

Brief overview of participating organizations

- **Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture** - is a research and education center with statewide programs to develop sustainable agricultural practices that are both profitable and conserve natural resources. The Center funds projects under three initiative areas: Ecology, Marketing and Food Systems, and Policy. The Center also coordinates the Value Chain Partnerships project, along with Iowa State University and Practical Farmers of Iowa.
- **Land Stewardship Project** - is a grassroots membership organization dedicated to sustainable agriculture, vibrant rural communities and a healthy ecosystem. Our strengths include direct contact with farmers, institutions and businesses already involved in local and regional food, our Farm Beginnings Program® networking beginning and experienced farmers, and our experience and coalitions in federal, state and corporate policy.
- **Michael Fields Agricultural Institute** - is a non-profit dedicated to rebuilding sustainable food and farming systems through policy education, farmer training, research and outreach. In our 24th year, we work with both rural and urban producers, consumers and organizations. We value the relationships with other organizations that have been the result of many collaborative projects through the years.
- **Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)** – is a non-profit organization that works locally and globally at the intersection of policy and practice to ensure fair and sustainable food, farm and trade systems. IATP launched a new Local Foods Program in late 2007. Led by JoAnne Berkenkamp, the program works to advance the cause of small/medium farms in the Upper Midwest, build infrastructure and relationships in the middle of the chain to foster a thriving regional food system, and expand access to healthy food for all members of our community.
- **Cooperative Development Services (CDS)** - is a non-profit organization that helps start new cooperatives and helps existing ones expand. Its client base includes natural food cooperatives nationwide, and producer-owned natural/sustainable/organic products cooperatives in the upper Midwest.
- **Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)** - is a cooperative effort of the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, Extension and the Sustainers' Coalition, a group of five non-profit organizations based in Minnesota. The purpose of MISA is to bring together the agricultural community and the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond.
- **Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (WISA)** - is a federation of University of WI – Madison campus units working together on regional sustainable agriculture projects. WISA for Integrated Agricultural Systems brings 20 years of experience in Wisconsin food systems to this

effort, including a number of current initiatives investigating issues around scaling up the Midwest food system through planning, aggregation, business innovation, farmer networks, multi-county initiatives, and farmer training.

- **Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS)** - is a statewide NGO that advances and sustains food and farming systems in which agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship, and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan's communities. We have been networking with farmers and providing technical assistance for over ten years. In the past two years, we have successfully cooperated with partners both in-and out- of-state to build value-based value chains.
- **Sustain/FamilyFarmed.Org** - connects local and organic farmers with consumers and trade buyers through its website, EXPO, and market making activities. Its Wholesale Success manual provides technical assistance to farmers looking to sell produce into wholesale markets.
- **Fresh Taste Initiative** - is an effort by five Illinois foundations and the City of Chicago to develop a strategy to further a regional effort that encourages diverse local agriculture and healthy eating in Chicago, and across Illinois.
- **Blue Planet Partners (BPP)** – is a Great Lakes basin focused NGO. Its mission is to accelerate social innovation that builds healthy regions. BPP has helped to lead an effort to build a strategic framework for accelerating the growth of sustainable regional food systems.
- **WellSpring Management** - a research and consulting practice focused on regional food and agricultural systems. WellSpring provides market development, strategic analysis and value chain expertise to business, non-government organizations (NGOs) and government.

Background

The demand for green, fair, affordable, and healthy food in the upper Midwest is outpacing supply. In particular, the demand for good food in the major metropolitan areas of this region (Minneapolis/St. Paul, Chicago, and Milwaukee) presents complex challenges for university and NGO partners in Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Michigan who have had success helping farmers in local, direct markets. Many of the participating organizations, along with their local partners, are organized along state boundary lines. Farmers, farmer networks, processors, and other entrepreneurs sell into markets that extend across state boundaries.

