New Farms for New Americans: Incubator Farm Programs, Economic Self-Sufficiency and Grant Dependency

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Abstract

Conventional agriculture has been heavily critiqued for its environmental and social impacts. In response, there has been a surge in alternative agriculture and more sustainable initiatives. While the demand for sustainably produced foods continues to grow, so does the need to train farmers in these new farming methods. One of the most useful and successful ways to do this is through an incubator farm model, which trains new or beginning farmers in order to help them establish their own agricultural business enterprise. One particular population within incubator farm programs in the United States is recently resettled refugees, who have agricultural backgrounds, but lack the resources to begin farming in the United States. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has many programs focused on refugees achieving economic self-sufficiency by means of creating agricultural entrepreneurs. For example, the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) provides grants, predominantly to nonprofits involved with refugees and agriculture. Given the nature of nonprofits, they tend to gravitate towards large federal funds at the expense of diluting their original mission.

This research was a case study on one nonprofit incubator farm program, New Farms for New Americans (NFNA), which is located in Burlington, Vermont. NFNA serves refugees resettled in the state and has been funded largely by two RAPP grants since 2007. In order to determine if the RAPP grant had influenced NFNA's mission, the responses from the pre-existing farmer exit surveys, conducted by Professor Pablo Bose, about the farmers motivations for participating and hopes for the future of the program were compared with the reoccurring themes in the RAPP Funding Opportunity Announcements. This thesis critically analyzed the economic self-sufficiency model and determined if it was appropriate or effective within the NFNA refugee farmer participants.

Keywords: alternative agriculture, economic self-sufficiency, grant dependency, incubator farm programs, nonprofit organizations, refugees

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Important Acronyms

AALV- Association of Africans Living in Vermont

CSA- Community Supported Agriculture

FOA- Funding Opportunity Announcement

NFNA- New Farms for New Americans

ORR- Office of Refugee Resettlement

RAPP- Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program

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1. Introduction

Industrial or conventional agriculture has dominated our food system in the United States for the last century. It is characterized by resource intensive monocultures, the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and an abundance of water (Lyson & Guptill, 2004). Although high in yields and low in price, other impacts beyond the economic sector are being considered, such as environmental, social and human health (Lyson, 2004). Several studies have been done to determine the environmental impacts of conventional agriculture (Lovett, 1990; Gomiero et al., 2011; Horrigan et al., 2002). Additionally, there is an abundance of literature on the social costs associated with conventional agriculture (Welsh, 1997; Hinrichs & Lyson, 2007; Berman, 2011).

After many decades of industrialized agriculture, there has been in a rise in alternatives. In 1999, Cornell Professor Thomas A. Lyson, coined the term "civic agriculture," which is characterized by sustainable farming practices and small, local scale. As an expert on the topic, Lyson has written greatly about specific alternatives under the umbrella term of civic agriculture such as, farmers markets, community supported agriculture and community gardens (Lyson, 2004).

While alternative agriculture has been gaining momentum, so has the birth of a new generation of American farmers (Rafferty, 2011). New initiatives have been created to assist these new farmers and encourage their desire to enter the agriculture sector. For example, incubator farms are tiered systems that support new or beginner farmers. They are characterized by highly subsidizes rates for land, equipment and infrastructure coupled with training in farming techniques and business management (Ewert, 2013;

Green & McReynolds, 2009). The end goal of most incubator farms is to have its graduates go on to start up their own farm business enterprise. Additionally, incubator farms are primarily run through nonprofit organizations, which capitalize on federal grants to fund their programs.

There are several successful nonprofit incubator-farming initiatives in the nation, three of which will be briefly discussed. First, is the Beginning Farmer Center (BFC), which was created in 1994 as part of the Iowa State University Extension. The purpose of the program is to encourage individuals to become new farmers, by matching them with existing farmers who want to handover their farm business. The BFC provides education in sustainable agriculture, financial management and planning and legal advice through seminars and publications (Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, 2013). Second, is the People Learning Agriculture Now Not Tomorrow (PLANT) initiative at Breeze Farm Enterprise Incubator in North Carolina. The purpose of the program is to reinvigorate agricultural activity in the state. PLANT involves training via workshops on sustainable farming techniques (Orange County Farms, 2013). Third, is the Seed Farm incubation program, located in Pennsylvania. The program provides new farmers with guidance in starting up their own farm businesses. The Seed Farm provides subsidized rates for land, infrastructure and equipment coupled with mentorship in farming and marketing techniques (Seed Farm, 2013).

Many incubator farm programs are geared towards assisting specific groups of people. For example, one particular population served by incubator farm programs is recently resettled refugees. Given their lack of resources, the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) provides refugees with medical and social services (Halpern, 2009).

The ORR and all of its initiatives were created to assist refugees in achieving economic self-sufficiency (Bruno, 2011). Given that many of the incubator farming models in the United States have the end goal of creating agricultural entrepreneurs out of their participants, and that the ORR emphasizes the need for refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency, it is no surprise that incubator farm models have dominated many of the ORR programs and initiatives. Furthermore, the emphasis on achieving economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible after entering the United States is also evident in the rhetoric of many ORR grant Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs).

Often times, grant funded programs change their mission to align with the funders objectives. Specifically, nonprofit organizations are plagued by the 'resource dependence theory' and mission dilution (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The enticement of large federal funds leads to a breakdown in the program's original mission (Froelich, 1999).

One particular program, New Farms for New Americans (NFNA), located in Burlington, Vermont embodies all of the aforementioned contexts. The program serves refugee populations and capitalizes on the alternative food movements underway in the state of Vermont through organic agricultural methods. Additionally, the program has been largely funded by two federal grants from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) through the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP).

This research was a case study, done to assess if the RAPP grant guidelines have influenced or directed New Farms for New Americans mission, goals and/or objectives. My research entailed document analysis of both the 2007 and 2010 RAPP FOAs as well as pre-existing farmer exit surveys conducted by Professor Pablo Bose. After analyzing and comparing both of these documents, I have produced some meaningful

recommendations for the future of the NFNA program. The following section provides an overview of the literature surrounding the aforementioned topics and issues as a platform for my research to build upon.

2. Literature Review

a) Conventional Agriculture & Alternatives

For the last century, agriculture in the United States has been a highly industrialized and commodity based system that is built upon the conviction that the primary intention of farming should be to produce as much food for the least cost possible. Simply put, the goals of United States agriculture have been to increase productivity and efficiency simultaneously (Lyson & Guptill, 2004). There is no doubt that high crop yields have been attained in the last century under commodity agricultural models, but it has been at the expense of environmental and human health (Lovett, 1990; Gomiero et al., 2011; Horrigan et al. 2002). Industrial (or conventional) agriculture is characterized by high-energy use and expensive off farm inputs that degrade the land (Gomiero et al., 2011; Horrigan et al. 2002). Some other environmental impacts associated with industrial agriculture are low rates of biodiversity, pollution of soil and waterways from heavy synthetic fertilizers and unsustainable water use (Horrigan et al. 2002). In terms of soil properties, conventional agriculture has lower soil organic matter, more erosion, and lower percolation rates (Gomiero et al., 2011).

Aside from environmental degradation, there are also social costs to this type of food system. Industrial agriculture is accompanied by corporate control and vertical integration throughout the production and supply chain (Welsh, 1997). Large multinational food corporations have replaced self-reliant farmers to the point where the

ten largest U.S.-based corporations control almost 60% of the food and beverages sold in the United States (Hinrichs & Lyson, 2007). One consequence of this kind of power over our food systems is that rural farming communities lose autonomy and suffer socially and economically. Meanwhile, inner cities lose access to fresh, locally produced food, and consumers become further out of touch with the origins of their meals (Berman, 2011; Horrigan et al. 2002).

After many decades of intense industrialization of our food system, there has been a growing curiosity about the ways in which our food is produced and more sustainable alternatives. Consumers, environmentalists and farmers are all voicing their desire for more "civic agriculture"; a term coined by Cornell Professor Thomas A. Lyson at the 1999 Rural Sociology Annual Meeting (Lyson, 2004). Civic agriculture is a sustainable alternative to conventional agriculture and is characterized by small, local scale and intrinsically connected to the "social and cultural fabric of the community" (Hinrichs & Lyson, 2007). Unlike the founding tenants of industrialized or commodity agriculture, alternative approaches are grounded in the belief that farmers have control of their own operations from cultivation all the way to the final sale (Welsh, 1997). The demand amongst consumers has led to exponentially rising rates of direct marketing agricultural products throughout the country (Raftery, 2011; Welsh, 1997).

