

VENTURE PROPOSALS

The following Venture Proposals are projects that represent opportunities to build and strengthen the County's agricultural sector and regional economy. They have been developed by the project team to provide initial scoping and research into a limited number of action items identified within implementation matrix of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Update. These venture proposals were chosen based on several factors by the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board, including demonstrated need, community support, and readiness. Venture proposals are intended to be used in communicating with project partners and garnering support from funding and programmatic entities.

AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST VENTURE PROPOSAL

Establish an Economic Development Specialist position and potentially an office focusing primarily on agricultural enterprises. Dedicated staffing of such a position would occur to identify and facilitate new market opportunities for Onondaga County farmers and food businesses. Throughout development of the Agriculture & Farmland Protection Plan process, the need for dedicated staffed resources to lead and coordinate implementation of Plan goals, actions, and venture proposals was highlighted as a need. Expansion of agriculture and related food system coordination efforts were also included as one of five key recommendations in the 2021 Central New York Food Plan.

Ideally, this individual or office will work directly with farmers to facilitate successful matches between farmers and buyers, government programs and private sector partners throughout the food chain. The Specialist position will be an agile and responsive position that connects needs with resources within Onondaga County to strengthen the local and regional agricultural economy. The Agriculture Economic Development Specialist will develop and organize partnerships to support producers, processors, distributors, and buyers to build mutually beneficial supply chain relationships.

Coordinator responsibilities may include:

- 1. Develop Agribusiness Opportunities:** Attract agribusiness opportunities to utilize Onondaga Grown products, local processing assets, and transportation industry assets. The staff or office should advance initiatives such as the siting of food industry businesses and development of critical infrastructure and programming including an agricultural business park, business incubation programs, food hub services, commercial kitchen development, and shared packing facilities.
- 2. Agribusiness Marketing and Support:** Link farmers to distribution, aggregation, and processing networks. Expand availability of farm labor through programming such as: farm labor and new farmer training, refugee coordination, and providing support for high-technology shifts. Advance the Onondaga Grown marketing program. Provide technical and marketing support for agritourism businesses.
- 3. Intergovernmental Liaison:** Coordinate policy with local and state government staff to advance agriculture-oriented programs. Partner with the CNY Regional Economic Development Council to capitalize on economic development opportunities from agriculture. Support farmers through the development of direct and indirect funding programs, grant writing support, and improved access to government financial services and loans.

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4. Partner with Local Programming: This includes providing support for farmers' markets and urban agriculture programming. Coordinate programs with Cornell Cooperative Extension staff and nonprofit organizations such as SOFSA.

BASIC INFORMATION

Targeted Populations

The work of the Agricultural Economic Development Specialist, and eventually an Office of Agricultural Economic Development, will expand the availability of locally and regionally grown foods for Onondaga County consumers. The Agriculture economic development coordinator and related staff members will directly serve farms, food businesses, and buyers by identifying and facilitating market matches. Bolstering the local and regional agricultural economy will provide community-wide benefits through increased revenue circulation from strengthened market relationships between Onondaga County farms, businesses, and institutions.

Potential Project Lead and Sponsors

Potential Project Lead(s):

New private or not-for-profit entity
Onondaga County Office of Economic Development
CenterState Corporation for Economic Opportunity
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (CCE)
Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board (CNYRPDB)

Potential Project Partners:

Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)
Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance (SOFSA)
Onondaga County Agriculture Council

BACKGROUND

Demonstrated Need

A variety of logistical and market barriers create a disconnect between Onondaga County's farmers and local and regional buyers despite interest on both ends of the supply chain. For example, institutions interested in local producer might be contracted to out-of-state producers, despite availability of local produce but the lack of awareness, coordinated logistics, or available funding. Local producers interested in providing for local institutions might not be able to meet demand unless they partner with other producers. Active coordination efforts from a designated Ag Specialist will prioritize building relationships, troubleshooting bottlenecks and barriers to bridge existing gaps between Onondaga County farmers and buyers.

Since the recommendations from Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan are aspirational, there will need to be focused effort to implement recommendations. Stakeholder engagement and research throughout

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plan development process affirmed the need for a designated economic development coordinator to increase market opportunities for local farmers. This position can help to navigate the economic development community and link available government assistance to exploratory ways to increase the agricultural viability of Onondaga County. Existing resources are fragmented among a variety of organizations and agencies, with competing priorities and limited resources. No one entity is focused on specifically agricultural economic development.

The Central New York food plan (FoodPlanCNY) also includes the expansion of food system coordination efforts as one of five key recommendations. Strategies for this coordination include the need to develop a project-based, inclusive process in coordination with a food council to integrate food systems into city and county policies, plans, and programs. Similarly, the CNY Regional Economic Development Council's 2015 Upstate Revitalization Initiative report calls for enhancing connections between farmers and markets through soft and hard infrastructure upgrades. Local organizations such as the Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance are specifically working to address local food system gaps through relationship building, aligning resources, and public policy advocacy.

Alignment with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

The Agricultural Economic Development Specialist position would work directly towards the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan's vision as being "a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system." This venture proposal aligns with the goals of the countywide plan, directly and indirectly.

DIRECT ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN GOALS:



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.



Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.

INDIRECT ALIGNMENT WITH PLAN GOALS:



Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.



Continue to enhance the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment.

Preliminary Cost Estimate

\$120k per year for 5 years

Considerations and Challenges

There are several initial considerations in scoping this proposal. As evidenced in prior section, the potential duties and activities of the Agricultural Economic Development Coordinator can be significant and varied. It will be important to refine the potential activities and responsibilities into a focused, manageable, and effective work program.

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Identifying the most appropriate and effective entity to house, sponsor, and provide oversight to this position will be an important first consideration. Should this be a standalone organization, perhaps a not-for-profit, with flexibility in activities and oversight, but reliant on outside funding to sustain its operations? Or should this be part of a larger governmental agency, who may be most capable of hosting a staff position, but subject to the limits of public employment and spending?

Whether private or public sector supported, funding is a challenge, given limited resources for such activities within local government and the not-for-profit sectors. Governmental grant funding often precludes sustained multi-year support for staff positions. Funding opportunities that span multiple (three or more) years will have greater potential to realize returns on investment.

A related challenge in funding positions such as this is demonstrating and quantifying the positive impacts of coordination activities. When considering funding opportunities, it is important to keep in mind that it takes time for coordination activities to impact traditional metrics such as increased sales or increased job creation. Impacts for investors and participating businesses should be measured; the program should determine at the outset what economic data will be tracked and how it will be captured.

Finally, tight economic competition, limited resources and profitability of farming to accommodate necessary investments into economic development projects will be an ongoing challenge to developing working relationships necessary for this coordinator position, but that challenge is the very reason for this work. The position and office will need a varied skillset and the bandwidth necessary to reach the varied farming and food system, as well as economic development community.

As the position matures and programming needs become clearer, grant funds can play an important role in expanding the positive impact of the coordinator role. State grant funds can also play an important role in expanding the positive impact of the position. Programmatic and project funding for the position could be sought through the New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process with support from the CNY Regional Economic Development Council.

Federal grant programs could also provide financial resources for implementation of project initiatives to benefit the Onondaga County agricultural economy. USDA grant programs such as the Local Food Promotion and Farmers Market Promotion Programs provide operations and maintenance funds that could be leveraged. In addition, the Specialist could explore the possibilities of the NYS per-meal rebate for schools in purchasing at least 30% NY-grown products. Collaborative funding initiatives between neighboring governments and jurisdictions should also be considered.

