Rooting Opportunity: Doing Economic Development Differently

Network Building

John K. Littles, Exec. Director
Cheryl B. Peterson, Sr. Mg. Director
McIntosh S.E.E.D.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Project Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network (ASAN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National Wildlife Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perry County Center for Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Cottage House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The United Christian Community Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Alabama Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ford Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Yellow Wood Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Center for Rural Entrepreneurship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• McIntosh SEED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Funding Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• McIntosh SEED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rural Support Partners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mississippi Partners

<p>| |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Children’s Defense Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mississippi Action for Community Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quitman County Development Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Winston County Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mileston Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tougaloo College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Created by: DSWCN/McSEED/RSP
Demographics

• Population:
  - Alabama: 4.8 Million
  - Mississippi: 2.9 Million

• Poverty Rate:
  - Rural Mississippi: 25.8%
  - Rural Alabama: 21.8%

Accompanying Issues

• Apathy
• Low Education Rates
• Low Ranking on the Human Development Index
• Limited History of Collaboration
• Systemic Racism
• Land Loss
  - Exodus of Youth
  - Depopulation

Systemic racism - still prevalent in many formal systems, institutions, and policies – is the underlying cause of many of these issues. It continues to hinder economic development efforts in the Deep South.

2010. USDA Economic Research Service

Created by: DSWCN/McSEED/RSP
Opportunity
Utilize region-based organizations to form a Network

Potential
• Minority farmers still own substantial amounts of land
• Many have much more capacity on the supply side
• A robust agricultural supply chain could serve markets both inside and outside the Delta
• Some minority (and many white) farmers already export crops and value-added products to corporations (e.g., Mars)
• If organized, producers could capture more substantial regulated market opportunities.

Anticipated Results
1. Increase income for all farmers
2. Increase income for low-wealth minority farmers,
3. Capitalize on the increase in statewide vegetable and fruit production
4. Improve, connect and fully utilize existing built capital
5. Increase financial capital within the region.

Created by: DSWCN/McSEED/RSP
Why the Network Model in Alabama & Mississippi?

- Moves from isolated projects to a systems approach
- Provides opportunities to pursue larger more diverse markets
- Gives farmers the tools, capacities, support and connections to significantly improve their own livelihoods
- Provides opportunities for food & farm entrepreneurs
- Creates multiple forms of wealth that is locally owned, controlled and reinvested into rural communities
Steps to forming the DSCAN Network

COMMUNICATION 101
Building Social Capital

Tell us about you: Where do you live? Where do you work? Who do you serve? What are your successes? What are your challenges? What are your investment needs?

- Production, aggregation, distribution, and infrastructure
- Organizational and partnership development
- Branding, marketing, and educational campaigns
- Capital development
• Identify areas of commonality in your work, community, values, etc...
• Are there any intersections or cross-pollination of our work?
• Can we work together to expand your/our capacity?
• Can we work together to address the challenges?
• Can we work together to capitalize on the OPPORTUNITIES that exists within our region?

• Focus on the ASSETS!!!

LOTS & LOTS of TEAMBUILDING Exercises
“Can we talk?”

- Monthly Conference Calls
- Quarterly Gatherings
- Peer Learning Journeys
- Executive Committee Calls
- Site Visits to each Organization
- Trainings & Workshops
- One-on-One Consultations
- Weekly Progress Checks: Produce Update
Each organization collectively mapped the core components of their value chain on a large map of Alabama and Mississippi.

The organizations collectively identified the following:
- producers
- direct sales
- PAD (processors, aggregators, distributors)
- wholesale buyers
- Consumers
- waste management
- input suppliers
- labor

The organizations also identified key investment needs with their value chain, how they are working together across teams, and lessons learned from their research.
Mapping Exercise: Regional Area “Assets”
Feasibility Study #1

- What do you know about specific demand for the primary products or services you might produce?
- Who are the key partners or potential partners who might be able to help you?
- What is the economic impact of launching this project in your community?
- How will this project be grounded in local ownership and control?
- How will this project help with the upward mobility of local low-income people?
- Will you be able to create jobs?
- Are there opportunities for small business enterprises/entrepreneurship?
- How will the youth or next generation of farmers be engaged?
Phase I: Exploration and Research
2011 & 2012

- Research/analyze the various components of the value chain: product demand, production capacity, aggregation/distribution infrastructure, etc.
- Engage, inform, & connect value chain stakeholders
- Developed a common understand, vision, and language related to value chain research and construction
- Discover connections, common visions and possible ways project groups can work together
- Develop individual & collective action plans
- Strengthen our skills, knowledge & capacities
- Document tools & lessons to help other groups working to construct value chains
Goal:
Develop a vision and collective understanding of the impact we are trying to have on the region.

- Do we **want** to work together as a Network?
- **How** do we want to work together as a Network?
- Do we want to develop **branding** as a Network?
- What **impact** will the Network have on the region? (Local economy, jobs, businesses, food, housing, education, health, etc...)
Vision Statement (2012)

To work toward the development of a sustainable agriculture network focused on building fruit, vegetable, and livestock value chains for the purpose of improving rural livelihoods at the local and regional level in Alabama and Mississippi.

