

TCK will enter the data gathered into a monthly monitoring report such as the one found following.

3. MONITORING REPORT

Activities	Expected dates		Current status	remarks / explanation	actions taken	acheivement of output
	Start	Finish				
output #1						
output #2						
output #3						
output #4						
output #5						
output #6						

4. EVALUATION PLAN

The success of the project will be evaluated based on whether or not the various benchmark criteria are being met in the anticipated timeframes. In the end, the final indicator of success in the project is whether an acceptable percentage of project participants are able to incubate their small businesses to such a level where they can move out of the incubator and on to their own kitchens with profitable food businesses. Many short-term outcomes are necessary to achieve this long-term outcome. Each of these will be evaluated by assessing particular indicators, using various data gathering techniques depending on the indicator. By evaluating the indicators on an ongoing basis, TCK will be able to determine if our hypotheses in conceiving and implementing the Common Kitchen were/are correct or incorrect. Steps can then be taken with the input of managers and participants to adjust the project in areas that are not working as well as expected. Please see the evaluation plan below for a detailed breakdown of the methodology. Key informant interviews will be a primary method of data gathering, especially if available data is limited.

Hypothesis	variables	indicators	data gathering	time frame
If: A business is successfully incubated Then: Profitable business ownership will occur	IV: Successfully incubated <u>business</u> DV: Profitable business ownership	Number of participants who <u>graduate from the incubator</u> Number of graduates owning profitable businesses	Application forms, graduation certificates, project records <u>focus groups</u> Survey, secondary data (city records)	Every 3 months beginning April 2006 Every 3 months beginning April 2006
If: Participants gain improved knowledge and skills in business Then: Businesses will be successfully incubated	IV: Participants with improved knowledge and <u>skills in business</u> DV: Successfully incubated businesses	Pre and posttest scores in business knowledge and skills, completed business <u>plans, etc.</u> Number of participants who graduate from the incubator	Test results, project records, business plan evaluations etc.. Project records, graduation certificates	Before and after each training Monthly
If: Participants gain improved k&s in food production and processing Then: Businesses will be successfully incubated	IV: Participants with improved K&S in food <u>processing / production</u> DV: Successfully incubated businesses	Pre and posttest scores in food processing / production, skill <u>demonstration etc..</u> Number of participants who graduate from the incubator	Test results, demonstration evaluations Project records, graduation certificates	Before and after each training Monthly
If: Participants gain improved access to physical production related resources Then: Businesses will be successfully incubated	IV: Participants with improved access to physical production <u>related resources</u> DV: Successfully incubated businesses	Number of participants using physical production <u>related resources</u> Number of participants who graduate form the incubator	Project records Project records, graduation certificates	Monthly Monthly
If: Participants have improved access to production cost saving mechanisms Then: Businesses will be successfully incubated	IV: Participants with improved access to production cost saving <u>mechanisms</u> DV: Successfully incubated businesses	Number of participants using cost saving <u>mechanisms</u> Number of participants who graduate form the incubator	Projuct records, invoices from food wholesalers Project records, graduation certificates	Monthly Monthly
If: Incubator has organizational support Then: Businesses will be successfully incubated	IV: Good orgainzational <u>support for incubator</u> DV: Successfully incubated businesses	Good operating systems, quality management and ongoing economic <u>sustainability for incubator</u> Number of participants who graduate from the incubator	Project records, financial statements, stakeholder surveys, focus groups Project records, graduation certificates	Evaluate project records monthly and do surveys / focus groups every 6 months Monthly

If: Participants are trained in business Then: Participants gain improved knowledge and skills in business	IV: Participants trained in <u>business</u> DV: participants with improved K&S in business	Number of participants completing training in <u>business</u> Pre and posttest scores in business K & S, completed business plans, etc.	Project records Test results, business plan evaluations etc.	Monthly Before and after each training
If: Participants are trained in food production and processing Then: Participants gain improved K & S in food processing and production	IV: Participants trained in food production and <u>processing</u> DV: Participants with improved K & S in food processing and production	Number of participants completing training in food production and processing Pre and posttests in food processing / production, skill demonstration etc..	Project records Test scores, demonstration evaluations etc.	Monthly Before and after each training
If: Participants gain access to the incubator's commercial food production facilities Then: Participants have improved access to physical production related facilities	IV: Participants gaining access to TCK food production facilities DV: Participants with improved access to production related facilities	Number of participants qualifying to access food production facilities Number of participants accessing TCK's physical production related facilities	Project records Project records, kitchen logs etc.	Monthly Monthly
If: Participants gain access to socialized fee schedule and discounted production inputs Then: Participants have improved access to cost saving mechanisms	IV: Participants with access to socialized fee schedule and discounted production inputs DV: Improved access to cost saving mechanisms for participants	Number of participants with access to socialized fee schedule and discounted production inputs Realized cost savings for participants through TCK	Project records Fee schedule records, food supplier's invoices	Monthly Every 3 months
If: An ad-hoc committee is created within SNHU Hospitality school is created to manage the incubator Then: The incubator will have organizational support available	IV: Creation of an ad-hoc management committee DV: Available organizational support for the incubator	Enthusiasm, diversity and effectiveness of committee Quality and effectiveness of support, continued economic sustainability of incubator	project records, focus groups surveys, focus groups, financial statements and key informant interviews	Every 3 months Every 3 months

5. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

In order to achieve long-term success of the incubator project and help its participants attain financial independence, some measure of sustainability must be achieved. Both the sustainability of the benefits and of the project itself must be achieved for the incubator to flourish and its participants to continue to reap its benefits. The following addresses those issues.

FIELD OBSERVATION

As members of the incubator's management committee are being selected, careful attention will be paid to the diversity of their areas of expertise. In order for The Common Kitchen to be a long-term success, many varied skill sets and viewpoints will be essential. The feedback of the stakeholders as well as the participants will be periodically sought out with focus groups and key informant interviews, in the interest of continually modifying and improving the services and sustainability elements of the incubator.

SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENTS

Sustainability of the Project

The Common Kitchen culinary incubator has among its goals, to become fully integrated into Southern New Hampshire University. TCK will have a strong record of helping to improve the economic wellbeing of the Manchester area's low-income workforce by offering a pathway to small business ownership. Student of the SNHU Culinary Arts Program will also use the incubator as a launching pad for their own food based businesses. This will put SNHU at the center of New Hampshire's effort to encourage small business ownership, with the Amoskeag Business Incubator and now The Common Kitchen. With integration into the University, some amount of funding will be secured for the incubator on an ongoing basis.

The incubator allocates 30% of its available time slots to established, profitable businesses that simply rent the commercial kitchen with no incubation services needed. These clients pay fair market rates for the kitchen rental, and in so doing help to subsidize lower income members as well as sustain the incubator over the long term.

Every measure will be taken to keep the incubator operating at capacity, both to maximize efficiency and to ensure sufficient income for ongoing sustainability.

In addition to these elements, TCK will regularly apply for local, state and federal grants to continue to fund small business growth and entrepreneurship in New Hampshire.

Sustainability of the Benefits

The benefit of the project will be sustained through a lasting connection between the incubator and its participants. Although success of the project depends on participants being encouraged to graduate from and move out of the incubator, the ultimate long term goal of the project is to help in facilitating meaningful and lasting positive change in the economic wellbeing of the participants. Towards this end, many of the resources and support systems of The Common Kitchen will remain available to incubator graduates as they pursue their careers as small business owners in the community. As they encounter the challenges and difficulties inherent in small business ownership, they can call on the incubator staff and networks and TCK will always do what it can to be of assistance in trying to help resolve whatever problems arise. The Project Management Team will be a sounding board for new ideas and future projects. Should they require financing for expansion or new projects, they will have the benefit of having worked with us, completing the trainings in business and marketing and thus in most cases TCK can feel comfortable in recommending them to financing institutions it has associations with in the community.

As the project progressed through its first year of operation, some of the strategies were implemented as originally planned and some were not. The Project Team assessed the situation along the way and made adjustments and revisions as they were necessary. There were many successes and failures. Many adjustments will be made in the future operations based on what was learned from this first period.

VI. RESULTS, FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following is a comparison of what was originally planned and what actually occurred during implementation.

1. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION RESULTS

Trainings

TCK had originally planned to make several trainings, complete with pre-tests and post-tests an integral part of the incubator program. The Project Management Team was concerned with the incubator's ability to meet its financial obligations over the long term, and so the tenant's businesses would have to meet standards as far as their chances for success. Toward this end TCK mandated that people would receive trainings, not only in how to use the kitchen facilities safely and efficiently, but also in business skills along with basic accounting/bookkeeping, in marketing and promotion, and food processing.

TCK quickly abandoned this as a requirement when the reality of the situation was that TCK was having such a hard time getting participants at all, that it wanted to do nothing that might deter potential participants from using the incubator. TCK also found out that these trainings required more time than anyone had available, Project Managers or participants, most of whom are working people trying to make ends meet. It was decided that instead of requiring these trainings for our participants, TCK would simply offer them on a case by case basis, by making participants aware of our network and letting them take advantage of training and coaching by the SNHU Business School or the Ad Lab if they wished and in their own time. At the time of this writing, participants have expressed the desire to avail themselves of these services but so far no one has.

As this is an ongoing project, there is still hope that participants will take advantage of these services and connections, and that TCK will learn from

participants more specifically what their needs are, and be able to better tailor trainings to meet those needs.

Bulk, wholesale ordering of inputs through Hospitality School

Originally, TCK had thought that this would be very appealing to participants and it may yet be, but up to this point, people are more often buying their own inputs. The reality of the situation is that in the age of the big box stores, although ordering through us and having the inputs delivered to the kitchen saves them time in not having to shop, it really doesn't save them much money. They can also buy less at a time and spend less cash. Buying less is especially important for participants who use perishable products, as any spoilage will quickly erode any potential savings from bulk ordering.

Assistance in obtaining licenses and permits

For those of our clients that had not already obtained the required licensing, TCK has been able to successfully assist in fulfilling state and local requirements. There have been a few stumbling blocks in this effort, however, including some miscommunication by the New Hampshire Department of Health about the type of health license required for operation in the incubator kitchen. This has resulted in additional costs for one of our tenants. Additionally, the New Hampshire Department of Health has added an additional requirement for each tenant using potentially hazardous products to create their own individual Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Plan (HACCP plan) contrary to the original requirement that the kitchen need have only one HACCP plan to cover all who worked there.

Sliding scale fee program

TCK determined after a short time that instead of making a sliding scale, it would charge all the participants at the low end of the fee scale. TCK agreed to revisit this after the 1st 6 months. At the moment it seems like TCK could not begin to raise the kitchen use fees, as \$10 per hour is already at the very upper limits of

what its current tenants can afford. The higher fees paid by our higher income tenants were intended to be used to offset the lower fees paid by lower income tenants. TCK has yet to get a tenant that can afford the higher fees.

Creation of an ad-hoc committee to operate the incubator

The original plan was to immediately create an ad-hoc committee to oversee the day-to-day operation of the incubator. TCK does have a student who takes care of the incubator much of the time, but so far it has been impractical and unnecessary to have a committee, as the number of tenants and the general volume of kitchen activity doesn't warrant it. This may be an essential element in the future as the incubator develops.

Many of the results from the first year of operation dictated that deviation from the original plan in various areas was appropriate.

2. INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANT RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the project in its first year, the Project Management Team needed to gain information about the experiences of the participants. How did the experiences of the participants compare to our original plans and expectations?

Because of the limited number of participants, TCK conducted key informant interviews with each participant to evaluate several factors including their progress using the incubator, the effectiveness of their experience in the incubator, and their level satisfaction with the services provided by the incubator. How had their lives changed by using the incubator? Were they able to grow their small food businesses and become more economically self-sufficient? Were they using some or all of the services offered and if not, why not?