Funding Opportunities

A wide variety of funding sources can be utilized to establish a position for an Agriculture Economic Development Specialist and fund work to support marketing operations. The USDA Regional Food System Partnerships program supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan for and develop local or regional food systems. For Planning projects, applicants may request a minimum of \$100,000 and maximum of \$250,000. Implementation and Farm to Institution projects may request a minimum of \$250,000 and maximum of \$1,000,000. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is also responsible for a Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP), which provides matching funds to the NYS Agriculture and Markets funds to further assist exploring new market opportunities, specifically aiming to improve efficiency.

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The NYS Empire State Development Market grant program offers millions of funds annually for funds to strengthen or attract visitors to NYS, including agritourism events and regional marketing initiatives or capital projects. The Agriculture Business Development program through the Cornell Cooperative Extension helps farmers expand management and marketing skills. Other grants may be available through agribusiness forums, local governments, Onondaga County, and the CNY Regional Planning and Development Board.

Timeframe

Preliminary Steps (pre-hire): Finalize funding, organizational sponsor and hiring strategy for Economic Development Specialist for Agriculture position.

Short term (1-2 years): Position responsible to establish near-term strategic plan for position that outlines priority goals and programmatic offerings. Convene agricultural stakeholders to develop strategies for agricultural sector growth. Identify low-hanging fruit, market matches, and support for Onondaga County producers.

Medium term (3-6 years): Convene agricultural economy stakeholders to address medium-term market opportunities, align resources, and develop strategies for agricultural sector growth. Pursue strategic partnerships to advance agricultural economic development objectives.

Long term (6+ years): Refine and revisit strategic plan for Specialist position to identify needs and opportunities. If appropriate, grow position into an office with additional resources and support for Onondaga County farmers and value chain actors. Continue to engage agricultural economy stakeholders to address market opportunities, align resources, and develop strategies for agricultural sector growth.

Precedent Examples and Additional Resources

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, ONEIDA COUNTY

The position of Economic Development Specialist at CCE Oneida County is the closest available analog to the proposed Coordinator position in Onondaga County. Close geographic proximity, local government funding and support, and similar job responsibilities make the Oneida County position a useful model to look to for lessons learned and metric of success.

- Relevant Staff Position(s):
 - Oneida County Agricultural Economic Development Specialist, Marty Broccoli
- Background
 - From the CCE Oneida County website: "The Ag Economic Development Program was created in 1998 in accordance with the Oneida County Farmland Protection Plan (OCFPP) and officially registered with the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets in 2000. The mission of AED is to help foster an economic climate that supports and promotes the expansion of agricultural business within Oneida County.
 - Areas of focus: Educating consumers about the importance of agriculture in today's society. Working with farmers to explore ways to enhance their sales through direct marketing or developing value-added products. Working with the Mohawk Valley EDGE, Cities of Utica and Rome to conduct outreach visits to regional agribusinesses to help ensure agricultural

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industry viability and create employment opportunities. Working with the Oneida County Farmland Protection Board to reach out to town and county governments to become more aware and sensitive to agriculture industry issues. Educating today's younger children of the many rewarding employment opportunities that the world of Agriculture offers."

LOUISIANA CENTRAL

The positions of Executive Director for Farm and Food and Director of Farm to Market Operations at Louisiana Central demonstrate how a nonprofit economic development agency targets support to agricultural and food system entrepreneurs. The organization's programmatic offerings are worth consideration for an Onondaga County Coordinator (workshops, online programs, technical assistance, business coaching, financial advising, etc.)

- Relevant Staff Position(s):
 - Executive Director for Farm and Food, Bahia Nightengale
 - Director of Farm to Market Operations, Audrey Kolde
- Background
 - Louisiana Central is an economic development agency serving a ten-county region in central Louisiana. The nonprofit supports agricultural economic development primarily through investing in farmers markets and hosting a farmer training program which "offers group workshops, online programs, one on one technical assistance, business coaching, access to business loans, and many crucial services that support local production of specialty crops and grass-based livestock." The Farmer Training Program is supported by USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) funding.

HUDSON VALLEY AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (HVADC)

HVADC is a non-profit economic development agency with a focus on growing the agricultural economy of the Hudson Valley. HVADC offers several programs that could be considered for implementation by an Onondaga County Agriculture and Food System Development Coordinator. Programs include a farm incubation, funding accelerator, educational and technical resources, amongst others.

- Relevant Staff Position(s):
 - Executive Director, Todd Erling
- Background
 - From the HVADC website: "The Hudson Valley Agribusiness Development Corporation (HVADC) is the only economic development agency in the Hudson Valley with a specific focus on the viability of the agricultural economy in the region. HVADC's charge is to enhance the agricultural sector in the Hudson Valley by assisting both new and existing agri-businesses and supporting policies and regulations that recognize and support New York State's agricultural economy.

Our services are carefully designed to promote the Hudson Valley as an attractive, viable region for agriculture and to foster growth and development of the agricultural sector through a creative program of marketing, promotion and the provision and coordination of financial and other resources. We are a not-for-profit organization with offices in

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Hudson, New York, enabling us to work closely with a variety of public and private partners throughout the Hudson Valley.”

PURDUE UNIVERSITY, INDIANA FARM CONNECT FARM CONNECT

Indiana Farm Connect demonstrates food system economic development through coordination across the state of Indiana. The project is a case study into how multiple coordinators can collaborate at the regional level to grow market opportunities for farmers. Once release, the results of the project may have important lessons learned to share with an Onondaga County Coordinator.

- Relevant Staff Position(s):
 - Value Chain Coordinator, Food and Growers Association, Oak Hawk
 - Local Food Coordinator, City of Bloomington, Rachel Beyer
 - Business Development, Fischer Farms Natural Foods, Joseph Fischer
 - Value Chain Coordinator, Northwest Indiana Food Council, Virginia Pleasant
- Background
 - An ongoing public-private collaboration hosted by Purdue University that works to strengthen food systems in the state of Indiana by connecting local suppliers and purchasers. The project has provided funding for four value chain coordinators at partner organizations across the state. These coordinators are tasked with building networks between buyers, farmers, distributors, aggregators, processors, and local organizations in order to drive economic opportunities for farmers and other food system businesses. In addition to network building, the grant recipients provide technical assistance and support for fruit and vegetable growers to reach wholesale markets with a focus on food safety and business assistance. The Farm Connect program was funded in 2018 by a Local Food Promotion Program grant from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

THE WALLACE CENTER VALUE CHAIN COORDINATION RESOURCES

The Wallace Center at Winrock International has been working since 1983 to support regional food system development. The Center has created a series of resources that introduce the concept of value chain coordination (very similar to economic development coordination) and its potential impacts for regional food system development. Additional resources outline strategies for evaluating economic outcomes from coordination activities.

- Relevant Resources:
 - Value Chain Coordination Quicksheets
 - [Roles of Value Chain Coordination](#)
 - [Funding Value Chain Coordination as a Place-Based Development Strategy](#)
 - [Evaluating Economic Outcomes](#)
 - [Evaluating Convening Events: Social Network Analysis and Rapid Stakeholder Surveys](#)
- Background
 - From the Wallace Center’s website: “Since 1983, the Wallace Center has been leading the regional food movement in innovation, networking, support, and capacity building. We seek to affect systems change to bring benefits to the environment, to communities, and

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to the farmers and food businesses that are the building blocks of a just and equitable food system. Through the support of our funders, we engage with organizations and individuals working on local and regional food systems development across the country to provide technical assistance and training, share best practices, cultivate learning networks and catalyze shifts in systems thinking.”