One of these alternatives is a farmers market. The USDA defines a farmers market as a, "common area where several farmers and growers gather on a regular, reoccurring basis to sell locally-grown farm products directly to consumers" (United States Department of Agriculture, 2012). Farmers markets provide consumers with access to locally grown foods while also fostering social capital through regular interactions

between farmers and their customers. They are an integral link between urban populations and farms and continue to grow in popularity. For example, the number of registered farmers markets in the United States has increased from 1,755 in 1994 to 7,864 in 2012 (United States Department of Agriculture, 2012).

Another form of alternative agriculture is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), in which the consumers buy "shares" in the farm before planting begins and receive portions of in season foods, as they are available throughout the growing season (Brown & Miller, 2008). CSAs foster relationships between farmers and consumers through direct sales (Northeast Organic Farming Association, 2012). Originally introduced in the early 1990's when there were only 50 CSA farms, there are now over 4,000 CSA farms in the United States (Brown & Miller, 2008; Local Harvest, 2012). In Vermont, there are currently over 65 CSA farms in operation. The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) is a nonprofit association, comprised of gardeners, farmers and consumers. Their mission is to foster a Vermont food system that is both economically profitable while also being ecologically beneficial (Northeast Organic Farming Association, 2012a). NOFA-VT works closely with CSAs in the state to support and improve their operations.

A third and final form of alternative agriculture, which has gained some footing is the community garden. Unlike a private garden, community gardens are public in ownership and access. Similarly to farmers markets and CSA's, community gardens promote social capital and locally grown produce. They are now recognized as an international phenomenon under the broader context of urban gardening (Ferris et al., 2001). The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) is a non-profit whose

mission is to build social capital by creating community gardens throughout the United States and Canada (American Community Gardening Association, 2008). They have a comprehensive database where you can enter your zip code or state in order to find a community garden in your area. The ACGA has seen an overwhelming increase in interest in the last 5 years, with a 200% increase in hits on their website and a 75% increase in phone calls (Mannion, 2009). Additionally, large cities have been making serious policy changes to incorporate urban gardening into their cityscapes. In Miami, zoning laws have been refurbished to allow for rooftop and backyard gardens and in the city of Milwaukee vacant lots have been leased for use as community gardens (Mannion, 2009).

All of these alternatives gaining popularity are concurrent with the birth of a new generation of American farmers dissatisfied with industrial agriculture (Rafferty, 2011). With a more sustainable mindset and interest in local foods, this new generation has great potential to transform our agricultural system. However, there are many barriers to entry for new farmers such as access to land, startup costs and lack of social support (Ewert, 2012).

b) Incubator Farms, Refugee Resettlement Programs & Nonprofit Organizations

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has stated that beginning, limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers make up about 40% of all U.S. farmers (Niewolny & Lillard, 2010). Given these statistics, the last few years have seen an increased interest in support programs to help beginner farmers such as the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, the 2006 Small Farms

and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Regulation Policy (Niewolny & Lillard, 2010). Although helpful, one of the most straightforward and effective approaches has been the creation and implementation of incubator farms. The concept of an incubator farms involves a tiered system for new or beginner farmers to progress through. They enter the program at a highly subsidized tier, providing farmers access to land, equipment, resources and training (Boekelheide, 2012). Most incubator farms also provide their participants with technical support, highly subsidized rates and assistance is accessing markets to sell their products (Ewert, 2012; Green & McReynolds, 2009). As they progress through the program and acquire skills, farmer participants are less subsidized and assume more responsibility in the creation of their own farming enterprise.

Incubator farms are predominantly run through nonprofit organizations although some are government-sponsored and others even run by individuals (Ewert, 2012; Niewolny & Lillard, 2010). The process by which land is distributed varies from program to program as well; some lease land to individuals or groups of farmers, while others use the land collectively amongst participants. Given that most incubator farms are through nonprofit organizations, staffing can be vary variant from one program to another. Depending on how much funding is acquired, a program could be losing money and understaffed or economically self-sustaining (Boris, 1998).

Whether the participants are experienced or have never farmed before, natives or immigrants, incubator farms accommodate a very diverse population of participants. A number of farm incubator programs are designed for specific demographics (Niewolny & Lillard, 2010). One particular population served by incubator farm programs is recently resettled refugees. Refugees are forced to flee their homes due to violent conflict or other

disruptions such as development induced displacement. In a report on refugee economic self-sufficiency prepared by Peggy Halpern for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Halpern (2008) writes, "a refugee is a person outside of his or her own country and unable or unwilling to return because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group" (p. v).

Some specific goals for refugees resettled in the United States include increased levels of income, a better understanding of American culture, and increased access to mainstream services and resources (Halpern, 2008). Refugees often lack the resources needed to attain these goals or rebuild their lives, so they are provided with medical and social services by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) located in the United States Department of Health and Human Services (Halpern, 2008). The ORR and all of its initiatives and programs are intended to assist refugees in achieving economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible once they arrive in the United States (Bruno, 2013). Although good intentioned, many argue that the ORR programs need to be reformed. More specifically, the self-sufficiency model has been heavily critiqued as inappropriate and ineffective (Bruno, 2013). Some other problems within the ORR include insufficient funds and the "lottery effect," by which the amount of financial assistance and services provided is dictated by the location in the country where refugees are resettled (Bruno, 2013).

One program within the ORR of particular relevance is the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP). The RAPP has multiple objectives for the refugee population, which include generating supplemental income for families, access to healthy

foods and stimulating social integration (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2012). Given that most refugees come from agrarian, subsistence farming backgrounds this program provided funding in the form of grants for public or private nonprofit agencies. There have been two 36-month long grant cycles so far, the first 2007-2010 and the second 2010-2013, in which 14 projects were funded (Halpern, 2008). The 2007 Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) had a range of individual awards from $50,000 to $125,000 per budget period, with the average award around $77,000 (See Appendix 1). The 2010 FOA had similar amounts, with an award ceiling of $100,000, an award floor of $50,000 per budget period, and an average award of $83,300 (See Appendix 2).

All recipients of the RAPP grant were nonprofit organizations (NPO) with a focus on refugees and agriculture (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2012). NPOs, given their nature, are inherently forced to rely upon outside sources for funding (Froelich, 1999). This phenomenon has been deemed, 'resource dependence theory' and states, "the key to organizational survival is the ability to acquire and maintain resources" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). With this theory in mind, nonprofit organizations are not simply pursuing goals of their own accord. On the contrary, they are heavily constrained by their resource dependence and unfortunately the funding ultimately changes and remolds their original mission (Froelich, 1999).

Many studies have sited government funding as a reliable, stable and predictable sources of revenue, which has contributed to why so many nonprofits rely on federal sources specifically, as opposed to others (Froelich, 1999; Boris, 1998). While the familiarity of federal funding is appealing, there is also something to be said about the impacts it has on nonprofit organization's structure.

In a broad study of government-funded nonprofit organizations, Nielsen (1979) writes, "as a direct consequence of their financial dependence, Third Sector institutions have become entangled in an increasingly dense web of government rules and regulations and have lost a large degree of control over their own policies, procedures, and programs" (p. 18). More specifically, one of the most glaring and often times unnoticed effects is mission dilution, by which nonprofit organizations lose their original sense of goals and objectives due to the lure of large sums of money from the government (Froelich, 1999).

c) Case Study: New Farms for New Americans & the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program

One particular program, New Farms for New Americans, located in Burlington, Vermont embodies all of the aforementioned contexts. Given their subsistence farming background, many refugees are relocated in agriculturally driven states, like Vermont. One of the current fourteen Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) grantees in the United States is the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV). Launched in 2008, New Farms for New American's (NFNA) is AALV's nonprofit gardening and agricultural program, which is largely funded by the RAPP grants. NFNA's mission is to help participants at three levels: 1) access community gardening and gardening resources, 2) learn about farming for a profit in the United States and participate in social enterprise sales, and 3) start up a farm business (Association of Africans Living in Vermont, 2012).

The program serves over 90 households from Africa and Asia. All of the participants have a vast amount of experience with agriculture from their homelands, thus organic food cultivation is a means of maintaining their culture as well as supplemental

income (Association of Africans Living in Vermont, 2012). Since the majority of the farmers have been primarily involved in subsistence farming, there is substantial instructions given on business-oriented skills such as goal setting, planning timelines, and record keeping (Association of Africans Living in Vermont, 2012). The program has plots of land at the Intervale Center, Ethan Allen Homestead and farmland in Shelburne.

Of these three locations, the Intervale, a nonprofit organization located in Burlington, Vermont, has had significant involvement with NFNA. Their mission is to strengthen community food systems through, "new farm incubation, farm business development, agricultural market development, agricultural land stewardship, food systems research and consulting and celebration of food and farmers" (Intervale, 2012). The organization has three main goals: 1) enhance viability of farming 2) promote sustainable use of agricultural lands and 3) ensure community engagement in the food systems.