The Project Managers also needed to find out what in the incubator was working and what was not working. What could be improved, what needs to be changed, what could be eliminated and what should be added.

The results of the participant interviews and the knowledge gleaned from the first year of operation are below.

Participant Profile: Sweet Comfort Farm

Name: Allyn May-Daly

Sex: Female

Age: 60

Educational Level: Unknown

Business: Sweet Comfort Farm

Location: New Boston, NH

Allyn was TCK's first participant. She found out about The Common Kitchen when she attended the 2006 Stonyfield Farm Entrepreneurship Institute at SNHU. At that conference, John Knorr did a 15-minute presentation about the incubator. She approached John afterward and he had a chance to give her more details about the project.

Allyn owns a small, home-based food business called Sweet Comfort Farm. She makes wedding cakes, artisanal breads, baked goods using traditional recipes from her Polish ancestry and other food products. Her flagship products are a beautifully packaged line of jams and jellies, made using fresh herbs, flowers and other unusual ingredients.

Allyn began her business 3 years ago and her production has doubled each year since then. She sells Sweet Comfort Farm products at the Amherst farmers market, at an assortment of small retail stores throughout New Hampshire,

through wholesale accounts and directly through the Sweet Comfort Farm website. She began production at the incubator in the first weeks of October 2006.

Why the incubator?

Allyn became interested in using the incubator because although she had a home production health license and her home kitchen was inspected and certified, production was taking over her home and in her words she needed “more dedicated space.” She also believed she could increase production at the incubator. She has recently run into some stumbling blocks at the incubator, which will be discussed later.

When interviewed, Allyn said that she believed she would find helpful and planned to take advantage of the following services offered at the incubator, although she has not done so as of yet.

- Bulk/wholesale purchasing of inputs through the incubator
- Business assistance through our networks with the business school at SNHU
- Culinary consultation and assistance in product development
- Advertising consultation, marketing strategies and promotional assistance

She was informed of the availability of these services at her orientation with John Knorr.

Allyn’s original plan was to use the incubator all day (8 hours) every Monday.

At the time of the interview she could not think of any services that would be of use to her business that were not currently offered by the incubator.

The results of Allyn’s first few production days at the incubator were very positive. They included increased production, an easier workday and improved

efficiency. She found the pressure steamer especially helpful in the canning process for her jams and jellies, as when she worked at her home, she had to boil water and make a water bath for her jars. She was able to double her daily production in her first few sessions using the commercial kitchen at the incubator.

Problems and barriers

After a few sessions at the incubator kitchen, the health inspector informed Allyn that while her class D food production license was fine for food production in her home kitchen, if she planned to work in a commercial kitchen she would need a class C food production license. Acquiring this license would cost Allyn and additional \$200. Allyn said in our interview that her Christmas sales this year were less than she had expected or hoped. She indicated that even though she realized that the hourly rate of \$10 was below fair market rent, it was still a stretch for her. With the additional expense of having to upgrade to a class C license she felt like for the time being, production at the incubator was not financially possible for her. The finances proved a formidable barrier to her continuing to work at the incubator. She has been encouraged to take advantage of some of the other services the incubator offers in the interest of increasing her sales and bringing these production costs more in line with her revenues. Allyn has also mentioned that from time to time it is difficult to find this or that in the kitchen, and there was a problem with the grease trap in the sink, causing periodic overflows. This caused some frustration and cut into Allyn's work time.

Net result

Allyn is currently producing out of her home and is planning to revisit production at the incubator in the near future. She finds that with her sales at their current level she cannot justify paying the ten dollars per hour for the kitchen rental, nor the \$200 she would need to pay for a class C health license. She concedes that her business would be able to grow faster if she worked out of the incubator, but is finding it difficult to move past this financial stage.

Participant Profile: The Spinach Pie Lady

Name: Michelle Williams

Sex: Female

Age: 31

Educational Level: Masters Degree in Education

Business: The Spinach Pie Lady

Location: New Ipswich, NH

Michelle Williams was the second tenant in the incubator. She learned about the incubator from Allyn, who she knows personally and sees at the Amherst Farmer's Market where they both sell their products. Michelle moved to the area with her husband 1 year ago from Los Angeles, California. She has four children and is currently nine months pregnant with her fifth. She owns a small food business called "The Spinach Pie Lady" and produces a variety of Greek foods from her family's recipes that have been handed down through generations. These products include: baklava, moussaka, a variety of Greek dishes from old world recipes, and of course spanikopita (spinach pies). She sells her product exclusively at the weekly Amherst Farmer's Market at the present time, although she wishes to expand. She indicates that she has no competition at this time in that venue. Nobody else is making Greek food products anywhere in her area.

Michelle began working at the incubator in late October 2006.

Why the incubator?

Michelle began production out of her home when she moved East from California and then made arrangements to work out of the kitchen at Bursey's Market in Wilton. Bursey's had agreed to take product as payment for rental of the kitchen space. Soon Michelle became very disappointed with the facilities at Bursey's,

which she describes as perpetually dirty and unsanitary. To use her words “the kitchen was always gross.” Michelle’s goal is to create a commercial kitchen in her garage at home, but she cannot afford the construction and equipment at this time. Michelle is having such a hard time making ends meet right now in fact that she is preparing to take a morning job at McDonald’s to keep up with the bills until the summer, when business will pick up for her. Her goal at the incubator and with her business in general is to get her son involved in working with her. If the two of them work together, they can speed up food production, but also in the summer when there are five or more farmer’s markets in a week (compared to just one a week in the winter) they can cover more ground, sometimes doing two or more in a single day. Her eventual goal, as mentioned before, is to convert her garage to a commercial kitchen so that she has no time pressure and she can work as it fits in to her schedule. She hopes the incubator will help her to get there, by increasing the efficiency of her production in the limited time she has between having to care for all her children.

In the interview conducted with Michelle, she indicated that she plans to take advantage of the following services offered at the incubator.

- Business assistance and basic accounting and business planning
- Advertising consultation, market strategies and promotional assistance

She was informed of these services during her orientation, but says that for some reason she did not retain the information.