Value Chain Coordination is a market-based approach to developing local and regional food systems that better serve communities. Value chain work includes the development of collaborative ties among businesses along the food supply chain, with the expectation that the economic position of these supply chain members improves. Value Chain Coordination describes leveraging the soft infrastructure, in the form of skills, competencies and relationships, in a food value chain. With a strong soft infrastructure, individuals and organizations are far more readily able to acquire and utilize hard infrastructure in their communities.”

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, POLK COUNTY, NC

Although the county structure in North Carolina is slightly different than the county structure in New York, Onondaga County could form a similar government entity to advise on policy needs while encouraging and supporting agribusiness within the county.

From the Polk County website: “The purpose of the Agricultural Economic Development office is to encourage, support and maintain growing agricultural enterprises in Polk County, North Carolina. Objectives of the office include:

- Marketing Polk County’s agricultural products and services by creating market opportunities.
- Encourage value-added enterprises.
- Identify trends and support services.
- Assist in training and scaling up agricultural businesses.
- Supporting new farmer enterprises through connection and mentoring opportunities
- Encourage expansion of secondary Agricultural businesses such as distribution and marketing, business planning, support business such as dry goods, seeds, implements, equipment, etc.
- Maintaining an appropriate agricultural land base to support a viable agricultural economy in Polk County specifically through Farmland Preservation and other conservation programs
- Encourage value-added enterprises. Identify trends and support services. Assist in training and scaling up agricultural businesses.”

Note that the North Carolina Agricultural Economic Development department may have more freedom to make policy decisions because it is governed by a board, which can make independent decisions from the county commissioners. In New York, an agricultural economic development department would likely need to rely on the county executive and legislature to make policy and budgeting decisions.

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COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE INITIATIVE VENTURE PROPOSAL

Land and infrastructure assets exist within Onondaga County that can be better leveraged to benefit agricultural producers and the broader community in the context of community greenhouse facilities. Stakeholders have highlighted the opportunity for improved and expanded community greenhouse spaces in Onondaga County to generate a range of positive community outcomes:

- 1) Extend the growing season for urban farmers and community gardeners by expanding access to greenhouse space
- 2) Expose youth to agriculture as a career path and as a general topic of interest through targeted programming
- 3) Workforce development through technical training focused on emerging career opportunities in agriculture including specialty crop production and Controlled Environment Agriculture (also called CEA and includes vertical farming, hydroponics, etc.), which can foster job opportunities for individuals with barriers to stable employment (e.g., immigrants and refugees or formerly incarcerated youth)
- 4) Provide demonstration sites to promote the importance of local food production and local agriculture to the broader community

Through the development of this Venture Proposal, stakeholders identified two different Community Greenhouse projects, each with their own scale, purposes, and potential locations.

The first location suggested was the **Onondaga Park Greenhouse** in the City of Syracuse. The existing greenhouse space at Lower Onondaga Park is underutilized and could be used to enhance the production capacity of urban agriculture. Details for the additional use, renovation, and potential development of the Onondaga Park Greenhouse should be evaluated in coordination with the City of Syracuse (property owner). Programming and operation of the space will require partnerships with local agriculture and community service organizations.

The second location is adjacent to the Expo Center at the **New York State Fairgrounds** in the Town of Geddes. Goals for this vastly different community greenhouse facility to act as a showcase for innovation in agriculture in New York State for fairgoers, but also to increase community-wide understanding of vegetable and fruit production, increase public interest in agriculture, and create a year-round agritourism destination. New York State has already committed approximately 1.5-acres for a state-of-the-art greenhouse structure at the Fairgrounds. Details for the construction, operation, and programming of a greenhouse space at the State Fairgrounds requires additional coordination with New York State Fairgrounds and New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets representatives.

BASIC INFORMATION

Communities Served

Community greenhouse spaces have the potential to serve several communities within Onondaga County. Community greenhouses could serve Onondaga County producers or community gardeners who would benefit from expanded access to greenhouse space, youth through exposure to agriculture and educational programs, provide opportunities for job seekers through technical training and workforce readiness preparation, and/or benefit the general public through the provision of engaging educational and cultural experiences.

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Potential Project Lead and Sponsors

Potential Project Lead(s):

For Onondaga Park Greenhouse: City of Syracuse
Department of Parks and Recreation

For NYS Fairgrounds Greenhouse: NYS
Fairgrounds/Department of Agriculture and
Markets

Potential Project Partners:

Onondaga County Parks and Recreation
Refugee and Immigrant Self-Empowerment
(RISE)
Brady Farm and other community farm
organization
Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency
Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County
(4H, Master Gardeners, etc.)
Onondaga County Agricultural Council
Onondaga Earth Corps
Future Farmers of America
Other volunteer organizations
Individual Farm Operators
SOSFA

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Demonstrated Need

- 1) Expanded access to greenhouse space would allow small scale groups or individual growers to increase production for local markets. Multiple stakeholders suggested urban growers would use community greenhouse space, if made available. The following groups were highlighted as likely users of greenhouse space: urban farmers, community gardeners, immigrants, refugees, and nonprofits that serve these groups
- 2) Local community greenhouse space is in demand for both educational programming and workforce development purposes. Stakeholders suggested a combination of youth education and occupational skills training programs could be hosted at a community greenhouse space. Occupational skills training could be targeted towards community members who are experiencing barriers to employment (refugees, immigrants, individuals transitioning from incarceration, etc.) and/or emerging opportunities in agriculture such as specialty crop production or Controlled Environment Agriculture.
- 3) Expanded community greenhouse space provides opportunities for engaging, year-round agritourism experiences to increase community-wide knowledge and appreciation for agriculture. Stakeholders expressed interest in creating new opportunities for community members and tourists, youth, and adults, to learn about regional agriculture and innovative CEA technology. A community greenhouse space could provide a venue to host demonstrations, agritourism events, and other educational experiences year-round.

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Alignment with Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

The Community Greenhouse Initiative would work directly towards the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan's vision as being "a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system." The Community Greenhouse Initiative directly and indirectly aligns with plan goals as outlined here:

DIRECT ALIGNMENT



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.



Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.

INDIRECT ALIGNMENT



Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.



Continue to enhance the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment.

Additional Details

The following photos of the Onondaga Park Greenhouse demonstrate both the current state and use of the city facility and overall underutilization of the space to support urban agriculture. This venture proposal provides opportunities to increase the utilization of the existing facility.

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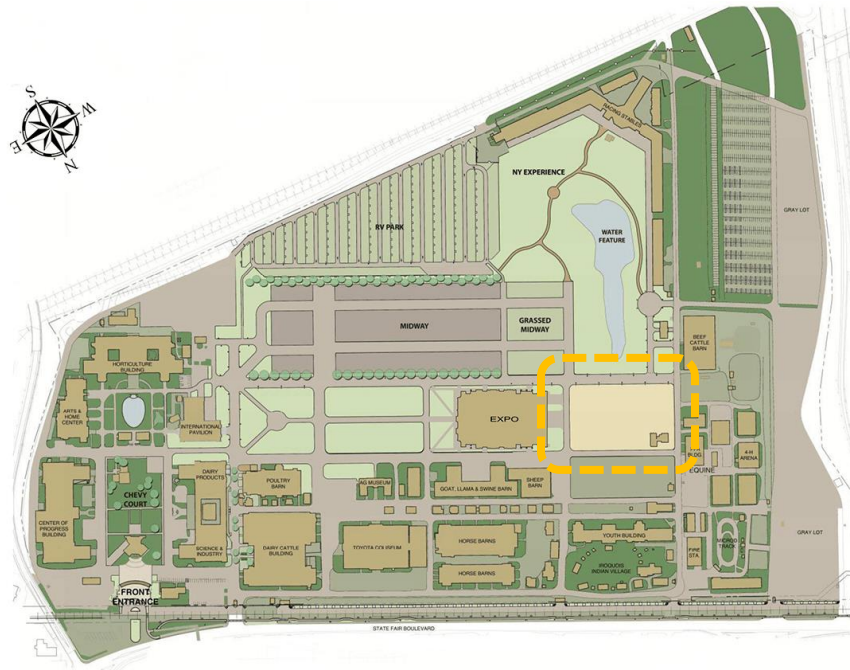
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View from the top left photo is looking south along Onondaga Ave showing the historic park infrastructure near the facility, view from top right photo is looking inside the western-most greenhouse, which is currently utilized by the City for ornamental plants. There are, however, other portions that remain unutilized and could potentially be renovated to support urban agriculture. Views from the bottom two photos are looking towards two potential areas for expanded use; the photo on the left looks north towards the southern portion of the greenhouse facility showing portions that appear unused; the photo on the right shows the parking lot and composting area, with additional vacant greenhouses behind the structures. Source: Environmental Design and Research, April 1, 2022.