The Intervale Center carries out these goals and implements their programs on 350 acres of stewarded land along the Winooski River. Their farmer incubator program follows the previously mentioned, tiered model consisting of three phases: incubator (1-3 years), enterprise (3-5 years), and mentor (5+ years) (Berman, 2011; Intervale Center, 2012). Former NFNA program specialist, Josie Weldon, described the relationship between the Intervale and NFNA as one of a landlord. The first year NFNA rented one acre, the second year two acres and the third year, three acres of land from the Intervale. NFNA had to pay for water, land, fees for land use and maintenance. Additionally, the Intervale was a sub-grantee to NFNA, which paid the Intervale to consult on farming techniques and integration into the broader agriculture community in Vermont.

3. Methodology

New Farms for New Americans is a valuable community-based social enterprise providing ecological, economic and social goods and services to its participants and the greater Burlington area. The purpose of this research was to delve into the influence that the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) grant has had on the New Farms for New Americans (NFNA) initiative and provide NFNA with meaningful recommendations for the future direction of the program. Although the intentions of the RAPP are straightforward, "help refugees achieve economic self-sufficiency," there has not been a holistic study done to determine if the agricultural entrepreneurship model is the most appropriate avenue for NFNA to continue down. This thesis examined the impact that the RAPP grant had on the mission of NFNA and can be applied more generally to the implications funding can have on any organizations mission.

The research entailed analyzing two types of documents: 1) both Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) and 2) pre-existing farmer exit surveys. The RAPP FOAs were analyzed to explicitly state what the funder's goals, objectives and overall mission were. By categorizing the major themes found in both RAPP FOAs and noting their frequency I was able to capture the essence of what the federal government wanted organizations focused on refugees to be doing with their funding. The survey was conducted by, Professor Pablo Bose on behalf of New Farms for New Americans, in October of 2012 and consisted of 34 respondents' answers to 18 questions. Analyzing the pre-existing exit surveys shed light on the motives for refugee farmer participation NFNA and their hopes for the program's future.

In order to analyze these documents, both the 2007 and 2010 Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) were coded to identify key themes, patterns, ideas and concepts (Denscombe, 2010; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Additionally, the data from the farmer exit surveys were converted into graphic representations for easy reader comprehension. The main goal of utilizing these documents was to paint a detailed and accurate picture of the funders mission in comparison to the farmer participant's motives for being part of the program (Denscombe, 2010). Aside from the two FOAs and pre-existing farmer exit surveys, other documents were also examined for context including, correspondences between the RAPP grant program manager Larry Laverentz and the NFNA executive director Jacob Bogre, letters of support from partners within Vermont, general information about the RAPP grant, NFNA's project proposal for the RAPP grants and required semi-annual evaluations done by NFNA. Former program specialist Josie Weldon and current program specialist Alisha Laramee were also consulted throughout this research.

4. Results

a) Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program Funding Opportunity Annoucement Document Analysis

Generally speaking, potential grantees applying for the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) grant were to propose a plan that utilized agriculture to achieve better livelihoods for refugee families. There have been two 36-month award announcements, the first in 2007 and the second in 2010. In order to speak qualitatively about the driving forces behind this grant, certain phrases and paragraphs from the

Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) were coded with a color to indicate different reoccurring themes (See Appendix 1).

Table 1: RAPP FOA 2007 Codes

Color	Theme	Frequency
Green	Social services to further integration into society	7
Orange	Independent farmers/ achieve economic self-sufficiency/ greater self-reliance	6
Yellow	Training (i.e. business management, farming assistance, English lessons)	5
Red	Sustainable or reasonable income	5
Purple	Collaborations	4
Pink	Health & nutrition benefits	1
Teal	Assumptions	1

Table 1 summarizes the following results of the 2007 RAPP Funding Opportunity Announcement. The most frequently used theme was "social services to further integration into society." This was brought up in the context of language and cultural differences, which limit refugee's ability to assimilate into society. The document also

mentioned the overall positive effect of engaging refugees in farming, including both mental and social benefits.

The second most popular theme was "independent farmers/achieve economic self-sufficiency/ greater self-reliance." The idea that refugees want to pursue an agriculture livelihood and achieve economic self-sufficiency by means of farming was heavily emphasized throughout the document. Within this theme were also statements about how funds would be given to applicants that had long-term goals of farm business ventures for their refugee participants.

The next most popular theme was "training (i.e. business management, farming assistance, English lessons)." This was brought up in regards to providing assistance to refugees who did not know how to farm in the United States and had little business and financial knowledge. This went together with the emphasis on awarding money to applicants whose projects were directed at setting up farming ventures for refugee participants. In order to do so, training in marketing, farming and financing would be necessary as well. The theme of "sustainable or reasonable income" had the same level of frequency. One statement in particular that weighed heavily given the word choice was, "The main focus of the RAPP is to support sustainable income earning and activities in rural areas" (See Appendix 1).

"Collaborations" was mentioned a total of four times throughout the document, in reference to the importance of applications to include partnerships with other organizations. The document stated several different examples of appropriate collaborations such as local and regional groups interested in sustainable agriculture and

health departments. The emphasis on collaboration made it clear that the most successful applicants were those with a variety of supporting organizations.

Finally, “health and nutrition benefits” and “assumptions” were both only mentioned one time. The first was in reference to consumer demand for organic and niche crops. Assumptions stood out in a statement that, “refugee family members are willing to work together in rural businesses. They share a willingness to do intensive hands-on labor and to work on small tracts of land” (See Appendix 1).

The next document analyzed was the 2010 Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA). Multiple objectives were apparent, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: RAPP FOA 2010 Codes

Color	Theme	Frequency
Yellow	Training (i.e. business management, farming assistance, English lessons)	10
Pink	Health & nutrition benefits	9
Green	Social services to further integrate into society	7
Orange	Independent farmers/achieve economic self-sufficiency/greater self reliance	6
Red	Improve livelihoods (i.e. extra income)	5
Purple	Collaborations	3
Blue	Grow for your own consumption	1

The most popular theme was "training (i.e. business management, farming assistance, English lessons)." It was mentioned a total of ten times throughout the grant. Most of these were in reference to business training such as understanding financial terms, record keeping, planning and marketing assistance to create more demand for products. Within this theme, English lessons and place-based farm training were also mentioned, but the main messages were about business management.

The second most popular theme was "health & nutrition benefits." The most frequently mentioned messages within this theme had to do with access to healthy and familiar foods (due to the fact that refugees are often resettled in food deserts), increasing food security in their communities, and there was one mention of how the objectives of RAPP are in line with the anti-hunger and anti-obesity objectives of the federal government (See Appendix 2).

The third most mentioned theme was "social services to further integrate into society." This was mentioned throughout the entire grant FOA and essentially spoke about recognizing the specific needs of the refugees in order to make a smooth transition into their new homes. This included education, health and other services. By entering the sustainable food networks in their area, the hope was that refugees would expedite their incorporation process.

"Independent farmers/achieving economic self-sufficiency/greater self reliance" and "improving livelihoods (i.e. generating extra income)" had similar levels of frequency. Although close in meaning, there was an intentional distinction made between creating a source of *supplemental* income through farming and creating *independent farmers* whose sole source of money comes from farming. Furthermore, this set apart the benefits of extra income in the immediate short-term from the emphasis on the importance of becoming independent farmers with their own established enterprises.

The next most prevalent theme was "collaborations." This document stated quite clearly that establishing collaborative partnerships with organizations within the community was key to being awarded the grant. There was a specific section on page 4 of

the 2010 RAPP FOA, entitled Collaborative Relationships, which delved into the significance of gaining support and involvement from other organizations within the community if awarded this grant (See Appendix 2).

Lastly, "grow for your own consumption" was mentioned once. This was stated on page 2 in a bulleted list of rationale for RAPP. The document read, "it responds to a growing interest by refugee and other families that wish to grow their own vegetables for family consumption and sharing with extended family and friends" (See Appendix 2).

b) Pre-existing Farmer Exit Surveys

The farmer exit surveys were conducted by Professor Pablo Bose, on behalf of New Farms for New Americans in October of 2012 (See Appendix 3). There were 34 participants in the survey, 18 of which were women and 16 men. The average age was 55.9, the youngest being 27 and the oldest being 75. All participants were Bhutanese tier 2 farmers and 82% identified farming as their previous occupation. The average time commitment to the New Farms for New Americans (NFNA) project was 15 hours. Participants gave a range of times with 1-9 hours a week being the lowest and 20-30 hours being the highest.

