

NWMI Food and Farming Network 2016 Mini-Grant Survey

In the spring of 2016, the Food and Farming Network awarded funds to eight community projects that focused on our network action areas and collaboration. For an overview of these projects, please visit the 2016 Mini-Grant report on our resources page. With the support of Northsky Nonprofit Network, we developed a survey for the mini-grant recipients to complete when their project period was over. The survey gauged new and strengthened levels of connection within the network, and asked how we might improve. Here are the results of the full survey.

Question #1: Prior to the Food & Farming Network Mini-Seed Grant process, how connected did you feel to the goals and work of the Food & Farming Network (FFN)?

Results: 8 respondents were asked to provide their response on a scale of 0 to 100. The average of the responses was 58.

Question #2: Today, how connected do you feel to the goals and work of the FFN?

Results: 8 respondents were asked to provide their response on a scale of 0 to 100. The average of the responses was 88.

In total, 75% of the respondents' reported level of connection increased.

After questions one and two, we asked the mini-grant recipients to please describe the reasoning behind their numbers:

"Prior to receiving the grant, we had good relations with some local farms to help our Farm to Camp program. With the grant and networking available through the exposure of the FFN organization, we have been able to increase our collaborations and look toward an even more productive future with great associations."

"Participating in the grant has increased my connection to the FFN beyond my involvement with the Local Food Alliance of Northern Michigan."

"We've become aware of the FFN, we've partnered with growers, read the newsletter, and plan to attend meetings when possible."

"Raised on our family farm near Arcadia. Have always eaten and preserved fresh food. Our family rarely went to 'the store'; aunt & uncle had a dairy farm + pigs, we had veggies & fruit, chickens & some cattle. Now that I know of the FFN, I feel very connected. Not to mention, receiving a grant for our (NMHSI) Fresh Food Prescription Program (FFPP). Would like to be more active, but w/working FT attending meetings, etc. is very difficult."

"I am new to my position, so my understanding with the FFN is new and still growing."

Question #4: How likely are you to increase your engagement with the FFN in the next 6 - 12 months? E.g. Come to meetings, meet with other members, read or contribute to the newsletter, participate in other ways?

Results: 8 respondents were asked to provide their response on a scale of 0 to 100. The average of the responses was 57.

Question #5: Is there anything we could do differently to get you more involved?

Answers:

"Morning FFN meetings are difficult for me to attend, and the field trips have occasionally been beyond my reach. Afternoon FFN meetings would be better. I valued the conference last year very much. It was great to pack all that work into one day. Perhaps two smaller conferences would be an option in the future? It's great to get all the actors and movers in one room together."

"You're great! I have a day to day market manager that works for us, so it is hard for me to balance the two halves of my job."

"Yes, Marry me! Then there would be a second person who could do more marketing and networking. More tasks than time for one with a small farm."

"Find more time in my schedule..."

Question #6: Have you made any new connections that you attribute to your participation in the FFN mini-grant process? Please choose **all** that apply.

Results:

Yes, I learned about a connection through FFN communications (website or newsletter) and reached out to him/her. (1 respondent)

Yes, A mutual connection from the FFN introduced us. (2 respondents)

No, I didn't make any new connections through this process. (3 respondents)

Yes, I made a connection in another way. (4 respondents)

After question #6, we asked respondents to please describe their new connections.

"We reached out to Rasho Feeds farm, a connection we made through FFN, to try to work out a way for campers to come and work their farm, but unfortunately could not set up a mutually convenient schedule. We also met with Cherry Capital Foods about working up a farming curriculum for our Outdoor Education program. We have had preliminary conversations with Crosshatch and hope to collaborate with them in the near future to find ways that they can add to our programs and we can help theirs."

"These are actors from different parts of our food system, and undoubtedly will enhance the capacity of our project."

"It is hard for me to separate the connections I've made with FFN through the minigrant, the Local Food Alliance, and through my work at our food pantry. But the minigrant definitely played an important part. These connections include Meghan McDermott, and Lindsay Hall of Food Corps, among others."

Question #8: In what ways have these new connections added value to your work? Please choose all that apply.

New ideas (5 respondents)

Exchanging information (5 respondents)

Providing inspiration and encouragement (4 respondents)

Sharing project work (2 respondents)

Learning a new skill (2 respondents)

No new or strengthened connections (2 respondents)

Question #9: How likely are you to continue working with one of these connections after the mini grant period is over?

Results: 7 respondents provided answers on a scale of 0 to 100. The average was 98.

Question #10: Are there other ways the mini grant program has impacted your work?

"It has inspired us to reach higher and seek grants to help us fund a farming curriculum, educational farm and staffing for our outdoor education and summer camp programs."

"Directly increased sales of food to a food pantry."

"It strengthened our commitment to be diligent about providing fresh local food to our pantry clients. Success is encouraging!"

"We were encouraged to reach out to our area growers in a bigger way."

"This grant has been a great affirmation that the work we are doing is valuable in our community."

"Working closer with our providers."

Question #11: One of our roles as a network is to strengthen connections between various parts of the systems we are working within. How could the FFN better help you connect with others and new resources?

Answers:

"Not much. FFN reached out and made people and organizations available to us, gave us ideas and funding to pursue our Farm to Camp initiatives."

"The FFN business meetings that I have attended have been informative, but don't necessarily lead to new connections. The conference last year was big for me, for that reason specifically. It provided an avenue to connect various stakeholders and drew a big crowd. It's the people that bring the value. How can FFN create more opportunities to simply "gather" around a given topic and schmooze?"

"Collect success stories from various pantries about providing local produce to their clients, and make the results available to all."

Question #12: What might you do next related to food or farming?

"As stated above, work on developing a farming curriculum for our outdoor education and summer camp programs, increase our local produce use at our camps and hopefully build an educational garden."

"Start the season earlier, and try to secure more direct sales to businesses pre season. Generally be more competitive in a competitive and saturated market."

"Find more opportunities to speak and write in the community about the need to support generational land transfer."

"We have discussed plans for increasing our garden's productivity, as well as growing additional crops. We are also discussing ways to connect with community gardeners, whether through the city's community garden, or just creating awareness among individual gardeners. We'd like to promote the idea of donating extra produce to the pantry. We're also discussing other ways to raise funds specifically for purchasing local produce. We'll continue working with Manna Food Project on various "gleaning" opportunities."

"We hope to offer more sampling, a farm to table style cooking class, and hoping to offer more info about ways to use the produce we get!"

"Continue to encourage participants re: our Fresh Food Prescription Program; both inreach and outreach."

