

FINAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Grantee: The Starting Block, Inc. (SBI)

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PROJECT TITLE

Entrepreneurial Education up the Specialty Food Value-Chain Beyond the Farm-Gate

PROJECT SUMMARY

To educate the small, start-up specialty-food entrepreneur, and larger existing processors, in the belief that a new, “Food-Safety-Informed” entrepreneur becomes more competitive, and a more viable BUYER of the local specialty crop producer’s product. Significant ongoing world-wide efforts have been made educate the specialty crop grower/producer in good agricultural practice (GAP) and food safety, BEHIND the farm-gate. The specific need, addressed by this project, has been to train the beginning specialty food entrepreneur to meet current (and ever-changing) food safety regulations, in order to remain a viable and growing buyer of local specialty crops. The Starting Block (SBI) has always provided assistance to clients in developing their business plans, marketing/distribution plans, legal organization, financial plans, etc. We also encourage our clients to purchase their fruit, vegetable, tree nut, herb, spice and other inputs, locally whenever possible. This project enabled SBI to provide much more focused, one-on-one, food safety counseling to clients, when and as they were here, producing products at our shared-use commercial kitchen incubator. Larger existing food processors, as well as producers behind the farm-gate, have had access to this training, for quite some time, but the “gap” has been with the small start-up, wishing to join the food value-chain. This is the need we have attempted to fill with this project.

PROJECT APPROACH

As a specialty business incubator, with licensed commercial kitchens, we, by definition, have taken a one-on-one, individual client approach in counseling the new start-up client in current (and ever-changing) food safety protocols. The client is here, to produce the product, and gets “real-time” counseling in food safety, safe equipment operation, and changing food safety regulations, both from our trained staff, as well as State and Federal Inspectors.

Initially, we expected to include existing, large food processors in our food safety training. This was under the assumption that significant, rapid progress would be made in the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI). GFSI’s charter has been to integrate the many national food safety protocols, around the world (SQF, ISO 22000, BRC, etc.), into one globally accepted standard. We intended to offer classroom venue training in agreed-upon GFSI standards. Progress, in achieving one GFSI standard has been stalled, and replaced with GFSI giving “benchmark” approval to the national protocols already in force in various countries. Our local food processors were already certified in their chosen protocol (primarily SQF), and did not require training.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

Introduction:

The following is a detailed description of all activities completed. For the most part, it illustrates the one-on-one, individual client approach we have taken in counseling the client in current (and ever-changing) food safety protocols. The goal is always to prepare the client to successfully pass his/her process inspection, and receive a wholesale food license from the appropriate regulatory agency (MDARD, FDA, USDA, etc.). After licensing, we continue consultation with the clients, as they come into the incubator, to produce their products and grow their businesses. That consultation includes connecting them with local specialty crop growers and processors, where they can source growing amounts of inputs to their production.

We provided food safety and entrepreneurial consulting to 27 new start-up businesses, during the grant year. This training resulted in fifteen (15) of those clients receiving their wholesale licenses from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). At the start of their licensed production, they created an averaged of two (2) new jobs. As their businesses grew, during the year, they added an average of one (1) new job. During the year we had 3 clients “graduate”, either to their own licensed facility, or to a licensed “co-packer” who handled production.

Their purchase of local specialty crop inputs (both fresh and processed) began from a base-line of zero, at their beginning. Their purchases grew, from that base-line, as their businesses expanded, here at the incubator, and after they graduated. None of our clients have experienced a “recall”, but their documented recall procedure is required as part of their food licensing process. Food safety and entrepreneurial training and hands-on experience, at the incubator, have resulted in their ability to start and grow a competitive specialty (non-commodity) food business, and to make the decision continue in their own facility, in their own community. Outcome measures, starting from “zero”, are long-term, after “graduation”, and would require post-grant monitoring as to business survival, job creation and increased specialty crop purchases.