Figure 1: English Language Skills

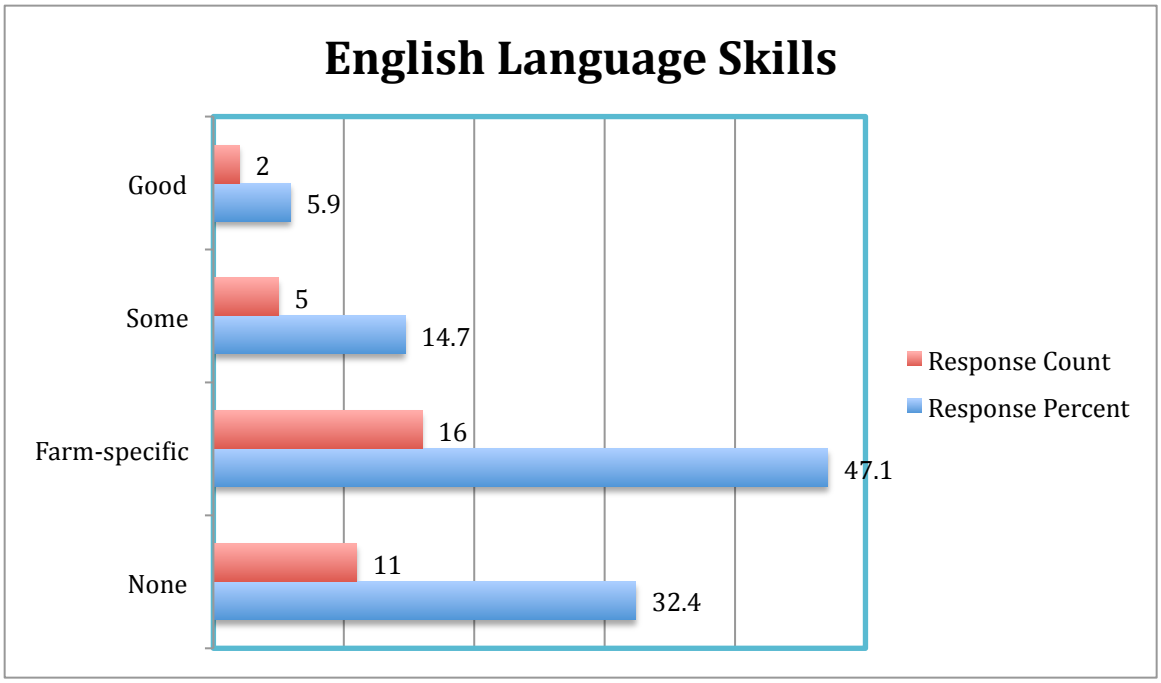

Figure 1 above, shows their level of English proficiency. The majority of participants have "Farm-specific" skills, while only two identified their English language skills as "Good."

Figure 2: How many years have you been involved in the project?

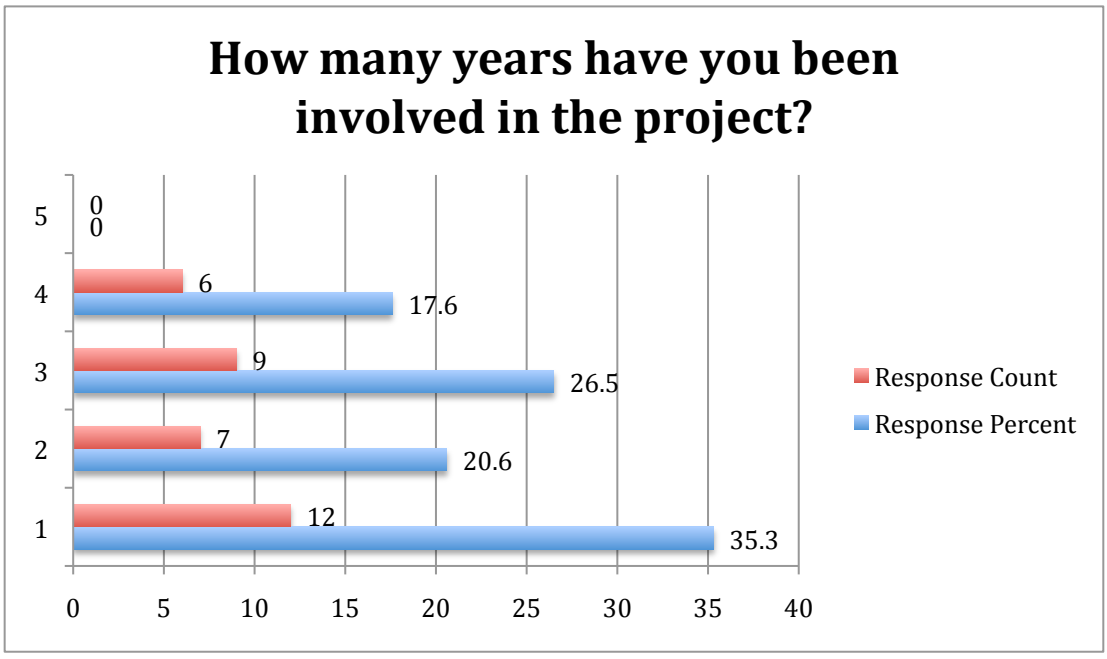

Figure 2 depicts how many years the survey participants have been involved in the New Farms for New Americans (NFNA) project. The majority of participants, 35.3%, have been involved for one year and the longest amount of years any participant responded to being involved in the program was four.

Table 3: Why are you participating in this program? List all that are applicable and rank in order of importance

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Response Count
Income	4.0% (1)	**40.0% (10)**	32.0% (8)	20.0% (5)	4.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25
Produce for household consumption	**41.2% (14)**	35.3% (12)	20.6% (7)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	34
Skill development/ Learning about farming in Vermont	**37.5% (3)**	25.0% (2)	25.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	12.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8
Interact with people in your community	13.6% (3)	18.2% (4)	**27.3% (6)**	18.2% (4)	22.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	22
Interact with people in broader community	0.0% (0)	**66.7% (2)**	0.0% (0)	33.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3
Exercise and/or health benefits	**48.0% (12)**	16.0% (4)	12.0% (3)	20.0% (5)	4.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25

Table 3 summarizes the results for when asked why they were participating in the program. The number one response was produce for home consumption, followed by exercise and health benefits. Of particular interest is the fact that only one survey

participant identified income as the first reason for participating in the program, but most listed it as their second.

Table 4: Would you continue to sell food in this program if your responsibilities required any of the following?

	Yes	No	Maybe	Response Count
Weighing and labeling food	33.3% (11)	30.3% (10)	**36.4% (12)**	33
Preparing and packaging food for CSAs and deliveries	**82.4% (28)**	8.8% (3)	8.8% (3)	34
Selling at farmers markets	18.2% (6)	**51.5% (17)**	30.3% (10)	33
Delivering goods to restaurants and retailers	5.9% (2)	**76.5% (26)**	17.6% (6)	34

Table 4 summarizes the results for when asked if they would continue to sell food in the program if their responsibilities required any of the following. Labeling food, participants were fairly evenly split: 11 said yes, 10 said no and 12 said maybe. Preparing and packing food deliveries was well received, with 82.4% answering yes. Selling food to farmers markets and delivering goods to restaurants and retailers were not popular, both of which had the majority of participants voting no.

Figure 3: What would prevent you from wanting to participate in these aspects of the program?

