



Case Study: Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative.

Background

Sandhills Farm to Table is a multi-farm Community Supported Agriculture venture (CSA) that was organized in late 2009 as a multi-stakeholder cooperative. Matson Consulting, through our partnership with NC MarketReady, was able to work with Sandhills throughout their formation.



Sandhills' Goals

Sandhills' founder, Fenton Wilkinson, wanted to create an entity that would serve to meet the food demands of the local community with locally produced food, while benefitting the producers, the consumers, and the workers themselves. Another goal of the cooperative was to strengthen the community by connecting the people who were buying the food to the people who were producing it.

Matson Consulting

Matson Consulting, in partnership with NC MarketReady, has worked with Sandhills since their inception to organize the underlying structure of their multi-stakeholder cooperative. Because the initial goals of the cooperative included benefits to multiple groups (i.e., farmers, consumers, workers) a unique organizational format was necessary that would address the concerns of all classes of stake-holders involved in the project. In addition to determining the best structure for the co-op, Matson Consulting was able to use our demographic research and analysis skills to produce successful marketing and business development plans. We also provided our grant proposal expertise to help them apply and receive a USDA AMS FMPP grant. Like most of our work, the relationship we establish with our clients and the process itself are both ongoing. We continue to work with Sandhills Farm to Table in order to address both current growth as well as future planning concerns.



Looking Forward

Sandhills Farm to Table has proven to be a great success. They have made a huge impact in their community by providing fresh local food to more than 1600 members, while donating over \$30,000 to local schools and non-profit organizations. In addition, they have had a tremendous impact on their 35 producer-members by paying more than 70% of the retail food dollars received directly back to them. They continue to innovate and expand their



community impact by branching into areas not considered traditional cooperative territory; 2011 marks the first year that they will begin offering community enrichment classes through the cooperative. Their multi-stakeholder model is providing inspiration for several other rural cooperatives in North Carolina, and their unique contributions have been recognized by a recent article in Rural Development Magazine.



***USDA Agriculture Marketing Service Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant (USDA AMS FMPP)**

The Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) was created through an amendment of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976. The grants, administered by the FMPP, are targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Approximately \$5 million is allocated for FMPP for Fiscal Year 2010 and \$10 million for

Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012. The goals of the grant program are to aid in advertising and market promotion; bring local farm products into federal nutrition programs; consumer education and outreach; transportation and delivery equipment purchases; agri-tourism; waste management and green technologies; training farmers in business planning, record keeping and rules and regulations; and market start-up expansion and strategic planning. Entities eligible to apply include agricultural cooperatives, producer networks, producer associations, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public benefit corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers' market authorities and Tribal governments.

www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/FMPP