She has declined to use the incubator for bulk ordering because she says she is so hand to mouth that she is afraid it would cost too much money to place bulk orders even if it would save her money in the long run. She also feels that culinary consultation and product development assistance would not be useful to her, as she feels confident in her products and recipes.

Currently Michelle uses the kitchen in the middle of the week and the middle of the day for between 3 and 6 hours. In the summer she plans to double that to 6 to 12 hours as farmer's market season kicks in.

Of all the services not currently offered by the incubator, Michelle feels she would most benefit from financing assistance. Michelle was told about our connection with Microcredit New Hampshire and she plans to talk to John about possibilities in connecting with them. She would also like help learning how to design and install a commercial kitchen.

The results of Michelle's first few months at the incubator have been largely positive. The Common Kitchen has provided a well-equipped kitchen for her to produce her Greek specialties in. She has been able to access the kitchen according to her demanding schedule and finds there a place that will be especially useful when she is able to ramp up production. It is a financial stretch for her to pay the \$10 per hour rent, but if she is able to increase production this will no longer be a factor.

Problems and barriers

In most ways Michelle has found the incubator experience to be satisfactory but there have been a few problems as well. The majority of complaints Michelle has about the incubator are financial in nature. Although she realizes that \$10 per hour is a fair price, she finds that it stretches her to her limit, and that she is not able to break into the wholesale market because kitchen time is too expensive. She can budget for the kitchen rent as long as she sells her products at retail prices, but finds that it is no longer feasible if she sells at the lower wholesale rates. (This is a large problem, because if she could develop a substantial wholesale trade, there would be the potential for steady earnings and sustained growth. Wholesale is a much better business because your growth is only limited by the amount of food you can produce. If you have to then retail your product, there is a ceiling because there is only one of you and your time is finite).

Michelle told me in our interview that she has often had problems with not being able to find equipment from one session to the next. She said that things that were in the kitchen one week were not there the next. She also says that she has to spend time looking for things like garbage bags and kitchen rags. This is very upsetting to her because she doesn't like to complain, but she feels the minutes wasting and the meter ticking as she looks for these things. She says that she often needs to find someone working in another kitchen to help her track down things that should be in the incubator kitchen. She says she compensates for this by only paying for the time she is actually able to work. John has agreed that this is fair. She has also been affected by the problem with the grease trap in the sink, making it necessary to drain the sink very slowly to avoid overflow and then having to clean up the mess.

She has complained that the kitchen is not as clean as it could be. She claims to have been looking at the same pile of dirt in the corner since her first session in the incubator. She is well within her rights and correct in complaining about these things, and the Project Managers will address them. Nevertheless, it makes her uncomfortable to complain, seeing as using this kitchen is critical to her making a living.

She has also found out recently that, contrary to his original requirement that the kitchen itself have an approved Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Plan (HACCP plan), the health inspector now requires each tenant that is working with potentially hazardous food products have their own HACCP plan. This creates an additional barrier for Michelle as well as other incubator tenants.

There have been some complaints about Michelle from others in the hospitality school about her work attire. She works in sweats and other casual clothes that some feel are inappropriate for work inside a culinary school. It is their feeling that her attire may make a negative impression on people visiting the school as well as students. TCK has addressed this by keeping lab coats in the kitchen at

all times and asking people to please wear them if they don't have chef's attire of their own.

Net results

Michelle seems to be satisfied with the incubator so far and plans to increase her usage as summer approaches. Her ultimate goal is to make a kitchen in her garage eventually, which fits perfectly into the true nature of an incubator. She will have her son working with her this summer, which will be great because the cost of the kitchen is the same with one worker or 2 and she will be able to increase her output. She looks very much forward to working with people from the Ad-Lab to create attractive labels for her product and maybe a marketing plan. With a good summer and a new look to her products, she may be able to save enough to outfit her garage with used equipment and begin production there. TCK considers that a great success.

Participant Profile: Butter's

Name: Keith Dickey

Sex: Male

Age: 44

Educational Level: PhD in Archeology

Business: Butter's

Location: Concord, NH

Keith is a former Wall Street investment banker who was looking for a lifestyle and job change. In July 2006 Keith opened Butter's, a wine and cheese shop in the center of New Hampshire's capital city, Concord. Keith learned about The Common Kitchen through one of his store employees who graduated from SNHU's School of Hospitality. Keith says currently customers view his store as a place to stock up on good wine and cheese for dinner parties over the weekend. But he wants to change that perception by offering French baguettes and prepared food including soup, lasagna, quiches, and baked goods throughout the week.

Keith began using the incubator in early February 2007 and has two employees who work there at least 20 hours a week.

Why the incubator?

Keith's current shop does not have a kitchen and for professional purposes he did not want to apply for a state license that would allow him to produce at home. When looking into kitchen space, he said there were one or two other kitchens he considered (did not say where), but found The Common Kitchen to be the most convenient and well-equipped.

He did, however, say the price of \$10 an hour was affordable enough, but if the incubator were to raise its rates, it would be cost prohibitive and he would produce elsewhere.

Keith says by producing quality breads and food in The Common Kitchen he hopes to increase his store revenue by 15%. If the venture works well, he says the only reason he foresees leaving The Common Kitchen is if he opens a second store with a kitchen facility. As of now he predicts using The Common Kitchen for at least a year.

In his interview Keith indicated one of the incubator's most useful services is:

- Bulk/wholesale purchasing of inputs through the incubator

He does not take advantage of any other services, seeing as he has a well-established business, marketing and advertising plan.

Problems and barriers

While Keith has the most business experience and start-up capital, he has not yet paid The Common Kitchen. His two employees have used the kitchen for at least three weeks at 20 hours a week. That's \$600 of uncollected rent. Keith says he expects a monthly statement. However, The Common Kitchen decided on a pay-by-use plan, where rent is collected after each day of use. This may in fact be a problem The Common Kitchen needs to address. If tenants need to itemize expenses, it is necessary for them to have receipt or record of their bill.