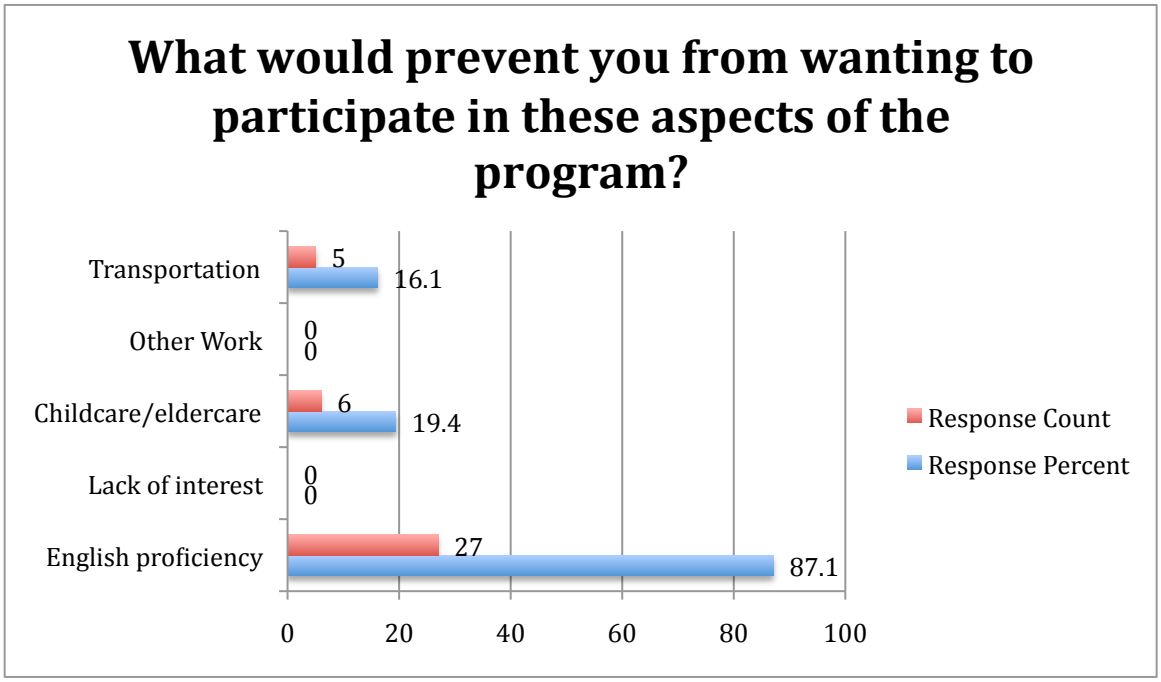

Figure 3 depicts the result when asked what was preventing them from wanting to participate in these aspects of the program; 87.1% answered English proficiency, followed by childcare/eldercare with 19.4% and transportation with 16.1%. Interestingly, no one answered lack of interest or other work for this question. Furthermore, when asked how important transportation was for their participation in the program, 60.6% of respondents answered very important (I cannot participate without a ride).

Table 5: What do you hope to achieve when you finish with your time at NFNA? Please indicate all that are applicable and rank in order of importance

	1	2	3	Response Count
Become and independent farmer	9.1% (1)	**63.6% (7)**	27.3% (3)	11
Become a community gardener	**90.9% (30)**	6.1% (2)	3.0% (1)	33
Find other food-related job	25.0% (3)	8.3% (1)	**66.7% (8)**	12

Table 5 represents what participants hope to achieve when they finish with the NFNA program. The most popular answer was become a community gardener. Only one person chose becoming an independent farmer as their first choice, and in total only 11 people identified becoming an independent farmer as a choice at all.

When asked about the most significant benefits of participating in the program, fresh produce for home consumption was the most frequent response, followed by exercise and health, then community interaction and finally extra income. When asked about problems with participating in the program, most answered none and a few respondents mentioned transportation.

When asked about any additional training or skills they would like to receive as part of NFNA's program, most respondents answered no additional training. However, there were a few responses about more English lessons and gardening/farm training.

The last question asked for any additional comments or suggestions for NFNA. Once again the majority answered none, however several respondents mentioned wanting to farm individually on their own plots of land.

5. Discussion

The Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) is an interesting case because there were two 36-month grant cycles, with different Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) and thus different themes within each. In the 2007 RAPP FOA, phrases about social services to further integrate refugees into society came up the most frequently, next was the mention of creating independent farmers, achieving economic self sufficiency and fostering greater self-reliance, and following that was the theme of training. However, in the 2010 RAPP FOA, the most popular theme was training, followed by health and nutrition benefits and then social services to further integrate refugees into society. Although frequency is not an end all be all indication of any conclusive findings, it is interesting to note how the grant focus had shifted over time. When speaking with the previous program specialist of New Farms for New Americans, Josie Weldon, she mentioned how around the second cycle of the grant, the federal government became much more involved in supporting projects that supported healthy nutrition, which is evident in the rewording of the 2010 RAPP FOA.

In my own experience working with the New Farms for New Americans (NFNA) initiative, there was a clear effort to promote healthy nutrition during the second funding cycle. More specifically, I ran two farm stands located in two public housing communities, one at Franklin Sqaure and the other in Winooski, where we sold the excess produce leftover after harvesting. The goal was to utilize the time to train farmer

participants in how to use a scale, weigh food, interact with customers and keep records. Additionally, the project promoted healthy, nutritious alternatives to members of the low-income neighborhoods who otherwise would settle for highly processed cheap food. Although not explicitly stated, there were undertones of nutrition awareness. This speaks to the impact that the RAPP objectives had on NFNA's mission during the second funding cycle.

Another interesting observation I made was in the 2007 RAPP FOA. The "assumptions" theme was only used once, but for a relatively glaring statement on page 2, which reads, "refugee family members are willing to work together in rural businesses. They share a willingness to do intensive hands-on labor and to work on small tracts of land" (See Appendix 1). This really stood out because if there is anything I personally have learned from my experience working with the NFNA refugee participants it is that they butt heads quite often. Aside from their unwillingness to work with members of other ethnicities, opinions are regularly voiced about wanting to work completely alone. As stated earlier, the last question of the exit survey asked for any additional comments or suggestions for NFNA (See Appendix 3). Although most answered none, there were several respondents who all mentioned wanting to farm individually on their own plots of land. Although the "assumptions" theme was only used once, the significance behind that statement speaks to the larger issue of our federal government having misconceptions about the people their funding is provided for. This relates to the aforementioned literature, which discussed the need for the Office of Refugee Resettlement Programs (ORR) to be reformed (Bruno, 2013).

A third observation worthy of discussion is the difference in wording for the red codes from each Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA). In the 2007 RAPP FOA, red indicated "sustainable or reasonable income", while in the 2010 RAPP FOA red signified "improve livelihoods (i.e. extra income)." The rhetoric found in the 2007 RAP FOA was much more focused on creating agricultural entrepreneurs out of refugee participants, whereas the 2010 RAPP FOA language was more focused on creating short-term supplemental income through agricultural activities. However, when surveyed, only one participant identified income as the first reason for participating in the program at all.

Along this same vein, the "independent farmers/achieving economic self-sufficiency/greater self-reliance," theme was very prevalent in both documents. On page 5 of the 2010 RAPP FOA, it states very clearly, "The ultimate purpose is to have persons become independent farmers" (See Appendix 2). Although concise, it made it very clear what the funders "ultimate purpose" for providing this money was, regardless of the seven different themes within this document. Even though "independent farmers/achieving economic self-sufficiency/greater self-reliance" was not the most frequently used theme, that one sentence alone carried more weight than anything else during the analysis. Furthermore, this contrasts greatly with the statistics from the pre-existing farmer exit surveys. When asked what participants hope to achieve when they finish with the NFNA program, only one person chose becoming an independent farmer as their first choice, and in total only 11 people identified it as a choice at all. Clearly there is still some disconnect between what the RAPP grant mission and objectives are and the desires of the refugee participants in the programs receiving the funding. These results were all in line with critics concerns about the appropriateness of the self-

sufficiency model and overall need to adjust some of the Office of Refugee Resettlement's program goals and objectives (Bruno, 2013).

A fourth interesting observation was that in the 2010 RAPP FOA, the "growing for own consumption" theme was only mentioned once. However, in the pre-existing exit surveys, when asked why they were participating in the program, produce for home consumption was the number one response. This is yet another example of the mismatched objectives between the RAPP grant and NFNA farmer participants.

A fifth observation suggested the need for more English lessons. As shown in the responses from the survey, the majority of participants do not want to sell food to farmers markets or deliver goods to restaurants and retailers. However, when asked what was preventing them from wanting to participate in these aspects of the program, an overwhelming majority, 87.1%, answered English proficiency and more interestingly nobody answered lack of interest. Additionally, when asked about any additional training or skills they would like to receive as part of NFNA's program, there were several responses about more English lessons. Given these statistics, perhaps New Farms for New American's could look into partnering up with some other organizations in town to provide more English lessons to program participants. For example, the University of Vermont is a great resource for student volunteers.

Perhaps the most telling statistic of all the research was the fact that 90.9% of farmers want to become community gardeners. This quite clearly states what direction the farmer participants want the New Farms for New Americans program to go in and should not be taken lightly.

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

This is a transitional time for New Farms for New Americans (NFNA); there is a new program specialist, Alisha Laramee, with new visions for the program. This is the perfect opportunity to make some significant changes for the better, including diversifying funding sources. Rather than relying solely on large federal grants from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, NFNA needs to look into alternative resources. Judging from the immense amount of letters of support included in the NFNA applications for the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) funding, NFNA has a solid network of partnerships to utilize. Rather than relying on the federal government for funding, perhaps NFNA should put its efforts into fostering closer relations with local networks of support.