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The following map of the New York State Fairgrounds shows the planned location of the greenhouse facility (see dashed orange rectangle) to be developed (by Fall 2023).



Source: New York State Fairgrounds based on personal correspondence with EDR and KK&P on May 10, 2022.
Map available at: <https://nysfairgrounds.ny.gov/maps>

Preliminary Budget Items

Greenhouse Construction or Renovation

1. Onondaga Park: \$30,000 for estimated site assessment; renovation costs will be determined by the results of the site assessment. There are roofing, ventilation, and watering issues with the building that need to be addressed to use it at full capacity. \$300,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding has been allocated to cover some greenhouse improvements, however, it is likely that additional funds will be needed to cover all repairs as determined by the site assessment.
2. State Fairgrounds: Funds have already been allocated for this

Greenhouse Management, Staffing, and Operations

1. Onondaga Park: \$240,000 (3 gardeners and one greenhouse crew leader)
2. State Fairgrounds: \$100,000 (1 greenhouse operator)

Note: These staff estimates are based on current staffing. If facilities and/or programming expands, additional staffing may be necessary. Operation costs will be in addition to the staffing costs (e.g., equipment repairs, seedling materials)

Educational Programming and Workforce Development Programming: Year-round educational program focusing on urban agriculture: \$200,000. During the school year, 2x per week (40 weeks, average of 20 participants/session, 2 staff): \$102,000; Summer (8 weeks, maximum of 1600 youth, 5 staff): \$98,000

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Funding Opportunities

A wide range of funding opportunities could support community greenhouse initiatives in Onondaga County. The US Department of Agriculture and state level grant opportunities that target local foods, economic development, or agricultural demonstration could be important in funding community greenhouse programs. Specifically, the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) provides funding through the Education and Workforce Development Grant Program. The program offers annual grants of up to \$500,000 with proposal deadlines annually in the fall. In addition, the Research and Education grant program offered by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture and Research and Education ("Northeast SARE") could be leveraged to fund educational programming or research at a community greenhouse. The grant program accepts preproposals in mid-summer and invites select proposals in the fall. Project awards typically range between \$30,000 and \$250,000. The New York Department of Agriculture and Markets is also anticipated to begin a new program to fund community gardens. The details of the opportunity are yet to be shared publicly, but the program will be relevant to one or both potential greenhouse spaces.

Considerations and challenges.

Considerations and challenges will vary depending on the specific site and program plans. The following considerations will be relevant for any community greenhouse project: Capital investment to renovate or build new greenhouse space (in the case of the Onondaga Park Greenhouse), sustained funding for programs and staffing, and interorganizational coordination and collaboration.

Timeframe

Preliminary Steps (0-1 years):

1. Determine site(s) for greenhouse renovation or construction
2. Hire an engineering or architecture firm to assess greenhouse renovation needs or to evaluate the need for developing a new greenhouse facility

Short term (1-3 years):

1. Build or renovate greenhouse space (Note: NYS Fairgrounds has stated a goal to have a greenhouse facility constructed and in operation in advance of the August 2023 State Fair.)
2. Hire key staff
3. Design and launch programming
4. Outline evaluation metrics to determine success over the short and long term

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Medium term (3-6 years)

1. Monitor programming success
2. Expand and grow programming
3. Continue fundraising efforts

Long term (6+ years)

1. Monitor programming success
2. Expand and grow programming
3. Continue fundraising efforts

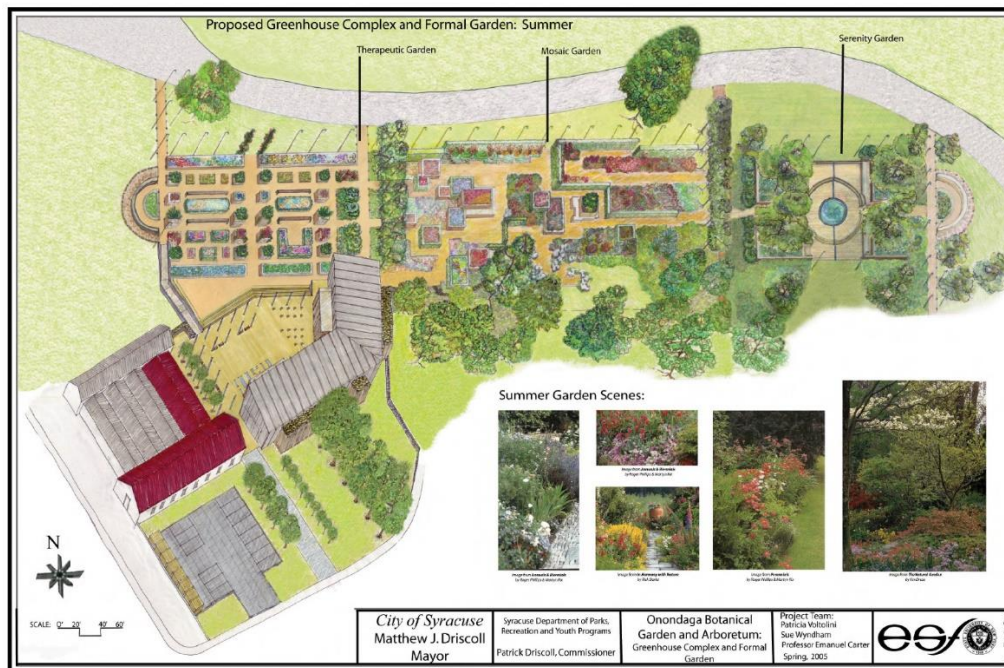
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Precedent Examples and Additional Resources

2004 ONONDAGA BOTANICAL GARDEN & ARBORETUM MASTER PLAN

The 2004 Onondaga Botanical Garden and Arboretum Master Plan outlined a plan that included re-designing and programming development at Lower Onondaga Park, the site of an existing greenhouse facility. Although the plan was not implemented, the landscape designs can be used as a starting point for evaluating the potential for expanded use of the Onondaga Park Greenhouse moving forward. The plan proposed a 228-acre facility that encompassed Lower Onondaga Park along with portions of Kirk Park, Elmwood Park, and the Onondaga Creek Corridor. The intended audience for the facility were students and staff from local school districts, local citizens, researchers and professionals from local institutions, and the Centers for Nature Education. The Onondaga Botanical Garden & Arboretum Master Plan is available at <https://www.esf.edu/la/carter/mplancombine2.pdf> (Accessed April 27, 2022).