Keith also indicated a lack of refrigerated storage space at The Common Kitchen, and that need should be addressed.

Net Result

Keith fits perfectly into the category of our first target community: existing entrepreneurs looking to expand their current business. He is an experienced businessman, with plenty of start-up capital and a well-defined market. His

consistent use of the kitchen will both spread the word about The Common Kitchen and allow TCK to put money into a scholarship program for entrepreneurs with little to no start-up capital. Also, a consistent tenant like Keith will encourage The Common Kitchen to continue to improve and refine its operating system.

Participant Profile: The Dinner Solution

Name: Heidi Cloutier

Sex: Female

Age: 31

Educational Level: Masters in Social Work

Business: The Dinner Solution

Location: Amherst, NH

Heidi Cloutier is a project manager in social work at the University of New Hampshire. She works at the University full-time and has a two-year-old child with her second on the way. Heidi found out about the incubator through Allyn and Michelle who she met at the Amherst Farmer's Market.

Heidi's company is called The Dinner Solution. The Dinner Solution makes and sells all natural prepared meals for people to reheat and serve at home. She has sold her meals on an occasional basis at the Amherst Farmer's Market. Her meals are a mix of vegetarian, meat and fish dishes.

Heidi began using the incubator late February 2007. Her biggest hurdle to overcome was getting two health licenses, one for preparing food and one for selling food. She also needed to complete her Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Plan (HACCP plan). The Dinner Solution is getting a slower start than she had planned and she is keeping her full time job for the meantime.

Heidi was close to signing a lease at a commercial kitchen in Amherst, but ultimately decided that it was too much of an obligation for her to be responsible for the expenses of a dedicated kitchen when her business was still in its infancy.

She sees the incubator as a perfect low cost, low risk way to test the waters for The Dinner Solution. Her goal is to eventually have her own kitchen. She

started working for just a few hours each week, but within the first year wants to ramp up production enough that she works as much as 24 hour per week. She wants to leave her job at UNH and make The Dinner Solution her full time occupation and her sole source of income.

In her interview, Heidi indicated that she would find useful and avail herself of the following services:

- Bulk/wholesale purchasing of inputs through the incubator
- Culinary consultation and assistance in product development
- Advertising consultation, marketing strategies and promotional assistance

Heidi is particularly interested in getting assistance with nutritional analysis of her products. This is something that she can certainly find help with at the incubator, through our network with the Hospitality School.

She felt like she was made partially aware of the services offered by TCK at her orientation. She felt that her orientation rated average, or the middle of the scale between poor and excellent. She says that since then there have been many questions that could have been addressed in the orientation.

Heidi plans to work at the incubator primarily on nights and weekends for the time being and then Wednesday and Friday mornings as her business grows.

Services not offered by the incubator that Heidi would find useful include: help and information in developing a database of customers, recipes, cost analysis and other information that would interface with her website. She would like people to be able to order from her through the Internet and automatically catalogue their information.

Results

So far, Heidi has sold her prepared meals at the Amherst Farmer's Market on two

occasions. Unfortunately, after spending \$600 on ingredients, she only made \$350 in sales the first week, and \$160 in sales the second week. She is not completely discouraged, however. She says she has put little time into marketing her product, sending out "press releases," etc. She does plan to attend a major expo called "Made in New Hampshire", which should help get her name out. Heidi is very enthusiastic and seems to have a good business sense. She is a promising tenant, as her business idea is a good one and her goals and expectations are realistic. She is making sensible business choices and her situation is not so desperate that she cannot afford the time to let her business grow. She plans to use the incubator for its intended purpose (to incubate) and work towards opening her own kitchen in approximately one year.

Problems and barriers

Heidi ran into some of the same problems as the other tenants, in terms of the Health Department and the HACCP plan. She says it took quite a while for inspectors to tell her she needed both a license to produce in Hooksett and a license to sell in Amherst. She mentioned that she would have appreciated a more comprehensive orientation process, but was understanding that TCK was just getting started. She felt that an informational package would have been helpful, along with kitchen specifications regarding fire suppression, electrical and other systems so she doesn't have to contact the kitchen every time an inspector asks her a question about these things. She would also find helpful a description and draft of the process of ordering bulk inputs through the incubator so she is clear on how that's done.

She mentioned that the address she was given for the incubator was the mailing address and not the physical address, which made things very confusing for the Health Department, as they had the school listed in Hooksett and not Manchester.

She also mentioned that John Knorr is extremely busy and difficult to get in touch

with, which is often the case. He has a lot on his plate and is spread a little thin. TCK needs to train a student to be able to answer some of the frequently asked questions, and only get John involved when absolutely necessary.

Net results

Heidi Cloutier is a success in that she finds The Common Kitchen fits her current needs and has the potential to help her business grow.

Participant profile: John Wesley Bakery

Prepared by: Matt Blau and Kria Sakakeeny

Name: Garrett Silveira

Sex: Male

Age: 57

Educational Level: High school graduate (presumed)

Business: John Wesley Bakery

Location: Manchester, NH

Garrett Silveira is a homeless man in Manchester with extensive baking experience. To help Garrett capitalize on his skills and earn enough money to rent his own apartment, local entrepreneur David Brown employed him as head baker for his new non-profit baking company, John Wesley Bakery.

Brown's intentions was to create a baking company which employed the homeless, including one a woman named Kimberly who spent most nights in her car.

Brown found the incubator as a result of a connection made by Chuck Hotchkiss of SNHU's Community Economic Development Program with the pastor of the First Methodist Church in Manchester. Before finding The Common Kitchen, Garrett had been making baked goods for the Venetian Café, which is a café business within the church itself. All of the conversations and interviews, however, have been with David. Garrett is mentally unstable, and for all intents and purposes The Common Kitchen's client really was David, as he made all the decisions for Garrett. Garrett makes well under \$5000 per year and David believes that he is a high school graduate.

The plan for John Wesley Bakery was to sell to the First Methodist Church and other churches and their congregations. In our first conversations with David, he asserted that he had a customer base ready and waiting; this turned out not to be the case.

Why the incubator?