Additionally, NFNA should establish their mission criteria including clear goals and tangible objectives before finding funding. Once they have established the program's mission, they should choose funding sources that support that mission rather than reshaping the program to fit big money goals and objectives. The current mission statement has three different ideas happening at once: 1) access community gardens and gardening resources; 2) learn about farming for a profit in the U.S. and participate in social enterprise sales, and 3) start up a farm business (Association of Africans Living in Vermont, 2012). Rather than searching for grants to fit their broad mission, they should hone in on one particular model and really work to make it prosper.

In the vein of establishing a clear mission, the research has revealed several important findings. First and foremost, is the fact that only one farmer wants to become an independent farmer at the end of the program, while 30 out of 33 (90.9%) want to be

community gardeners. Given this information, the NFNA program officers should work to alter their mission statement to be clearly centered on community gardening.

Given that transportation has been an issue that continually gets brought up, perhaps NFNA should look into creating two community gardens: one at a public housing unit (either Franklin Square or Winooski) and another at a central location in town. By creating a community garden in the public housing communities where the farm stand project was run this summer you eliminate the issues of transportation and childcare because a fair amount of participants live in that area. Additionally, for those who do not reside in either of the public housing communities mentioned earlier, a garden could be created in some location in town that is easy to get to by public bus, biking or walking.

Additionally, the fact that only one farmer answered income as their number one reason for participating in the program shows how different the refugees objectives are in comparison to many of the reoccurring RAPP grant themes such as creating independent farmers, achieving economic self-sufficiency, greater self-reliance and improving livelihoods by means of increased income etc (See Appendices 1 & 2). Rather than putting time and resources into training farmers on business techniques, perhaps NFNA should focus more on training participants in gardening techniques so they can produce food for home consumption.

This research has demonstrated that New Farms for New Americans should move away from the incubator-farming model focused on creating independent farmers and consider moving towards a community garden approach, in order to better serve the refugee participants. Additionally, they should look into addressing the topic of

transportation, since it was brought up several times in the exit surveys as an issue within the program and an obstacle to progression in general for the refugees.

In conclusion, I believe New Farms for New Americans should work towards fostering a clear, realistic set of program objectives and ultimately goals centered on creating a community garden, in order to avoid mission dilution or confusion. Moreover, in order to instill greater project ownership, the refugee participants themselves need to be heavily involved throughout all phases of the community gardening initiative. Perhaps organizing potluck dinners, English lesson activities or any other kind of event would encourage participants to get together and foster more of a group foundation to build upon. Lastly, given that NFNA is located in Burlington, Vermont, a state based on agriculture and a city full of food justice movements, they should consider looking into local funds geared towards community garden initiatives. New Farms for New Americans has the unique chance to revamp its program since they are at this transitional stage. Given the ecological, economic and social services the program provides, I hope that New Farms for New Americans will find success through community gardening.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: 2007 Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program Funding Opportunity Announcement

FON: HHS-2007-ACF-ORR-ZR-0118
Title: Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program
Program Office: ORR
Drafter: Larry Laverentz
Publish Means: ACF Website

Review Due:

Special Instructions:

Gray shaded text denotes standardized language that is required content in every announcement.

Gray shaded underlined text denotes optional standard language where users can opt to include certain text when appropriate.

Department of Health & Human Services
Administration for Children and Families

Program Office: Office of Refugee Resettlement

Funding Opportunity Title: Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: HHS-2007-ACF-ORR-ZR-0118

CFDA Number: 93.576

Due Date for Applications: **[Insert 60 days from date of publication].**

Executive Summary:

Background:

Farming and rural entrepreneurship provide an opportunity for refugees living in, or adjacent to, rural areas to earn a sustainable income and obtain economic self-sufficiency. Refugees, however, may initially lack the necessary knowledge and resources to achieve sustainable income in agriculture.

The Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP) assists refugee families in earning a reasonable income through farming and related businesses by providing, or facilitating the provision of, appropriate services to refugees already engaged in agriculture and to newly arriving refugees who may wish to pursue agriculture as a livelihood. The program seeks to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services to help refugees adjust to American agriculture and to link them to mainstream agriculture assistance agencies.

Many refugees come from agrarian societies and have the skills and aptitudes for farming. Moreover, refugee family members are willing to work together in rural businesses. They share a willingness to do intensive hands-on labor and to work on small tracts of land. These smaller tracts are conducive to the growing of organic, specialty and niche crops. The demand for specialty vegetables is mainly attributable to the significant number of foreign born persons living in this country. Greater consumer and institutional interest in better nutrition and healthier foods drive the increased demand for organic and niche crops. The promotion and interest in buying fresh local products also creates a greater demand for these crops in some regions.

Because of their skills and attitudes, in communities where there is substantial agricultural activity, refugee families can be a valuable resource for community revitalization. Evidence also suggests that by engaging in farming and growing their familiar foods for consumption or sale, refugees receive physical and mental well-being benefits, and therefore better integrate into this society.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 and FY 2005, under the Refugee Rural Initiative (RRI), the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) conducted demonstration projects to determine the issues and challenges for refugees in rural areas and the potential role of refugee serving agencies, particularly for the purpose of accessing and coordinating applicable resources. The results from these projects demonstrate that local organizations can play a coordinative role in identifying and solving challenges where the solution can lead to increased opportunities for refugee self-sufficiency through farming and rural entrepreneurship.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for promoting collaboration between ORR and various offices and programs within USDA. A purpose of the MOU is to increase cooperation among these organizations to improve the quality and access to services for refugees and other low-income farmers and rural entrepreneurs.

Program Scope:

It is expected that under this announcement applicants will demonstrate a broad understanding of these challenges, establish priorities and propose activities that will positively affect opportunities for refugee farmers in their community. In general, challenges fall into six elements: marketing, land acquisition, obtaining financing, technical assistance and training, lack of collaborative relationships, and language and culture.

1. Marketing: The prices refugee farmers receive for their produce are often limited by an inadequate understanding of marketing concepts and options. In some areas there is the problem of the

over-supply of certain types of vegetables. Refugee farmers are generally not aware of and need assistance in identifying options for creating a better demand or market for their products. There are potentially multiple options for the marketing of products. These include farmers markets, institutional markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), grocery stores, packing or processing companies, restaurant associations and websites.

2. Land Acquisition: Refugee farmers have difficulty obtaining land due to a lack of information and because the best locations often lie in the path of urban growth and development. Land is expensive to purchase and lease arrangements are normally short term and not advantageous to the farmer. Short-term leases in particular discourage capital investment and the planting of perennial crops.

3. Obtaining Financing: Refugee farmers have had limited access to mainstream financing. The primary issues have been the inability of refugees to understand and complete the paperwork requirements because of language and culture, and their failure to maintain financial records for a three-year period in order to meet the requirements of loan institutions.

4. Technical Assistance and Training: The profitability of refugee farmers has been reduced by their inability to understand the proper use of insecticides and fertilizers, applicable laws and regulations, risk management options and the elements of record keeping. Refugee farmers need to be introduced to the necessity of business planning that will be influenced by the production, marketing and other variables in their communities.

5. Lack of Collaborative Relationships: Communities vary in terms of which resource agencies are involved in the service delivery system for promoting agriculture among refugee families. More agencies need to be brought to the table and have defined roles in order to engender a holistic approach to meeting the challenges of the RRPP in rural communities.

6. Language and Culture: Language and cultural differences

transcend all other issues and often limit the ability of refugees to understand regulatory and technical requirements, as well as interact with mainstream organizations. Language and culture also constitute a problem in the interaction and sometimes negotiation with institutions such as banks, packing or processing companies and other commercial outlets.

Applicants may also identify other challenges in developing their applications.

The ability to establish collaborative partnerships with other organizations is important for projects funded under this announcement. These organizations should have specific interests and responsibilities to identify and solve needs and challenges, plan and provide program services and resources, and cooperate in providing feedback and monitoring. Potential partners encompass community-based organizations, including ethnic ones; lending institutions; the university cooperative extension service; USDA offices; and various other groups, such as organic certification agencies, health departments, faith-based organizations, market associations and various local or regional groups that have an interest in sustainable agriculture. Partner agencies might offer or facilitate training or technical assistance in crop production, use of fertilizers and insecticides, acquiring land, marketing, business management, record keeping and accessing credit. Applicants may also focus on accessing resources that improve opportunities for adjustment to rural areas, such as rural housing.

In collaboration with partner organizations, applicants should design projects to fit the needs of the community served. Thus, consideration should be given to local factors, such as refugee population numbers, access to population centers, market options, environmental considerations, cultural attitudes on the part of the mainstream and refugee populations, presence and effectiveness of resource agencies, and State and local regulatory and procedural incentives or disincentives.

Applicants should design their projects to achieve long-term goals for refugees, such as increased income levels, a better understanding of

American agriculture, and increased access to mainstream services and resources.