KROHN CONSERVATORY, CINCINNATI, OH

Owned and operated by the City of Cincinnati, the Krohn Conservatory is a botanical tourism destination for the community and tourists. The Conservatory is co-located at the same city park as several other attractions including the Cincinnati Art Museum and other landmarks and historical structures. The Krohn Conservatory has hosted agricultural exhibits in the past including a hydroponics demonstration. The Krohn Conservatory originally opened in 1933. The Conservatory is located at Eden Park, a city park two miles from downtown Cincinnati. The conservatory hosts the following collections in separate rooms: Fern House, Palm House, Desert House, Orchid House, Bonsai Gallery, and a seasonal floral show room. The conservatory offers paid admission year-round for visitors.

WINDY CITY HARVEST, CHICAGO, IL

Opened to the public in 1972, Windy City Harvest is an education and jobs-training program offered by Chicago Botanic Garden. Chicago Botanic Garden is owned by a local governmental commission, the Forest

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Preserve District of Cook County, and managed by the Chicago Horticultural Society. The Windy City Harvest program provides:

- Paid trainings for more than 150 people every year, with an average of 80 percent placement rate in food systems jobs post-training. Since 2013, Windy City Harvest has helped to grow twenty-five small farm businesses.
- Cooking and nutrition classes as well as affordable or free produce for more than 1,000 community health center patients with diet-related diseases every year. Supports a network of more than sixty family-run community garden plots, empowering families to grow their own healthy food.
- More than 100,000 pounds of produce every year grown on over fifteen farms. Most of the produce stays in the communities where it is grown.

RIVERVIEW GARDENS, APPLETON, WI

Riverview Gardens is a non-profit organization offering job training and employment to people experiencing barriers to employment. The organization offers their ServiceWorks program which is a 90-hour job-training model to train individuals with transferrable work skills with the goal to obtain stable and permanent employment. The training program is offered at their nonprofit urban farm and other enterprises.

Riverview Gardens' mission is to build dignity through job training and employment. The organization engages the entire community in addressing the root causes of unemployment, poverty and homelessness through hard work, creativity, and human dignity. Riverview Gardens hosts the following enterprises: certified-organic urban farm, hydroponic greenhouses, event and park space, maintenance contracts for other non-profit organizations, and supplemental cleaning services from C.A.R.E. (Clean, Assess, Refresh, Enhance) Team in collaboration with the City of Appleton and Appleton Downtown, Inc

STONE BARNs CENTER, TARRYTOWN, NY

Stone Barns Center is a non-profit farm and educational center with a partner restaurant, Blue Hill at Stone Barns. The Center is open to the public for self-guided tours and offers a variety of educational programs including annual apprenticeships for aspiring farmers. Programming is funded by donations and farm revenue.

The farm at Stone Barns is a four-season operation with approximately six acres used for vegetable production and several hundred acres for livestock. The farm grows two hundred varieties of produce year-round, in outdoor fields and gardens and in a 22,000-square-foot minimally heated greenhouse that capitalizes on each season's available sunlight. Stone Barns offers a variety of programs for farmers, teachers, and the public. Annually, the farm engages eight apprentices. The hands-on training also includes courses on business, pollination, water, and soil. Programs include the Young Farmers Conference, Entrepreneurship Intensive for Farmers, and Food Education for high school students.

QUEENS COUNTY FARM MUSEUM, QUEENS, NY

Queens Farm connects visitors to agriculture and the environment through the lens of its 47-acre historic site, providing learning opportunities and creating conversations about biodiversity, nutrition, health and wellness, climate change and preserving local history. The farm is owned by the NYC Department of Parks and offers educational programming to youth and adults.

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Queens County Farm Museum is one of the longest continually farmed sites in New York State. The farm's 47-acre historic site has produced food and fed New Yorkers for over three centuries. Queens Farm grows a variety of nutritionally dense and culturally relevant produce using sustainable and best farming practices. The farm's Agriculture Department and its growing practices teach New Yorkers about where their food comes from and illustrates the broader food system, beginning with the seed and ending with the consumer. The farm is owned by the New York City Department of Parks and is operated by the Colonial Farmhouse Restoration Society of Bellerose, Inc. Queens Farm's programs are supported in part by public funds from the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the New York City Council.

RED HOOK INITIATIVE / RED HOOK FARMS, BROOKLYN, NY

Red Hook Initiative (RHI) is a nonprofit farm that reaches over 6,500 local youth and residents of Brooklyn's largest public housing community annually through a model of youth development, community building and local hiring. RHI manages two farms totaling 3.86 acres and harvests over 20,000 pounds of produce each year. RHI offers the Fresh Food Box Program, which is a week-to-week sign up for fresh produce that is discounted for NYC Housing Authority residents and anyone paying with SNAP.

Each year, RHI engages over 450 youth from sixth grade through age 24. Youth development programs offer year-round support for middle schoolers, high schoolers, and young adults. These programs ensure that Red Hook youth can work toward academic success, explore careers, develop life skills, strengthen social support systems and lead by example in their neighborhood. RHI's approach builds leadership skills in youth and adult residents to address issues facing the neighborhood. Community building programs work to drive positive change and increase social cohesion to build a more resilient Red Hook. Over the past year, the Community building team prioritized issues such as unsafe public housing conditions, discriminatory over-policing, and transit access. RHI is a significant community employer with over 150 youth and adults from Red Hook on staff. RHI hires locally and invests in residents who will improve their lives and the community in which they work.

THE HERITAGE FARM AT SNUG HARBOR, STATEN ISLAND, NY

Hosted at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, the Heritage Farm is a working nonprofit farm. The Farm offers educational programming. Established in 2011, the Heritage Farm is a 2.5-acre production farm that uses sustainable, low-till farming practices that focus on building soil health through the use of compost, crop rotation, intercropping, and cover cropping. The Heritage Farm offers a CSA to Staten Island and NYC residents and donates thousands of pounds of produce to local community partners annually.

Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden is the result of more than four decades of restoration and development to convert a 19th century charitable rest home for sailors into a regional arts center, botanical gardens, and public park. It is a place where history, architecture, gardens, agriculture, visual and performing arts, and education come together to provide a dynamic experience for all ages. Snug Harbor consists of twenty-eight buildings, fourteen distinctive botanical gardens, a two-acre urban farm, wetlands and park land on a unique, free, open campus.

SQUARE ROOTS, BROOKLYN, NY

Square Roots is a private company that grows produce year-round inside refurbished, upcycled shipping containers. They currently have farms in New York, Wisconsin, and Michigan. Square Roots aims to create meaningful jobs in modern farming for local community members. They incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion in hiring practices and invest in their teams to offer accelerated career paths to all employees.

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Square Roots hires locally, unlocking new opportunities in farming and enabling young people to launch successful careers in high-tech agriculture. Purchases of Square Roots produce support farmers working in the local community. In-house training programs open career opportunities for young farmers, not only within farming but across many departments at Square Roots. The career paths of farm team members span R&D, sales, food safety, and operations, reflecting the company's commitment to professional advancement and personal development.

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AGRICULTURAL WASTE STREAM STRATEGIC PLAN VENTURE PROPOSAL

This project involves the creation of a strategic plan to address agricultural waste and by-product management in Onondaga County. Agricultural waste is a broad term and represents multiple sources, including food waste, produce, paper and plastics used in agricultural activities, and manure (if not put back into the soil).

Both food and non-food agricultural waste is a significant and growing problem both in Onondaga County and across the US (16% of all food waste stems from agriculture). Fortunately, several opportunities exist to recycle or convert these waste products into energy or usable materials. Improved agricultural by-product management can represent an opportunity to improve economic, social, and environmental conditions.