Dave and Garrett began using the incubator in the middle of October 2006, and the two would always come together (Garrett did not have his own transportation). Garrett was baking out of the church kitchen before coming to the incubator but apparently this wasn't working for the church. The incubator seemed the perfect solution for Garrett and David's needs.

Garrett and David used the kitchen 4 to 6 hours per week and their goal was to increase that to 15 to 20 hours. They worked most often on the weekends, since one of the staff at the Hospitality School said that Garrett's appearance might frighten the students. John was very upset by this comment and said that Garrett was welcome to work whenever he wished.

David felt that he and Garrett would greatly benefit by taking advantage of the following services offered by the incubator:

- Business assistance, basic accounting and business assessment
- Culinary consultation and product development assistance
- Advertising consultation, marketing strategies and promotional assistance

David was informed of these services at his orientation with John Knorr, which he describes as excellent and comprehensive.

In fact, John Wesley Bakery was the only client who used the services of SNHU's Ad Lab. Garrett and Dave had been using white stickers and highlighter markers to label their products. In February 2007 John Knorr and Kria Sakakeeny presented an Ad Lab class of about 20 students with the concept of John Wesley

Bakery employing the homeless. Students were delighted with the challenge and planned on developing a logo, label and marketing brochures.

Results

Garrett is mentally ill, and during his time at the incubator, lived with Kimberly in her car. David Brown was committed to helping Garrett get off the street. He paid Garrett a wage of \$12 per hour to bake at the incubator. Garrett used the incubator 4 to 6 hours per week. However, in February 2007, David decided to discontinue use of the kitchen because he could not find a market to sell to. Dave started by having Garrett bake at the church and sell his cookies and cakes there. Somehow the church account dried up, in addition to any other churches and congregations they had planned to sell to. Early on John Knorr mentioned that he would investigate the possibility of selling Garrett's wares to dining services at the college. This might have been a mistake, as David began to count on dining services as their major account. Dining services declined to purchase Garrett's cookies. Apparently, they were not what they were looking for, and they wanted baked goods made with real butter, which Garrett considered somewhat elitist. Even though Garrett's cookies were cheaper, they were happy to keep using what they were already using. The Project Managers had many conversations about Garrett and felt that the incubator could help with product development and promotion and marketing, but were confused about how that would fit into the parameters of the project, as the incubator would entirely revamp the product line according to our ideas of what is salable, in order to create sales for Garrett.

Problems and barriers

In February 2007 David had reached his peak frustration level. He estimated that he spent between \$5,000 and \$10,000 from his own pocket on the business venture. Unfortunately, David terminated John Wesley Bakery just as it was poised to have a new marketing image designed by Ad Lab students.

One main point of frustration for Dave was that Garrett was not interested in being an entrepreneur. He wanted to bake and get his \$12 in cash and leave. People were also clearly not terribly impressed with the product he was producing. One of the things Garrett liked to make was yeast bread. Those had to be discontinued, as they were too inefficient. They ended up costing about \$8 per loaf to produce. Kimberly was a very good cake decorator. This would have been a good business because Garrett made the cakes and Kimberly decorated them. The problem was when it came to delivery and set up. They had no way of reliably getting the cakes to where they needed to go. As this was possibly the most important part, especially with wedding cakes, this plan became impossible.

Net results

In the fall of 2006 Garrett was our most consistent tenant at the incubator. He worked well, and was quite productive when making the right things. He had been coming once a week since mid-October. He was an ideal tenant for the incubator in the sense that he was truly in need and low-income, looking for a way out of poverty. In another sense, he was not well suited for the incubator because he was not an entrepreneur and has no desire to be one. It was really David who was the entrepreneur and only in order to enable Garrett to make a living. David paid his bills at the incubator and that was good for the bottom line. The Common Kitchen would really have liked for Garrett to be a success story, as he would have been a good "poster child" for the incubator. With a tenant like Garrett, The Common Kitchen might have been able to leverage financing from state and local organizations to fund some of the incubator's operations.

3. FINDINGS

By working with these five participants, making observations and soliciting extensive feedback from them through questionnaires and key informant interviews, the following are some of the findings of the Management Team:

Many things in the project evolved much differently than expected. Whereas in the conceptualizing and design of the project the expectation was that many of the participants would be people who would see in TCK the opportunity to graduate from their daily jobs and employment cycle to small business ownership as a new potential road to financial independence, this was for the most part not the case. With the exception of Heidi Cloutier who has not yet begun in the incubator at the time of this report, all the participants in the incubator are people who already have their own food businesses and are looking for a more practical and user friendly place to produce their product. Most participants came to the incubator in search of lower costs and increased efficiency.

The idea originally was to have a sliding scale and to use the higher rates paid by those more successful to supplement the lower-income participants. At this point, TCK has no participants with the ability to pay anything above the \$10 per hour that was considered to be the absolute rock bottom rate. As it turns out, \$10 per hour really adds up for people in small food production businesses when combined with their other costs.

The Management Team has discovered that their original implementation plan was overly complicated for most participants. With all the trainings, pre and post-tests and other components, potential participants were clearly being scared away from participation. In order to attract participants, the project needed to be radically scaled back. The incubator and associated services may work better in a more metropolitan area or an area with a different demographic but have not been entirely successful in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Some of the participants needed more hand holding and intervention than they were given. Most were fine on their own, but with the increased participation of the Project Management Team may have been able to experience more significant business growth. The Management Team was uncertain as to how much intervention was appropriate without specific requests from participants. Participants may have been uncomfortable asking for members of the

Management Team to bring all of their resources to bear. It is possible that this is because they felt that the incubator being a part of the Hospitality School, they were already being given a very favorable arrangement and their business growth was incumbent solely upon them.

So far there are fewer people in the demographic categories finding the incubator useful than was originally assumed. Some of the possible reasons for this have been discussed already, but it is difficult to know if the project was less effective in reaching these people than it could have been, or that there were less potential participants in the area than originally thought. Most likely it is a combination of both factors.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 1: ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT OUTCOMES

In order to determine the level and nature of the successes and failures of the incubator project, the following questions need to be answered regarding how the goals were met according to the benchmarks outlined in the logic model.

i. Did the outputs lead to the attainment of the short-term outcomes?