The participating organizations in this project all play key roles in providing a wide range of services to farmers, farmer networks, and other businesses that participate in “good food” values-based supply chains in the upper Midwest. These services include, but are not limited to networking, policy research and advocacy, technical assistance, cooperative and business development, and value chain research and development. The organizations have not, however, collaborated to the extent necessary to provide more strategic, robust services

and research and development to assist farmers and other value chain partners as they market to higher volume food buyers in the upper Midwest.

What type of coordinated network providing technical and other assistance to farmers will best build their capacity to supply higher volume buyers of good food? In the book “Networks that Work,” Paul Vandeventer describes three different types of networks: *Cooperating*, *Coordinating*, and *Collaborating*.

Cooperating Networks involve relatively low levels of risk. They lead to little, if any, systemic or large-scale social, economic or political reform. Most food system collaborative efforts across NGOs, universities, and private partners in the Upper Midwest are at the cooperating network level.

Coordinating Networks involve low to moderate risk to members. In addition to many of the activities that distinguish cooperating networks, groups and organizations in coordinating networks:

- Carefully identify and pursue service or advocacy priorities.
- Negotiate time, resource and energy commitments with other members.
- Push established organizational boundaries and mutual interdependence.
- Engage in activities that require greater mutual reliance.

Collaborating Networks involve high stakes and, therefore, entail higher degrees of member risk. In addition to many of the activities associated with *cooperating* and *coordinating* networks, organizations and institutions involved in *collaborating* networks:

- Are pursuing fundamental, long-term system creation or reform.
- Typically begin to give up old notions and think differently about how the system in which they have been working can function differently.
- Authentically participate in or advocate for fundamental resource reallocation in ways that the old system resisted or protected.
- Reach agreement on how to permanently (and often radically) alter or shift the ways in which they once operated.

Scope of Work

The aforementioned upper Midwest partners already have met three times in 2008. We have begun to share ideas and build rapport toward developing a cadre of highly committed individuals engaged in high-trust relationships with the goal of supporting scaled-up good food systems within and across the upper Midwest. The partners in this proposal agree that a *cooperating* network (as defined by Vandeventer) of NGOs and university sustainable agriculture centers is not robust enough to foster increased success of farmers selling into higher volume, good food markets in the upper Midwest. Through the funding and implementation of this project, we will move to a *coordinating network* by acting as thought partners with one another, as co-strategists, and as program partners where joint, on-the-ground activities and broader strategic development efforts,

advance our shared interest in building the capacity producers, processors, and others needed in building good food values-based supply chains.

Toward this end, this collaborative effort, called the “Good Food Network for the Upper Midwest” proposes the following objectives:

1. Convene a regional community of practice consisting of key NGOs, university sustainable agriculture centers and consultants to determine what upper Midwest NGOs and universities know and don't know about helping producers and processors build capacity to sell to larger volume buyers in the region's metropolitan areas.
2. Develop a research agenda that will determine a clear strategic pathway for ramping up the Good Food system in the upper Midwest.
3. Determine what other partners are needed to provide the capacity-building to foster these "good food values-based supply chains."
4. Develop “best practice” strategies for NGOs and universities to collaborate across state boundaries (along with retail, food service, and consultant partners) to assist farmers and networks who sell or plan to sell to higher volume buyers in the upper Midwest metro areas.
5. Formulate and present a set of recommendations for inter-organizational collaboration to support farmers who supply more good food to metro areas in the upper Midwest to the following stakeholder groups: NGOs, agencies, and funders in Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan.

Work Plan

The work plan for the “Good Food Network for the Upper Midwest” is as follows:

The regional partners will meet five times during the period from September 2008 through August 2009. These strategic meetings will be rotated across states, with phone or other electronic conferences held between meetings as needed. Each meeting will address one or more of the objectives above:

- Meeting One (9/08) – Objectives 1 and 2
- Meeting Two (11/08) – Objective 2
- Meeting Three (2/09) – Objective 3 and 4
- Meeting Four (4/09) – Objective 4
- Meeting Five (6/09) – Objective 5
- Final project report (8/09) – Objective 5

The partners will bring farmers, retail and food service buyers, distributors, and food system consultants to these meetings as needed to address the first four proposal objectives.