The Agricultural Waste Stream Strategic Plan will seek to develop a three-pronged approach to:

- 1) Decrease the amount of agricultural waste;
- 2) Increase the recycling of paper and plastic waste from agricultural distributors and producers in Onondaga County; and
- 3) Explore innovations in the processing/composting of manure.

The strategic plan should determine the specific needs and feasibility of actions that can be implemented, such as specialized recycling facilities, appropriately designed anaerobic digesters with adequate technical assistance available, or programs to gather rescued produce to stop food waste at the farm level.

The strategy document could be developed through coordination between farmers and local entities engaged in the County's agriculture community efforts, including the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (CCE), the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency, as well as private businesses. The Agricultural Waste Stream Strategic Plan will set countywide food and agricultural waste reduction goals for the next 10 to 15 years. Identified actions are anticipated to support businesses and institutions needing to comply with the recently enacted NYS Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law. Additionally, partnering agencies will provide ongoing, up-to-date technical assistance for farm operators interested in working towards waste reduction strategies. This project should build upon existing initiatives that provide waste reduction support, such as the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District's agricultural tire recovery program.

BASIC INFORMATION

Targeted Populations

- Agricultural producers
- Agricultural product processing facilities
- Agricultural product distributors
- Agricultural waste handlers

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AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

Potential Project Lead and Partners

Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency, CCE Onondaga

BACKGROUND

Demonstrated Need

The need for an agricultural waste stream analysis is demonstrated by the increasing amount of food waste across the United States. This waste can be understood as a resource in all food system sectors. Sixteen percent of food waste in the US is generated from production, created by crop loss, pests, mechanical failures, contamination, changes in market demands, or labor shortages (Food Plan CNY, 2021).

Additionally, agriculture can produce non-food agricultural waste, which includes oil, silage plastics, fertilizer, pesticides, and herbicides, or excess manure not spread into the soil. US farmers generate 816 million pounds of plastic waste annually, mostly from plastic mulch and containers (Mancl, 2020). Agricultural waste options include recycling, recovery, and composting.

Fortunately, there are many solutions that exist to address waste recovery in the agricultural sector. What is missing today however is a multi-pronged strategy to address how waste recovery techniques might best be implemented in Onondaga County. Food and agricultural waste are significant contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. There are several technologies and management systems that can assist in decreasing the amount of waste, such as developing plastic recycling programs or reclaiming harvest waste. Unusable organic materials can be separated from the municipal solid waste stream and processed in an anaerobic digester, with appropriate economies of scale and technology.

Alignment with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

The Food and Agricultural Waste Stream Strategic Plan would directly support the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan's vision to be "a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system." This venture proposal aligns with the goals of the countywide plan, directly and indirectly.

DIRECT ALIGNMENT



Continue to enhance the relationship between agriculture and the natural environment.



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.

INDIRECT ALIGNMENT



Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.

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Preliminary Cost Estimate

\$100,000 to develop a strategic plan examining the options and feasibility for managing on-farm agricultural waste in Onondaga County. This effort could be expanded to explore all food waste for additional fee and scope.

Funding Opportunities

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation State Assistance Programs for Waste Reduction, Recycling and Household Hazardous Waste Programs provides municipal grants for Waste Reduction/Prevention Projects, Recycling Capital Projects, and Recycling Coordination and Education Projects. With the exception of the Recycling Coordination and Education Projects, proposals for projects are accepted on an ongoing first-come-first-served basis. In general, grants are typically awarded during the months of August, September, and October of each calendar year, with funds being dispersed the following calendar year.

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant program through the USDA offers six competitive grant programs to advance sustainable agriculture and food systems in the Northeast. Funding opportunities related to this Venture Proposal may include the Partnerships Grant (up to \$30,000) or Research for Novel Approaches grant (\$30,000 to \$200,000). The NYS Empire State Development Strategic Planning & Feasibility Studies Program provides up to \$100,000 in funding for feasibility studies for planning.

Considerations and challenges

The Agricultural Waste Stream Strategic Plan should be based on an analysis that prioritizes the most cost-effective ways to achieve agricultural waste reduction while working around the challenges to meet these goals. There are several challenges in addressing agricultural waste issues. In general, these challenges relate to the complexity of the necessary processes and the lack of resources, incentives, and available technical staff to operate digestion and recycling facilities.

Addressing these issues have been for some time a regional priority. According to the 2015 CNY Rising Upstate Revitalization Initiative Agribusiness Strategy, an important strategy identified to “develop technologies and support services to manage organic wastes”. Recommendations to achieve this strategy include:

- 1) Provide design/build services for use of these technologies consistent with operating farm and processing businesses;
- 2) Inventory technologies focused on water quality and extraction of valuable nutrients; and
- 3) Identify service providers with resources to support, e.g., environmental engineers and contractors.

More information is available through <https://esd.ny.gov/central-ny-rising-uri>.

As a potential strategy for the Agricultural Waste Stream Strategic Plan, the use of technologies to process agricultural by-products to energy can be quite complex and contingent on external pricing variables, like credits traded to implement California’s Low Carbon Fuel Standard. Upfront expenditures to develop infrastructure like anaerobic digesters can be risky if not total barriers for farm operations. According to local stakeholders, the economics and policies often do not to date align in the favor of facilities used to transport and process manure for renewable natural gas production. As the market continues to develop,

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innovation, increased technical expertise and support systems, and changes to pricing of energy credits may provide solutions to these barriers. There will be a continued need to ensure that the management of these systems is adequate and contracted energy specialists hold the adequate amount of liability in the facilities.

Another challenge relates to another potential strategy of the plan, the recycling of agricultural plastics. Recycling these plastics is complex because materials are often saturated, covered with dirt, and can be contaminated with herbicides and pesticides. Furthermore, these materials come in a variety of products, ranging from silo covers, irrigation pipe, herbicide/pesticide containers, and bale wrap, among others. To address these challenges, Cornell University's Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program features best management practices for both farm operations and agri-service practitioners.

Timeframe

Short-Term (1-2 years)

Additional Resources and Precedent Examples

- Cornell Waste Management Institute Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program: <http://www.recycleagplastics.css.cals.cornell.edu/agplastics-2.htm>
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Waste Management for Agriculture Regulations: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/84728.html>
- See <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/114499.html#DFSG> for more information on the NYS Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law enacted in January 2022.
- List of Designated Food Scrap Generators in NYS: https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/dfsglistfinal.pdf
- California clean fuel standard sparks renewable gas boom in Midwest <https://energynews.us/2021/05/13/california-clean-fuel-standard-sparks-renewable-gas-boom-in-midwest/>
- St. Lawrence County Agricultural Plastics Recycling Project: https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/ONE09-112/
- Anaerobic digesters in or near Onondaga County <https://www.epa.gov/agstar/livestock-anaerobic-digester-database>

Past CFA projects related to food waste in Central New York: Round 6 City of Cortland Construction and Pilot Operation of a Food Waste Vermicomposting Facility – DEC funding and Round 8 Regional Organic Waste to Energy Honeywell International partnering with NYS Fairgrounds – ESD funding The Regional Organic Waste to Energy project will collect and process commercial and institutional sources separated organics, primarily food waste, for use as feedstock in a planned anaerobic digester to be built as part of a brownfield redevelopment.

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AGRITOURISM SUPPORT PROGRAM VENTURE PROPOSAL

Agritourism describes businesses, operated as an accessory use to an active farm, which brings together tourism and agriculture for the education and enjoyment of the public. These agritourism destinations vary widely and may include activities such as u-pick operations, corn/hay mazes, kids activities, farm animal petting zoos, farm tours, restaurants and breweries/distilleries, retail sales of farm products, on-farm lodging, and/or agriculture themed festivals and other events.