Activities:

In FY 2006, ORR built on the FY 2004 and FY 2005 experience by giving priority to the achievement of specific outcomes that lead to higher and measurable levels of farm and entrepreneurship income for refugees. Acknowledgement was also given to the positive effect farming can have on refugees' integration into their communities. It is expected applications under this announcement will further refine and expand these approaches and/or establish new goals and activities consistent with the opportunities and challenges in their particular communities.

Allowable activities under this program might include the following:

1. Provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services to assist refugees in accessing mainstream services;
2. Identification of specific refugee farmers and the types of assistance needed;
3. Formation of a coordinative body to assess needs and develop program strategies;
4. Establishment of specific initiatives or projects to link refugees to programs that can assist them with marketing, land acquisition, obtaining financing, and technical assistance. Such projects might include:
   - Demonstration/training farm(s);
   - Agreement(s) with market or restaurant associations;
   - Agreement(s) with lending institutions;
   - Training classes or workshops to link refugees with resource agencies in their area and to improve technical skills;
   - Establishment of institutional markets (e.g., school systems, hospitals);

- Access to and/or use of facilities and technology, (e.g., cold storage, hothouses);
- Provisions for accessing land;
- Improving the use, marketing strategies, and sales volume of farmers' markets;
- Value added initiatives to include the use of incubator kitchens; or
- Crop or animal diversification.

5. Linkage of refugees to new program ideas and technologies that offer potential for contributing to sustainable income.

Client Eligibility:

Client eligibility for the Refugee Rural Partnership Program includes: (1) refugees; (2) asylees; (3) Cuban and Haitian entrants; (4) certain Amerasians and (5) and victims of severe forms of trafficking.

Note: Detailed information on eligibility is available at 45 CFR 400.43 and in ORR State Letters 00-17, 01-13, 02-01, and 04-12. Please visit ORR's website at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr to access these State letters.

Refugees who are not yet citizens may participate regardless of their date of arrival in the U.S. Grantees must maintain documentation of the eligibility of all participants in their programs.

Funding Opportunity Description

ORR plans to fund applications that provide or facilitate the provision of services that will result in refugee families earning income at a self-sufficiency level through farming and related businesses. Applications should include improving outreach and collaboration so that refugee farmers have greater access to community resources. These resources should assist refugee farmers and agricultural related entrepreneurs to overcome the challenges that limit them in being able to increase their levels of income and standards of living. In general, these community resources should fall under the areas of marketing, financing, land acquisition, and technical assistance and include activities such as improved market opportunities, business management skills, financing, ability to acquire land, growing practices and understanding various regulatory requirements and procedures.

Applications should give consideration to language and cultural differences that impact on refugees' ability to understand and access appropriate services Also, as a component of outreach, proposed projects should help bridge the gap between refugees and mainstream agencies so that the latter have a better understanding of refugee attitudes and characteristics, including language limitations. .

Many refugees start their agriculture experience in this country by

growing vegetables in urban gardens and may eventually sell enough produce to meet the USDA definition of a farmer (someone who earns the equivalent of at least $1,000 of annual gross income by selling agricultural products). The main focus of the RAPP is to support sustainable income earning activities in rural areas. However, besides projects to assist refugees already engaged in farming in rural areas, applicants may also propose projects to assist refugees wanting to start farming operations in these areas after having an urban garden and urban based projects that include urban gardens.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Anticipated Total Priority Area Funding:	$1,000,000
Anticipated Number of Awards:	10 to 16
Range of Amounts of Individual Awards:	$50,000 to $125,000 per budget period
Floor on Amount of Individual Awards:	None
Average Projected Award Amount:	$77,000 per budget period
Length of Project Periods:	36-month project with three 12-month budget periods

Appendix 2: 2010 Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program Funding Opportunity Announcement

Department of Health & Human Services
Administration for Children & Families

Program Office:	Office of Refugee Resettlement
Funding Opportunity Title:	Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program
Announcement Type:	Initial
Funding Opportunity Number:	HHS-2010-ACF-ORR-ZR-0037
CFDA Number:	93.576
Due Date for Applications:	**07/12/2010**

Executive Summary:

The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) invites entities to submit competitive grant applications for projects under the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP). Grant applications should propose strategies that incorporate agriculture and food systems to improve the lives of refugee families. These strategies should result in sustainable or supplemental income, improved access to healthy foods and better nutrition, and enhanced integration into communities by recently arrived refugee families. Applications should demonstrate an understanding that includes the population to be served, the needs and opportunities of a community or area, available partnerships and resources, a practical approach to achieving objectives, qualitative and quantitative outcomes, organizational capability and a budget consistent with the overall approach and anticipated results.

Eligible Populations

Populations eligible for refugee resettlement services include refugees, asylees, Cuban and Haitian entrants, Lawful Permanent Residents who have held one of these statuses in the past, certain Amerasians from Viet Nam who are admitted to the U.S. as immigrants, certain Amerasians from Viet Nam who are U.S. citizens, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants, and victims of a severe form of trafficking who receive certification or eligibility letters from ORR and certain other specified family members. See 45 C.F.R. 400.43 and ORR State Letter #00-17 (September 14, 2000) on eligibility for ORR programs. Also see ORR State Letter #01-13 ((May 3, 2001) on the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, as modified by ORR State Letter # 02-01 (January 4, 2002) and ORR State Letter # 04-12 (June 18, 2004). Finally, ORR State Letters #08-04 (January 18, 2008), #08-06 (February 7, 2008), and #09-17 (April 9, 2009) provide information on Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrant eligibility.

ORR State Letters may be found on the Office of Refugee Resettlement website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/orr_policy.htm. ORR regulations may be found on the website at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/policy/orr_regulations.htm.

The term "refugee" is used in this notice to encompass all such persons, listed above, who are eligible for refugee resettlement program services.

Statutory Authority

This program is authorized by section 412(c)(1)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality (INA) (8 U.S.C. 1522(c)(1)(A), as amended, which authorizes the Director "to make grants to, and enter into contracts with public or private nonprofit agencies for projects specifically designed--(i) to assist refugees in obtaining the skills which are necessary for economic self-sufficiency, including projects for job training, employment services, day care, professional refresher training and other recertification services; (ii) to provide training in English where necessary (regardless of whether the refugees are employed or receiving cash and other assistance); and (iii) to provide, where specific needs have been shown and recognized by the Director, health (including mental health) services, social servcices, educational and other services."

Description

The Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program (RAPP), through its granting of funds and the support of public and private partnerships, provides agricultural and food related resources and technical information to refugee families that are consistent with their agrarian backgrounds and result in rural and urban farming and food systems activities that support increased incomes, access to quality and familiar foods, better physical and mental health, greater self-reliance and enhanced integration into this society.

The rationale for RAPP has evolved into the following elements:

- The agrarian and small scale farming backgrounds of many refugee families combined with low literacy and English speaking skills are conducive to making agriculture a familiar and comfortable path to supplemental income and economic self-sufficiency;
- The greater demand for healthier and locally grown produce and ethnic foods has resulted in the increasing viability of small scale farming;
- There is widespread acknowledgement of the connection between agriculture, food, nutrition and health and concomitant relationship to disease and abnormalities such as diabetes and obesity. The objectives of RAPP are congruent with anti-hunger and anti-obesity objectives of the Federal Government;
- Opportunities exist for new and smaller scale farmers because the average age of the U.S. born farmer is over 55 and because of the significant capital investment required for new farmers to grow commodity and other crops;
- Agriculture in the form of small tracts of land or community gardens that result in the consumption and sale of familiar foods leads to healthier life styles and faster adjustment and integration into this society;
- Because newer refugees in particular tend to live in low-income areas that are food deserts, defined as a community or area that lacks a consistent supply of healthy produce, nutrition education and improved access to and consumption of healthier foods through farmers markets and local stores are encouraged;
- Market gardening and small scale farming facilitates refugee integration into mainstream communities through their entry into sustainable food networks and farmers' markets;
- It responds to a growing interest by refugee and other families that wish to grow their own vegetables for family consumption and sharing with extended family and friends at a time of fewer employment opportunities and greater economic stress;
- Provide assistance and experience to organizations to deliver agricultural and food system services that will strenghen their capacity to access mainstrem programs.

It will be the responsibility of an applicant for funding to describe a process that leads to the achievement of RAPP objectives and which recognizes the above opportunities, as well as the challenges inherent in cultural and language barriers and the complexity of agriculture and food systems in this country.

The focus of RAPP is to encourage the development of processes that will improve the livelihoods of refugee families. This may involve persons already engaged in some type of production or aspiring gardeners or farmers, particularly newer arrivals, who have a background and interest in agriculture. The ultimate purpose is to have persons become independent farmers. This is a longer term goal because of the challenges imposed by the complexity of agriculture and the cultural and language backgrounds of refugees. However, engaging in some form of production can also have important short-term and permanent impacts on refugees in the way of supplemental income, better food and nutrition from growing especially their familiar foods, and more rapid adjustment to a community.