Activities:

Use of Equipment and Kitchen Preparation

The Starting Block staff has aided specialty food clients with the use of equipment and kitchen preparation for making their products:

Title: Assemble and test filler and tilt braiser in preparation for clients, and help with other kitchen equipment to support clients at The Starting Block, Hart MI

May 4, 2011

May 12, 2011

May 18, 2011

May 20, 2011

June 17, 2011

July 7, 2011

August 25, 2011
August 30, 2011
September 1, 2011
September 9, 2011
September 14, 2011
September 16, 2011
September 20, 2011
October 23, 2011
October 25, 2011
November 8, 2011
November 21, 2011
November 30, 2011
December 16, 2011

Staff: Ron Steiner, Director, Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

June 8, 2011

Title: Preparation of kitchen and facilities for USDA client, at The Starting Block, Hart MI

Staff: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

July 14, 2011

Title: Preparation of kitchen and facilities for USDA client, at The Starting Block, Hart MI

Staff: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

July 18 and July 19, 2011

Title: Preparation of kitchen and facilities for USDA client, at The Starting Block, Hart MI

Staff: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Food Safety Newsletter and The Starting Block Website, www.startingblock.biz

The Starting Block has developed a Food Safety Newsletter for clients and people interested in specialty crop food production which is sent electronically and also included on The Starting Block website. This website is being updated to include current Specialty Food clients using The Starting Block kitchen on The Producers link and to keep guides to getting started and food safety information updated.

May 31, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter

Staff: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

June 1, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information and writing for newsletter
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

June 7, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

June 21, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter
Staff: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

June 22, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter
Staff: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

July 25, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Writing Food Safety newsletter
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

July 28, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Writing Food Safety newsletter
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

July 29, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter
Staff: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

August 1, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Writing newsletter
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

August 8, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

August 9, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates
Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

August 10, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

August 12, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates with Webmaster

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

August 15, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

August 16, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates and Webmaster Training

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

August 17, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, Assistant, The Starting Block

August 18, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

November 15, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter

Staff: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

December 13, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

December 14, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

December 15, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

December 16, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: The Starting Block Website Updates

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

December 20, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Gathering Food Safety information for newsletter

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

December 22, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Writing Food Safety newsletter

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

December 27, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Title: Writing Food Safety newsletter

Staff: Elizabeth Henley, Writer and Editor, The Starting Block

The Starting Block Training and Counseling Sessions

The Starting Block staff, along with the help of its partners, has conducted the following training or counseling sessions:

April 2, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

April 20, 2011 at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 2

April 27, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

April 28, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 2

May 5, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client pH meter Training Session
Presenter: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Mgr., The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

May 9, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

May 16, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

May 18, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

May 23, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Elizabeth Henley, Spanish Translator, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

May 24, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

May 24, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

May 28, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Elizabeth Henley, Spanish translator
Attendees: 1

June 6, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, Elizabeth Henley, Spanish translator, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

June 6, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 2

June 7, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

June 7, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: HACCP Labeling Fax, S.O.P.'s and Policies, Procedures & Pre-Licensing

Presenters: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

June 9, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session with USDA inspectors

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 3

June 10, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session with USDA inspectors

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 3

June 20, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

June 27, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session

Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 3

July 19, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

July 19, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

July 20, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session
Presenters: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

July 25, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Scheduled Process Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Jane Dosemagen, Office Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

August 10, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

August 29, 2011, at The Starting Block in Hart, MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session
Presenters: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block
Attendees: 4

September 7, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

September 8, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

September 12, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

September 12, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: S.O.P.'s and Policies, Procedures, Pre-Licensing Checklist
Presenter: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

September 14, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block – 1 hour
Attendees: 1

September 19, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

September 26, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: S.O.P.'s and Policies, Procedures, Pre-Licensing Checklist
Presenter: Jane Dosemagen, Office Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

September 26, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

September 27, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Scheduled Process Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

September 29, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

October 5, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

October 6, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

October 7, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 2

October 7, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Nutritional Analysis Session

Presenter: Jane Dosemagen, Office Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

October 11, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Session on Marketing and Equipment

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

October 14, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: FDA Scheduled Process Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

October 19, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Introduction to Food Safety and Kitchen Use

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

October 26 , 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Introduction to Food Safety and Kitchen Use

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

November 3, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Distribution Counseling

Presenter: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

November 4, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Sanitation Training Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 2

November 4, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Product Counseling Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

November 7, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client HACCP Counseling Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

November 8, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client pH Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

November 8, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Introduction to Food Safety and Scheduled Process Information
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

November 16, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Product Counseling Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 2

November 18, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client pH Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

November 21, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Safety, Sanitation & Scheduled Process Training Session
Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

November 29, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.
Session Title: Client Food Distribution Finance Counseling
Presenter: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block
Attendees: 1

December 1, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Introduction to Food Safety and Scheduled Process Information

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 6, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Scheduled Process Information Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 6, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client food product storage

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 15, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Business and Marketing Information Session

Presenter: Ron Steiner, Director, Jane Dosemagen, Office Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 16, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Business and Marketing Information Session

Presenter: Jane Dosemagen, Office Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 20, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Business, Marketing and Equipment Information Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 23, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety and Scheduled Process Information Session

Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 27, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Safety, Kitchen Safety, & Scheduled Process Information Presenter: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, The Starting Block

Attendees: 1

December 28, 2011, at The Starting Block, Hart MI.