Agritourism benefits the local economy, rural communities, and farm operations alike by providing added non-traditional revenues for farm operators to sustain and grow their ag operations. It also exposes the public to working lands and operations to learn about local food production and positive impacts of the agricultural community.

Agritourism exhibits strength and potential for Onondaga County, as demonstrated by the large increase in agritourism offerings in Onondaga County as well as the success of programs such as the Onondaga Grown Campaign in recent years.

Onondaga County, through the Agricultural Council and its agriculture planning programs, will continue to invest in planning initiatives and marketing support for agritourism opportunities through the development of an Agritourism Support Program. This program would encompass activities such as:

- Corridor Planning: Enhance rural planning and inter-municipal and agency coordination along agritourism corridors (e.g., NYS Routes 20 and 80, Route 370) through the analysis of agricultural community assets, roadside uses, accommodations, and incentives for agritourism operations, watershed analysis/protection measures, transportation planning, etc.
- Marketing and Promotion: Continued exploration of opportunities to market and promote Onondaga County farms and agritourism venues to the Central New York Region and beyond. Partner with existing tourism campaigns (e.g., Visit Syracuse and I love NY), development of social media/advertising campaigns, etc.
- Technical Assistance for Businesses: Information and training for farms and farm businesses to start, improve, or expand existing agritourism ventures, assistance for market analyses, media support, event management, etc.
- Technical Assistance for Municipalities: Information and training on best practices related to regulation and permitting of agritourism land uses, such as zoning accommodations, site planning considerations, and model design guidelines.

BASIC INFORMATION

Targeted Populations

- Agricultural producers ranging from small hobby farms to large-scale farm operations
- Businesses in rural villages and hamlets
- Onondaga County residents and visitors
- Rural municipalities

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Potential Project Lead and Partners

Potential Project Lead(s):

Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA)
Onondaga County Agricultural Council

Potential Project Partners:

Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County (4H, etc.)
Agritourism producers
Municipalities
Visit Syracuse / Visit Central New York
Local Chambers of Commerce (e.g., Skaneateles Area/Gr. Baldwinsville Chambers of Commerce)
Farmers Markets
Onondaga County Department of Economic Development
Onondaga Co. Industrial Development Agency
CNY Regional Planning and Development Board
Departments of Transportation

BACKGROUND

Demonstrated Need

To date, agritourism developments in Onondaga County, such as farm-to-table activities, U-pick venues, small-scale breweries and cideries, and celebratory venues have occurred informally. Agritourism continues to be a growing sector of agriculture in Onondaga County. While agritourism is quite diverse, there are common needs that can be fulfilled with a county-wide agritourism support program. It is important for this program to consider the many elements of agritourism from the perspective of farmers and municipalities.

This program will provide a guide for communities to embrace and balance agritourism throughout Onondaga County. Specific needs exist to provide a coordinated tourism marketing platform building on Onondaga Grown branding efforts along with support for new and existing venues to access this platform along with other tools for business development, safety and liability, and other site design elements. In doing so, this will build local awareness, ensure good management of agritourism operations and bring dollars into local rural economies.

Alignment with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

The Agritourism Support Program would contribute to the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan's vision of being "a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system." This venture proposal aligns with the goals of the countywide plan, directly and indirectly.

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AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

DIRECT ALIGNMENT



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.



Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.

INDIRECT ALIGNMENT



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.



Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.

Preliminary Cost Estimate

\$250,000

Potential Funding Opportunities

- Corridor Planning: , NYS Main Street Grant Program (Homes and Community Renewal), NYS Empire State Development Strategic Planning & Feasibility Studies Program, Onondaga County General Fund, Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency, Onondaga County Agriculture Council. Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (Unified Planning Work Program).
- Marketing and Promotion: The 2022 NYS Empire State Development Market New York grant program has funds for agritourism events, marketing initiatives, or capital projects that can demonstrate a 20% match and have a minimum grant request of \$25,000 or more for regional marketing or at least \$150,000 for capital projects.
- Technical Assistance for Businesses: The USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant program offers six competitive grant programs to advance sustainable agriculture and food systems in the Northeast. Specific funds that may relate include the Professional Development Grant (\$30,000 to \$150,000 available) or Partnerships Grant (up to \$30,000 available).

Considerations and challenges

The informal approach for agritourism development that has occurred to date creates risks of inadvertent conflicts between individual concerns and precludes a comprehensive approach to agricultural economic development and coordination across Onondaga County.

Land use conflicts can occur between agritourism facilities and neighboring landowners. Other related land use planning issues include change in character, traffic/infrastructure needs, event management, noise/lighting. It is also a challenge to keep agriculture as primary use and sometimes agritourism operations can actually take agricultural lands out of production. A balance of local oversight is needed to keep local agricultural lands and landscapes intact, while adding agritourism as a viable option for local farm operations. Tools and best practices, both for entering farm operations, as well as municipal regulators, would provide the resources and information needed to help ensure safe, orderly development of agritourism opportunities.

There appears to be an opportunity for more skill development in agritourism which may not be familiar to farm families entering agritourism, such as in advertising/social media, and in the retail business and/or food service management and development. Resource and knowledge-sharing is one way to overcome this knowledge and skillset gap.

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In addition to the Onondaga Grown campaign, and events such as OnFarm Fest, managed by the Onondaga County Agriculture Council, there may be opportunity to develop a coordinated agritourism marketing platform to better support to new and existing ventures. Marketing to a variety of audiences, including new visitors to the area, could better leverage farm offerings to a larger population base, and maximize skillsets.

Timeframe

Study/Plan Development: Short (1-2 years) ; Support : ongoing

Precedent Examples and Additional Resources

- Montgomery County Maryland Agritourism Study: This Agritourism Study examines issues raised by farmers, entrepreneurs, community members, planners, and regulators. It draws and expands on the earlier work of the Montgomery County Heritage Area Management Plan, as well as utilizes consultant assistance to conduct a study of agritourism policies and regulations in the county and comparable jurisdictions. The Agritourism Study seeks to identify considerations, including opportunities and challenges, as well as develop a menu of potential solutions to provide a comprehensive and coordinated approach for agricultural-economic development. The study seeks to preserve the character of the Agricultural Reserve while also enhancing the economic viability of farming. For more information visit: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/agricultural-reserve/agritourism-study/>



Source: Montgomery County Agritourism Study

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- Finger Lakes Farm Country: This program promotes the abundance of agritourism resources in the southern Finger Lakes by creating a memorable brand for agritourism attractions and businesses while highlighting educational and recreational activities for regional visitors. The program is a partnership between Chemung, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, and Yates counties, along with the Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Finger Lakes Wine Country Marketing Organization. In addition to online promotions and calendar coordination, the program features brochures that are distributed to tourism kiosks. For more information, visit: <https://fingerlakesfarmcountry.com/>



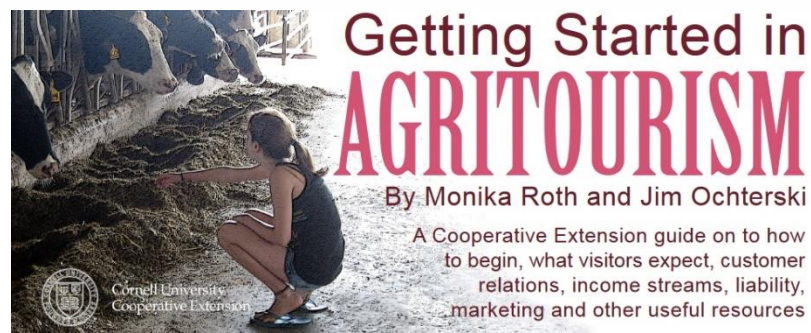
Harvest Relaxation at These Finger Lakes Farms

There are many ways to enjoy Finger Lakes Farm Country, including viewing the beautiful rolling hills, taking in scenic lakeside wineries and taking on hands-on farming adventures. But, what if those farm experiences could actually be quite relaxing? Check out [...]