Outcomes

Proposed outcomes are as follows:

1. Documentation of the research gaps that if addressed will help farmers, processors, and networks sell to higher volume buyers in upper Midwest metro areas. (by 12-08)
2. Recommendations for research and training to empower NGOs and universities to be more effective in providing services to farmers, processors, and networks selling to higher volume buyers. (by 8-09)
3. Identification and engagement of other private and public partners needed to provide the technical and financial assistance needed to foster these “good food values-based supply chains.” (by 4-09)
4. Production of a report and presentation of recommendations to existing and potential “good food” organizations in the upper Midwest, describing “best practice” strategies to collaborate and supply value chain support across organizations. Recommendations presented to at least one large conference in each of the five participating states. (by 8-09)
5. Documentation of at least two possible pathways that can bring the coordinated assistance to bear for specific good food chains. (by 8-09)
6. Development of a research agenda by February 2009 and implementation of that research agenda during 2009.

Metrics

Metrics for each of the outcomes are as follows

- Outcome 1 – Outline of matrix with research gaps and organizations best suited to address those gaps
- Outcome 2 – Outline of research projects and professional training needed for upper Midwest NGOs and universities
- Outcome 3 – List of recruited private and public partners
- Outcome 4 – Report and PowerPoint presentation(s)
- Outcome 5 – Graphic or template with description outlining the pathway(s)
- Outcome 6 – Research agenda document

List of partners and potential roles (alphabetic)

JoAnne Berkenkamp - Program Director, Local Foods, IATP
2105 First Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612.870.3410

jberkenkamp@iatp.org www.iatp.org

Roles: Serving on the national advisory council, co-leading development of research agenda, and sharing lessons learned about strategies to increase low-income access to healthy foods

Jim Bower – Executive Director, Blue Planet Partners
120 E. Lakeside
Madison, WI 53703
608.256.9797

jbower@blueplanetpartners.org www.blueplanetpartners.org

Roles: To assist in helping build the strategic directions for scaling up sustainable food systems. To continue to dialog with “for profit” partners in helping them understand business opportunities and market direction. To help clarify potential catalytic high-leveraged roles for NGOs and Public Sector organizations

Ron Doetch - Executive Director, Michael Fields Ag Institute
PO Box 990
East Troy, WI 53120
262.642.3303 Ext 119

RDoetch@MichaelFieldsAgInst.org www.MichaelFieldsAgInst.org

Roles: Continued interface with the “for-profit” partners in foods systems and share information. Host one meeting in East Troy, WI.

Kevin Edberg - Executive Director, Cooperative Development Services
400 Selby Ave Suite Y
St. Paul MN 55102
651.287.184;

Kedberg@cdsus.coop www.cdsus.coop

Roles: Lead efforts related to connecting producer co-ops to consumer-owned natural food co-ops.

Warren King - President, Wellspring Management
818 N. Marion St.
Oak Park, IL 60302-1533.
708. 383.0835

w.king@wellspringltd.com

Roles: Lead facilitation of values based value chains and connections to retail and institutional market buyers.

Beth Larabee - Program assistant, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
209 Curtiss Hall - ISU
Ames, Iowa 50011
515.294.8530

blarabee@iastate.edu www.leopold.iastate.edu

Roles: Provide administrative oversight to the project; provide leadership in coordinating group meetings and action items; participate in all meetings

Karen Lehman - Director, Fresh Taste Initiative.
c/o Chicago Community Trust,
111 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 1400,
Chicago, IL 60640.

312.616.8000, ext. 180. Cell: 312.810.5540

karenl@cct.org

Roles: help convene organizations in Chicago who will contribute both to the strategy and on-the-ground work of linking farmers and processors in the Upper Midwest with markets in our metropolitan area

Jim Slama - President Sustain/FamilyFarmed.Org

7115 W. North Ave. #504,

Oak Park, IL 60302.