Output #1: 6-10 participants trained in business and marketing

Because the Project Management Team realized early on that formal trainings in business and marketing were unrealistic, both because of the time required and because of participant's general resistance to the idea, this activity was cancelled. Therefore there was no output and no short-term outcome. Most of our participants were not coming to TCK for training. They were coming mostly for the use of an affordable and well-equipped commercial kitchen. As time went on, many participants felt the need for business and marketing advice, which took place in a less formal way on a case-by-case basis.

Output #2: 6-10 participants trained in food production and processing

Up to the present time, all of the project participants were small business owners when they joined the incubator, with the exception of Garrett whose unique situation has been previously discussed. All the participants felt fairly confident in the viability and quality of their products and in their food production skills. Because they were not new to food production, they saw little need to be trained by TCK in skills they saw themselves as already possessing. Participants didn't believe they needed improved skills in food production and processing. Maybe as they become more familiar and comfortable with the incubator they will see that there are growth opportunities and will take advantage of those resources. As it stands, neither the output nor the outcome was achieved.

Output #3: 6-10 participants with access to commercial food production facilities at SNHU

At the time of this report there are only 3 regular users of the commercial kitchen with 2 more getting their licensing and permitting requirements fulfilled and preparing to begin very shortly. In spite of the lower than hoped for turnout of participants, the Project Management Team sees this as a success and a good start for the incubator. The output has certainly led to the attainment of the short-term outcome “improved access to physical production related resources.”

Output #4: 6-10 participants with access to socialized fee schedule and discounted production inputs via bulk purchasing and other networked services

Again, there are only 3 regular users of the incubator kitchen at the present time, but they all have gained access the resources described in output #4. Most of the participants have thus far chosen to buy their own inputs, partially because they are operating on such small hand-to-mouth budgets that they need to purchase inputs in small quantities, and partially because with all the big box stores in the area they actually don't end up realizing a substantial savings most of the time by purchasing bulk inputs wholesale through the Hospitality School.

As far as the socialized fee schedule, it has been achieved, but it is hard to determine what exactly the effect is because all the participants so far have been at the low end of the scale. For practical purposes, TCK temporarily dispensed of the socialized fee schedule in favor of a fee schedule that is heavily subsidized to accommodate low-income participants. As most participants so far have been in this category, this seemed the most logical alternative.

The output has been achieved and has led to the attainment of the short-term outcome. Although only 3-5 instead of 6-10 participants are being served, the participants do have improved access to production cost saving mechanisms.

Output #5: Creation of ad-hoc committee within Hospitality School to run incubator.

The ad-hoc committee within the Hospitality School to run the incubator was not created. TCK does retain the services of one hospitality school student who looks after and monitors the kitchen, and is helpful to staff and participants; but with the small number of participants thus far, it has not seemed necessary to form the ad-hoc committee. The output was therefore not achieved because of a perceived lack of need, and the outcome was the same for the absence of need for organizational support.

ii. Did the short-term outcomes lead to the attainment of the medium term outcome?

The short-term outcomes did lead, for the most part, in the direction of the medium term outcome, which is a successfully incubated existing or planned business, although it is still too early in the process to know for sure. The question really is, at what point is it determined that a business has been successfully incubated? The answer to that question is, that there are two criteria, which determine when a business has been successfully incubated. The first is when a business is experiencing improved profitability, and the second is when it graduates from the incubator and moves onto its own or shared commercial kitchen, because it has become financially capable of doing so. The second has not happened at the time of this report, but the first has, to a degree. So the answer to the question of whether the short-term outcome led to the attainment of the medium-term outcome is, yes and no. The progress, although slower than the Project Management Team had hoped for, is good and all signs point toward the attainment of both aspects of the medium term outcome in the not too distant future.

iii. Did the intermediate outcome lead to the attainment of the long-term outcome?

The long-term outcome being profitable business ownership, the answer is again, yes and no. Are the participants running profitable businesses? Yes. Is using the incubator enabling them to do so? Yes, it most certainly is. Is it increasing their profitability over other kitchen options they have? In some cases yes and in some cases no. It is certainly allowing them to make bigger plans for the near future and opening up possibilities for business growth that they did not have before joining the incubator. Michelle for example, can now hire employees in her summer farmer's market season and radically improve her income potential. Are the participant's businesses in the incubator as profitable as they would like to be? Most likely, no. Has the incubator transformed the lives of participants from lives of poverty into ones of financial independence? At this point, no. Whether or not it does so in the future remains to be seen. Is the long-term outcome achieved? Yes and no.

SECTION 2: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This project has been a continuous learning process. It has undergone many transformations and alterations since its conception. It is at its essence a very strong concept and one that has been successful in many different settings. This evaluation is being written at a very early stage. The project only went into full implementation roughly 4 months ago, so the findings are somewhat preliminary. It is clear that the project will take more time than it has been given so far and probably more than was originally planned.

Because the project has a team of three managers, all decisions are deliberated and made in a democratic process. Despite the fact that the Project Management Team works fairly well together and sees eye-to-eye on most major issues, this team structure inevitably adds time to the process. A certain amount of time is spent simply communicating between the group, as the managers live in different places. The Project Managers all have slightly different ideas about

the ultimate mission of the project, although the mission has likely changed for each of us since the beginning.

The project in its original form was very wide in scope and comprehensive in terms of its CED applications. The idea was that TCK would provide trainings so that our participants could gain knowledge and skills in a variety of areas relating to food production and entrepreneurship. Trainings were planned in food production, business skills, kitchen use and safety, and promotion and marketing. TCK would get measurable results by administering pre-tests in all these areas and then post-tests after the trainings had been completed. The managers soon realized that this plan was untenable and had to be scaled back. First of all, TCK was having a much harder time attracting participants than was originally expected. The team became more and more reluctant to do anything that might deter potential participants from joining the incubator, and became worried that requiring an array of trainings and pre and post-tests would do just that. TCK made those trainings entirely elective and available to participants if they wished. In retrospect it seems like it was the right choice.