The goal is to work together to maximize the payoff for EVERYONE involved.
Accountability 101
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do we need to know?</th>
<th>Who will complete this task?</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>What research or other supports are needed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact existing aggregators to id demand for the products identified: White peas,</td>
<td>Barbara Shipman, Karen Wynne, Andrew Williams</td>
<td>By end of April</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>purple hull peas, watermelons, squash, tomatoes, collards, strawberries, blueberries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete demographic data for south AL</td>
<td>Alice Evans, Karen Wynne</td>
<td>Mid-April</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete inventory of existing value chain</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>End of April</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult with prisons</td>
<td>Barbara Shipman</td>
<td>End of June</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research value-added options like fresh-frozen and discuss demand with existing</td>
<td>Everyone as we are able</td>
<td>May -June</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aggregators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop next steps in branding program and promotion</td>
<td>Andrew Williams, Keisha Abrahams</td>
<td>April - May</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## National Wildlife Federation Budget Breakdown

**Phase 2: February - May 2012**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Amounts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Benefits (NWF)</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Support *(3)</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors (3)</td>
<td>$4,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Direct Costs**</td>
<td>$3,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overhead (10%)</td>
<td>$1,820</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Expenses**  $20,020.00
Contracts:

RE: Six Month Contract including: project objectives, deliverables, participation requirements, and budget for the first 6-month phase of the Value Chain Project.

This agreement, dated May 29, 2015 is made By and Between ___________________, hereafter referred to as “Coordinator”, and ___________________, hereafter referred to as “Consultant.”

Project Objectives, Timeline, and Deliverables
The goal of this project is to establish a regional network and build two beginning stage agricultural value chains across Southeast Alabama, West Alabama & East Mississippi, and the Mississippi Delta.

6-Month Deliverables Identified by Consultant, ___________________
In the next 6 months, the Consultant will have:
Markets are expanded with produce sold to Belle Food in Birmingham, AL.

Partnerships exist and are maintained with The Tuskegee University Wal-Mart Project and New North Florida Farmers Cooperative Association.

Farmers have the necessary training in crop succession planting and are prepped for GAP certification.

Farmers are well prepared for planting season. They have assessed their water and soil quality. And coordinated seed orders, planting dates, and administrative needs.
# Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Producers</th>
<th>Total sales exceeded $12,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Producers</td>
<td>New North Florida Cooperative, conventional wholesale buyers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Sells To</td>
<td>Amount Of 2012 Sales For This Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)</td>
<td>$535.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM</td>
<td>New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)</td>
<td>$246.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)</td>
<td>$1,120.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)</td>
<td>$1,113.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DB Brothers</td>
<td>AG Groceries, Calhoun Groceries, Piggley Wiggley, Smute Community Restaurant</td>
<td>$9,360.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal
Collaboratively connect and strengthen sustainable regional agricultural network

- Growing to Scale
- Meeting Large Market Demand
- Sharing Labor/Youth Labor
- Providing Training and Certification Workshops
- Sharing Equipment and Transportation
- Sharing Cool Storage
- Sharing Liability Insurance
- Growing Collaboratively
- Developing Growing Protocols
- Developing Crop Rotation Plans
- Fundraising: Investment & Capital
Goal  
To establish a clear structure

In the beginning, we had working committees:

• Executive/Steering
• Media
• Fundraising
## 2015 Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Andrew Williams (TUCCA- Alabama)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>Calvin Head (Milestone- Mississippi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Gloria Sturdevant (SRBWIA- Mississippi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Barbara Shipman (The Cottage House- Alabama)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby made and entered into by and between the member organizations of the Deep South Wealth Creation Network, hereinafter referred to as DSWCN.

The Deep South Wealth Creation Network is a collaboration of five organizations from Mississippi and Alabama who are working to develop vegetable and livestock value chains for the purpose of sustaining the natural resources and improving the livelihoods of rural families in the Deep South region.

Network partners include the Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative, Broader Horizons, and the MileSton Cooperative, located in Mississippi. Alabama partners include The United Christian Community Association and The Cottage House.

This MOU defines our shared principles and expectations of member participation in the network.

Vision - The Deep South Wealth Creation Network members envisions a day when the region’s deep agricultural knowledge is celebrated and vast amounts of underutilized land are capitalized on to create real economic opportunity and contribute to a high quality of life for all. We envision a time where today’s youth are tomorrow’s farmers, who implement the knowledge gained from elders to cultivate their land and contribute to the health and livelihood of their communities. We see our region recognized for not only inspiring the historical, cultural, and political changes that have transformed the United States over the past 50 years, but also influencing a new and just economic model that promotes local ownership, empowers families, ensures resilient communities, and protects our natural systems.

Our Mission - To build vegetable and livestock value chains that create multiple forms of local wealth, reduce poverty, accelerate the agricultural economy, empower communities, engage youth, and improve the livelihoods of rural people in the Deep South.
Network Building!

- Alabama groups are growing and selling leafy greens to meet market demand.

- Mississippi groups are growing and selling bell peppers to meet market demand.
“Skin-in-the-Game”

Each member organization has committed to investing $1,000.00 towards the sustainability of the Network.
Deep South Community Agricultural Network

(Video Link)