Session Title: Client Food Product Counseling

Presenter: Ron Steiner, The Starting Block

Attendees: 2

Meetings related to Food Safety and Entrepreneurial Training

May 11, June 21, August 3, September 28, October 24, November 28, 2011

Session Title: Newaygo County Agri-Tech Meeting

Attendee: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

May 19, 2011,

Session Title: Meeting with Susan Novakoski, MEDC Food Processing Specialist

Attendee: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

September 14, 2011

Session Title: Meeting with Cathy Martin, MDA Inspector

Attendee: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

November 1, 2011

Session Title: Food Scientist/Industry Meeting

Attendee: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

November 11, 2011

Session Title: Specialty Crop Packaging Consultation with Bruce Hart, MSU

Attendee: Ron Steiner, Director, The Starting Block

Meetings of SBI Staff to review project plans and responsibilities

Attendees: Ron Steiner, Director, Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager, Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager

Group Instruction

Energy (E3) Audit at Peterson Farms, including HACCP and Waste Management with MMTC/The Right Place, Spring and Fall, 2011

HACCP Training, May 31, 2011 and June 1, 2011 at The Starting Block

Preparation – Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager and Ron Steiner, Director

Pre-HACCP Training and Meeting with MMTC/The Right Place and Producers - Ron Steiner, Director, April 19, 20, and 21, 2011

Presentation each day by Ron Steiner, Director

FDA Certified ServSafe Training, June 15 and 16, 2011 at The Starting Block

Instructor, Lori LeRay

Preparation – Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager

Website Training, August 12 and 16, 2011
Webmaster Instructor, Sheree Lincoln, Brasswind Design

HACCP Training, November 9 and 10, 2011 at The Starting Block
Preparation – Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager, Ron Steiner, Director

Eastern Market Incubator Consultation, December 7, 2011
Instructor – Ron Steiner, Director

Asparagus Growers Meeting, March 24, 2011 and November 3, 2011 at The Starting Block

School Food Service Local Food Distribution Meeting, November 18, 2011 at The Starting Block
Staff: Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager

Other

Grant Collecting Information and Reporting
Staff: Jane Dosemagen, Operations Manager
Ron Steiner, Director
Jim Henley, Kitchen Manager

BENEFICIARIES

Clearly, the first beneficiaries have been the clients of the incubator. They have been able to receive much more intensive food safety and entrepreneurial counseling than we could have provided without this project. Prior to this project, our entire staff received extensive training and certification from FDA sanctioned “Better Processing” schools and USDA sanctioned “HACCP” programs. We were able to offer this knowledge to those clients making more hazardous products (acidified and low-acid) rather than relatively safer items (bakery, jam, etc.). We did this in numerous one-on-one instructional sessions with clients, as they came to produce their product. They went on to qualify for licensing, start and launch their new businesses, and become new and increasing job creators and buyers of locally grown specialty crops. Long-term, the beneficiaries become the specialty crop suppliers, down the food-chain, from processors to growers. An added beneficiary is the accelerating “local food” movement, where the consumer is able to buy more locally made specialty foods, from retailers. These retailers are constantly looking for more viable local suppliers to meet “locavore” consumer demand.

LESSONS LEARNED

With the world-wide food system, any outbreak of food-borne illness spreads quickly, and tracing the source is often difficult if not impossible. This is one of the drivers of the local food movement, where the supply chain is much shorter, and knowledge of source is available. This movement will continue

IF the local sources are knowledgeable practitioners of ever-changing and tightening food safety protocols. These more tightly regulated protocols require more intensive counseling of our clients than we have provided, for free, as part of the client's kitchen rental fees. To sustain this more intensive counseling, we will be charging fees-for-service to the client, as required, rather than to this grant project. These will vary, depending on the hazardous nature of the product.

We learned that a full-service kitchen incubator, with a dedicated, trained staff is a very viable approach, and the perfect venue for a new food client to start from "zero", and launch a viable new food business.

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