It is an unusual demographic TCK is dealing with in our participants. I think that it is only through implementation of the project that TCK could really discover that. Ideally, The Common Kitchen project's goal is to attract aspiring entrepreneurs, who are looking to either start small food businesses or grow existing food businesses as a way to break out of the cycle of poverty. There are a few inherent problems with this.

First of all, some considerable doubt has been raised that owning a small food business in today's America, let alone in today's Manchester (which is an extremely expensive area to live) is in fact a realistic route out of poverty. It may be that if you want to make enough money to live on in the food business it needs to be larger in scale, probably involving employees. With the Project Manager's collective experience in the food business, this notion may have arisen earlier.

Joining the incubator and meeting the minimum requirements to be able to work in the kitchen requires an investment of around \$600. That factor alone probably places The Common Kitchen out of reach for most of the truly poor. Some people have a very hard time finding and extra \$600. Food businesses take investment, and the payoff is often less than one might hope for. Then there is the cost of using the kitchen. Even at below market rates, the kitchen ends up costing tenants \$40-\$60 each time they use it. Factoring in the cost of inputs, gasoline at today's prices for transport, insurance, and fees often required to sell products (at farmers markets for example); unless production and sales are above a certain level the business owner often ends up making less than she would working for someone else. This is especially true at startup.

On the other end, people who would pay "fair market" rates for use of the kitchen and subsidize those paying less are likely to have enough resources to pay for their own kitchens. So it is a very narrow demographic that the incubator ends up making financial sense for. This could be incorrect, however. Given more time and promotion, the client base at the incubator could expand in numbers and have a much wider demographic. Surprisingly, Nuestra Kitchen in Boston, a much busier and more expensive incubator, was recently closing its doors for good. It turns out that the city of Boston stepped in at the last minute, but this certainly says something about the viability of the culinary incubator in general. At the start, the team had strong ideas about all the different people that could use the incubator. Now it is somewhat more difficult to imagine who would benefit from TCK. It seems like a narrower demographic.

TCK needed a better marketing strategy. If it could find more good cost-efficient ways to get our message out to a wider audience, or even a better targeted audience, TCK might get a better turnout at the incubator.

To summarize some of the most valuable lessons from The Common Kitchen experience:

Projects can become too large and too complicated very easily. It is a good idea to start smaller than you plan and scale up if possible. Participants are often not easy to categorize. They are individuals and will act as individuals. They are sometimes unpredictable and not to be put into a mold.

It was much more difficult than the Project Management Team expected to find clients for the culinary incubator in the Manchester area. The team misjudged the number of potential clients in the area.

Working as The Common Kitchen did, with partners over a distance co-managing a project, requires that at least twice the time be allotted to decision making than if those partners lived in close proximity and met face to face on a regular basis.

Many more people and organizations will express enthusiasm in a project than will actually get involved when the time comes for their participation.

Most low-income participants need there to be a financing component in the project for it to be possible for them. Entrepreneurship is very difficult and risky for people, especially those with lower incomes. They need to support themselves and their families today. As much as they may want to own their own business, it takes quite a bit of capital just to be able to afford to devote the time to wait out the success curve. It is critical to link to jobs or small business programs, or find some other way to make financing or access to capital an integral part of a culinary incubator.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to enhance the current project

Although there were many facets to the project as originally conceived and planned, the most successful part of this project was the participant's use of the commercial kitchen itself.

To make the most out of this experience, the Project Management Team might have had a more hands-on approach to participant's kitchen use. If the Team spent more time in the kitchen, it may have found more ways to help the participants refine their businesses and improve profitability. Some of the small breakdowns in communication may also have been avoided and some of the problems with the physical plant could have been dealt with more effectively and in a timelier manner.

More consistent communication with the participants would also improve the experience for everyone. TCK should use the success stories of the current participants to attract new participants.

Recommendations for replication

For anyone considering doing a similar project involving a culinary incubator, here are some recommendations based on The Common Kitchen experience.

Find a way if possible to conduct focus groups or do surveys to determine what the actual needs are in the community. Find out what your community needs out of an incubator and use that to drive your design. Start small with the incubator having a fairly narrow focus. There will be time as the project gets its legs to expand the range of services offered. Focus on what exactly the community needs.

Get as much information as possible from other incubators. Not only looking at the incubators themselves, but also the demographics of the communities they operate in. It seems that many of the other culinary incubators that have had success have been in areas with very different characteristics than Manchester.

Get local government and businesses involved. Try to make your incubator a pet project of local government and business. Encourage those involved to feel a sense of ownership and encourage their financial support.

Make access to capital or financing of some sort a central part of your project.

Make a clear and concise brochure of the services you offer at the incubator so participants will have easy access to the information. Participants need to be able to reexamine the incubator from time to time as they settle in and become ready to take advantage of different services. Make a database of frequently asked questions and include answers to them in the informational packet. Include technical specifications of the kitchen so when dealing with the Health Department or other agencies participants will have that information to refer to.

Have frequent meetings with other stakeholders. This keeps everyone's interest up and creates energy in the group and for the project. Allow more time than you think is necessary for the implementation of activities and the meeting of goals and outcomes. Don't be discouraged when things take longer than you expect (they will) and don't be afraid to change directions within your project in midstream. You won't learn about your project until it is well underway.

In the right setting, a culinary incubator can be a viable avenue out of poverty through entrepreneurship and small business ownership. It is a difficult road for truly low-income people if there is no access to financial assistance or very simple microfinance integral to the program. Entrepreneurship takes a special talent and drive. Initially, it may be more difficult to make a living being a small business owner than by having a job. Possibly the trickiest part of running a culinary incubator is keeping it financially sustainable. This financial sustainability is more difficult in an area of lower population density. When an incubator works well, however, it is a very rewarding enterprise, and can make a substantial improvement in the lives of people and in a community.