312.504.5537

jimslama@sustainusa.org

Roles: Convene one of the meetings in Chicago, bring together wholesale buyers and sellers at "meet the buyer gatherings", share finding with producers and buyers in the FamilyFarmed.org network, and develop trainings based on the Wholesale Success publication

Michelle Miller - Associate Director, WISA-Center for Integrated Ag Systems,

1535 Observatory Drive

Madison, WI 53706

608.262.7135

mmmille6@wisc.edu www.cias.wisc.edu

Roles: Attend meetings, convene one of the meetings in Madison, work on the recommendations, share findings with Wisconsin networks, present information to campus partners and at applicable state conferences.

Helene Murray - Executive Director, MISA

411 Borlaug Hall, 1991 Buford Circle

St Paul, MN 55108

612.625.0220

hmurray@umn.edu www.misa.umn.edu

Roles: Will contribute to the network by providing access to MISA staff and resources, and by providing connections to our partners in the areas of research, teaching and outreach

Rich Pirog - Associate Director, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

209 Curtiss Hall – ISU

Ames, Iowa 50011

515.294.1854

rspirog@iastate.edu www.leopold.iastate.edu

Roles: Leopold Center will serve as the regional lead team organization, attend national good food meetings, and act as fiscal agent for the project. The Center will co-lead development of the research agenda, and apply its learnings through the Value Chain Partnerships (VCP) project of developing and coordinating communities of practice. The Center will represent VCP and invite in other Iowa NGOs, businesses, and universities in this work as it evolves.

Elaine Brown - Executive Director, MIFFS
416 Agriculture Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824
517.432.0712
Email: browne@msu.edu.

Roles: Identify both value chain experts to inform learning community and advisory committee appointees. Share lessons learned and disseminate the work and finding of the upper Midwest community of practice across the Michigan sustainable agriculture and local food community networks.

Terry VanDerPol - Land Stewardship Project
Milwaukee Road Depot - 301 State Road, Ste 2
Montevideo, MN 56265
320.269.2105
tlvdp@landstewardshipproject.org

Roles: Bring the experiences and knowledge of LSPs member farmers to bear on our discussions of how to help producers and processors increase capacity; bring specific input from our member practitioners on proposed research agendas and strategies to assist farmers and farmer networks in ramping up; identify other partners who should be part of this effort and bring their voice to the table; bring LSPs significant experience in developing successful interstate, inter-organizational collaborations to bear on our collaborative efforts.

Capacity of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture to serve as the Regional Lead Team organization

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture is a recognized regional and national leader in sustainable agriculture and food systems research and education. The Leopold Center's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative currently funds \$250,000 per year in new projects; most of these projects complement and inform the work of the National Good Food Network.

Regional Steering Committee and Advisors

Given the nature of this project, the participating NGO and university partners are the core of the steering committee. The following people in the processing, retail, farming, and food service sectors will likely serve as advisors:

- Linda Bannister, GM The Wedge Coop, or another GM from a food cooperative
- John Biondi, THRIVE (an eight county South Central Wisconsin business development consortium with a food / agriculture component, Mineral Point, WI. John is also an apple grower and hard cider producer in SW Wisconsin and part of an angel investors network.
- Lori Tatreau, Regional Local Foods Forager of Whole Foods Market (committed)
- Gary Matteson, Farm Credit Council. Gary is Vice President in charge of increasing Farm Credit Association lending to young, beginning and minority farmers. (committed)

- Steve Williams, Naturally Iowa LLC, a farmer owned dairy processor

Actions to sustain role as lead team after term of Wallace grant - will vary by organization. The Leopold Center plans to continue supporting research and demonstration projects in Iowa that support development of a “Good Food Network” in Iowa and the upper Midwest. The new Leopold Center RFP will be available June 23, 2008.