Applicants will be expected to develop their proposals according to the general needs and wants of their refugee population and the community or area in which they reside. There are a host of variables that will impact program implementation. These may include client farming experience, client time and commitment, climate, availability of land, transportation, access to irrigation, market options, institutional support and the ability to develop partnerships.

The ability to establish collaborative partnerships with other organizations is important for projects to be funded under this announcement. These organizations should have specific interests and responsibilities to identify and solve needs and challenges, plan and provide program services and resources, and cooperate in providing feedback and monitoring. Potential partners encompass community based organizations (including ethnic organizations); lending institutions; the university cooperative extension service; United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offices; and various other groups, such as organic certification agencies, health departments, faith-based organizations, market associations and various local or regional groups that have an interest in sustainable agriculture. Partner agencies might offer or facilitate training or technical assistance in crop production, use of fertilizers and insecticides, acquiring land, marketing, business management, record keeping and accessing credit.

A strategy for providing training and technical assistance is important. Training is necessary to help clients understand financial terms and procedures, record keeping, and expenditures and revenues focused on managing their own enterprise, becoming more self-reliant and becoming financially independent. Technical support and follow up are required in many areas from production to marketing.

The applicant should describe how its project proposal relates to or is complemented by any related projects or activities. To the extent possible, project goals should be delineated. The anticipated support from volunteers should be described.

Refugees are primarily resettled in low-income urban areas. These are often "food deserts", or lacking community food security, defined as the adequate availability of fresh and healthy produce. Refugee families most often fall into the pattern of relying on fast or convenience foods. The development of community gardens is one way to interrupt this pattern. Another way to increase access to fresh produce is to support the establishment and/or modification of procedures of farmers markets and other grocery outlets. Healthy food outlets that accept EBT/SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) and (SFMNP) Seniors' Farmers' Market Nutritional Program offer a viable option for better food and nutrition. These initiatives are supported by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and Food & Nutrition Service.

Technical Areas

Applicants are expected to incorporate a discussion of most or all of the following technical areas:

1. Production: Developing knowledge of production techniques, use of insecticides and fertilizers, organic production, proper irrigation, harvesting and season extending methods can improve farmer production.

2. Marketing: The prices refugee farmers receive for their produce are often limited by inadequate understanding of marketing concepts and options. Understanding and adapting to farmers market procedures, exchanging produce for money and the presentation and display of produce are important to increasing incomes and independence or self reliance. Refugee farmers are generally not aware of and need assistance in identifying options for creating a better demand or market for their products. There are potentially multiple options for the marketing of products. These include farmers markets, institutional markets, CSA (community supported agriculture), grocery stores, packing/processing companies, restaurants and websites.

3. Land Acquisition: Refugee farmers have difficulty obtaining land due to a lack of information and because the best located land often lies in the path of urban growth and development. Land is expensive to purchase and lease arrangements are normally short-term and not advantageous to the farmer. Short-term leases in particular discourage capital investment and the planting of perennial crops.

4. Obtaining Financing: Farmers have had limited access to mainstream financing. Two of the primary issues have been the inability of refugees to understand and complete the paperwork requirements because of language and culture and their failure to maintain financial records for a 3 year period in order to meet the requirements of loan institutions. Institutions are disinclined to make loans in the smaller amounts needed by refugee farmers.

5. Business Development: Refugees need training and technical support in understanding financial terms, record keeping and business planning and management.

6. Institutional Requirements: Various local, State and Federal Government laws, regulations and procedures and their impact are often unfamiliar to refugees.

7. Community Food Security: Refugee clients should be exposed to options for increasing their community food security through community gardens and improved access to outlets that sell healthy produce.

8. Collaborative Relationships: Communities vary in terms of which resource agencies are involved in the service delivery system for promoting agriculture among refugee families. More agencies need to be brought to the table and have defined roles in order to engender a holistic approach to meeting the challenges of the Refugee Agricultural Partnership Program in rural and urban communities.

9. Technical Assistance and Training: The capacity to plan and implement client assessment, provide appropriate training and do technical assistance impact on the effectiveness of the areas above.

10. Language and Culture: Language and cultural differences transcend all other issues and often limit the ability of refugees to understand regulatory and technical requirements as well as interact with mainstream organizations. Language and culture also constitute a problem in the interaction and sometimes negotiation with institutions such as banks, packing or processing companies, and other commercial outlets.

The applicant is expected to establish objectives and projected activities consistent with the above program rationale and technical areas. Depending on the refugee population and other variables mentioned above, projects may be implemented in either urban or rural areas or both. The application should reflect a planning process and project participation involving local partners. The application should indicate an understanding of the potential progression process for clients starting with community gardens, to market gardens, to farming on their individual tracts of land, to becoming independent farmers with sustainable income. Integrated within each step of this potential progression would be the identification of program accomplishments or outcomes related to improving refugee family livelihoods.

The priority of this announcement is to serve recently arrived refugee families. The applicant is expected to

provide a strong rationale and approach for serving its proposed client population.

Activities

Below are examples of activities that are permissible under this announcement. These should be viewed as neither mandatory nor all inclusive of the possible activities of a project proposal. Examples are:

1. Locating vacant land for a community garden:

   - Dividing plots and selecting participants,
   - Arranging partner training,
   - Providing on-site technical assistance,
   - Assisting with harvesting and marketing produce;

2. Locating land in a rural area for a refugee farmer to work more independently;

3. Working to get a farmers market approved to have EBT and the ability to accept SNAP and WIC;

4. Encouraging financial literacy and business terms be included in an ESL Program;

5. Establishing a process for collecting data on dollar value of production and/or sales;

6. Helping establish a sales agreement between farmers and an institution;

7. Promoting the establishment of a group of partner organizations;

8. Initiating partnerships to provide cooking and/or nutrition classes;

9. Provide training in business planning and management;

10. Facilitating ethnic organizations to assume responsibility for a garden;

11. Obtaining anecdotal information on the impact of gardening on self-reliance and community integration.

12. Providing or arranging linguistically appropriate services.

II. Award Information

Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Estimated Total Funding:	$1,000,000
Expected Number of Awards:	12
Award Ceiling:	$100,000 Per Budget Period
Award Floor:	$50,000 Per Budget Period
Average Projected Award Amount:	$83,300 Per Budget Period

Length of Project Periods:
36-month project with three 12-month budget periods

Additional Information on Awards:
Awards made under this announcement are subject to the availability of Federal funds.

The grant awards under this program will be issued for 3 years on a one time basis. Grantees are expected to develop partnerships and outside resources to sustain their indvidual programs after the 3 year project period.

Appendix 3: Pre-existing Farmer Exit Survey

NFNA Farmer Exit Survey October 2012

I. Profile

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Background
    a. Somali
    b. Bhutanese
    c. Burundian
    d. Other (please specify)
5. Previous occupation
6. English Language Skills
    a. None
    b. Farm-specific
    c. Some
    d. Good
7. Tier
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3

II. Program Participation

8. How many years have you been involved in the project?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5
9. Why are you participating in this program? List all that are applicable and rank in order of importance
    a. Income
    b. Produce for household consumption
    c. Skill development/Learning about farming in Vermont
    d. Interact with people in your community
    e. Interact with people in broader community

f. Exercise and/or health benefits

10. Would you continue to participate in this program if your responsibilities required any of the following besides planting and harvesting? (Please indicate on a scale of most to least likely)
    a. Weighing and labeling food
    b. Preparing and packaging food for CSAs and deliveries
    c. Selling at farmer's markets
    d. Delivering goods to restaurants and retailers

11. What would prevent you from wanting to participate in these aspects of the program?
    a. English proficiency
    b. Lack of interest
    c. Other commitments

12. How important is transportation for your participation in the program?
    a. Not very important (I can find my own way to the farm)
    b. Somewhat important (while difficult, I can get to the farm)
    c. Very important (I cannot participate without a ride)

13. What kind of time commitment does participation in this program require?
    a. 1-9 hours per week
    b. 10-19 hours per week
    c. 20-30 hours per week
    d. Other (please list)

III. Program Overview and Direction

14. What do you hope to achieve by completing this program?
    a. Become an independent farmer
    b. Learn more about farming in Vermont
    c. Short term income generation
    d. Provides skills for future job

15. What are the most significant benefits of participating in NFNA?

16. What are the most significant problems of participating in NFNA?

17. Are there any specific skills or training you would like to receive as part of the NFNA program?

18. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for NFNA?