READ ARTICLE

Source: Finger Lakes Farm Country website: <https://fingerlakesfarmcountry.com/>

- Getting Started in Agritourism Handbook: Originally developed in 2007 and updated in 2016 by Tompkins County CCE and posted on the Monroe County CCE website, this guidebook is targeted to farm operators interested in initiating agritourism operations, and provides guidance for visitor expectations, considerations for customer relations, generating income from agritourism, liability considerations and working with insurance providers, and marketing considerations. For more information, visit: <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/resources/getting-started-in-agritourism>



Source: Cover page of 2007 Agritourism Handbook

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VALUE-ADDED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES VENTURE PROPOSAL

Onondaga County and the Central New York Regional Economic Development Council recognize agribusiness as a key sector for strategic economic growth due to its role as a cornerstone for the regional economy. Within the agribusiness sector, *Value-Added Products* are a leading component of growth.

The USDA, Rural Business Development defines value-added products as follows:

- *A change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam).*
- *The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business plan (such as organically produced products).*
- *The physical segregation of an agricultural commodity or product in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product (such as an identity preserved marketing system).*

As a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a greater portion of revenue derived from the marketing, processing or physical segregation is made available to the producer of the commodity or product (AgMRC, 2022)

Value-added products offer farmers the potential to capture a larger share of the food dollar beyond typical farming activities, and examples are endless.

This venture proposal aims to develop supports for value-added economic development project ideas emerging from the Onondaga County agricultural community, as a means to expanding the region's agribusiness sector size, technological infrastructure, and access to major markets. Initial project concepts were identified through the research, interviews and data collection conducted in support of the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan, including:

- A regional food hub (i.e., an organization and/or facility to actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food)
- A flash freezing facility that rapidly distributes freezing cold air throughout a commercial unit, eventually cooling produce to safe and legal temperature so that produce can be distributed
- A commercial kitchen that is fully equipped, meets the requirements for cleanliness and safe food handling, and able to be rented out for shared use.
- A produce processing facility that manufactures, packages, labels, and provides food for sale or distribution to other business entities such as other food processing plants or food service establishments such as schools or institutional uses.
- An agribusiness park located on an industrial site that has been assessed for the attributes (utilities, transportation, workforce, etc.) necessary to attract new companies within the designated industry sectors specifically catering to agriculture-related industries.

More research related to the market, feasibility, siting, management, and role of governmental partners in these facilities is needed. It is envisioned that these tasks would be closely related to the work of the Agricultural Economic Development Specialist, detailed in Venture Proposal #1, as well as other regional economic development partners.

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AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

BASIC INFORMATION

Targeted Populations

Individual agriculture producers, processors, distributors, and large-scale wholesale consumers.

Potential Project Lead and Partners

Local private distributors, processing facilities, farmers, Onondaga County Office of Economic Development and Industrial Development Agency, Empire State Development, Centerstate CEO, Syracuse Onondaga Food Systems Alliance, Central New York Regional Market Authority, large-scale wholesale consumers.

BACKGROUND

Demonstrated Need

According to the *2021 Progress Report* for Central New York Regional Economic Development Council's *Upstate Revitalization Initiative*, a demonstrated need facing Central New York's agriculture is to build resiliency into the supply chain and local food systems. To accomplish this, two key recommendations were outlined that pertain to this venture proposal:

- 1) invest in technology that extends the shelf life of local products, and
- 2) diversify revenue streams through value-added products.

These recommendations were specifically directed towards dairy, fruits, and vegetable products, and even more specifically, crops or products that are threatened by climate change and other issues impacting water availability in areas of the country (e.g., the California Central Valley).

In addition to advancing regional agribusiness goals, this initiative will strongly benefit farmers. In a national survey of food hubs and producers, producers that were associated with food hubs hired more people, increased their acreage size, and extended their growing season (Michigan State University 2013).

Multiple farmers and distributors involved in the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan development process identified both growth in value-added markets as well as difficulties in meeting produce packaging needs for local institutions, and the limited facilities within Onondaga County to modify packing processes.

Alignment with the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan

The Value-Added Economic Development Initiative would work directly towards the Onondaga County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan's vision as being "a dynamic agricultural community of vibrant, resilient, and experienced farm operators and farm-related entrepreneurs who are the stewards of local viable farmland and the food system." This venture proposal aligns with the goals of the countywide plan, directly and indirectly.

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AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

DIRECT ALIGNMENT



Enhance agriculture-related economic development activities and collaboration to capitalize on emerging markets, technologies, and incentives.




Promote the importance of local agriculture and food systems throughout Onondaga County.



Support the next generation of farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs in Onondaga County.

INDIRECT ALIGNMENT



Strategically protect agricultural lands throughout Onondaga County to sustain and improve its vibrant agricultural operations.

Preliminary Cost Estimate

Initial work would involve a scoping study to define the specific value-added needs in the Syracuse area, and those value-added initiatives or projects with the most potential benefit to the agricultural community, based on community needs and available resources. The scoping process will involve identification and mobilization of potential partners and stakeholders (\$20,000)

Potential concepts identified through an initial scoping study will then likely require additional detailed analysis to establish proof of concept, feasibility and detailed management and funding mechanisms. This will involve market research/survey, business and/or operational needs assessment, data analysis, and financial feasibility analysis, and funding options. Depending on the results of the scoping study, a minimum of \$75,000 per initiative should be allocated towards this effort.

Funding Opportunities

NYS Empire State Development offers funding for strategic planning and feasibility studies as well as for capital projects associated with agribusiness initiatives (acquisition of land, buildings, machinery and/or equipment; demolition and environmental remediation; new construction, renovation, or leasehold improvements; acquisition of furniture and fixtures; soft costs of up to twenty-five percent (25%) of total project costs). Funding may also be obtained through the NYS Grown & Certified Infrastructure, Technology, research, and Development Grant Program.

The Value-Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG) is a competitive grants program administered by the USDA Rural Business Cooperative Service to help producers move into value-added agricultural enterprises. The program offers both planning (\$75k max) and/or capital investment (\$250k max) for value added enterprises.

Considerations and challenges

Scaling up production and adding processing and packaging activities to serve new, larger institutional users with value-added products can be difficult for farmers, many of which tend to be small scale or mid-sized in their operations. Small or midsized farms may face financial challenges in investing in or securing loans for the necessary machinery to increase the scale of operations.

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Sharing facilities to assist in the financing can also present logistical challenges between different operations and meeting standards for different markets.

Careful coordination and planning are needed to ensure that producers and processing facilities can accommodate fluctuations of demand pressures due to seasonal shifts in harvesting. Oftentimes, the products created from these special facilities require a price mark-up, leaving consumers to pay a premium that results in market limitations. Facilities may require new skills from operators, like packaging or marketing, to keep up with evolving markets.

Timeframe

Each potential venture will take a two-pronged approach when considering the timeframe for implementation. This timeframe may be expedited to the extent that projects can be combined (e.g., a commercial kitchen that can be sited with a food hub facility):

Short (1-2) for developing the scope of work, and initiating a feasibility study

Medium (3 to 6 years) for securing the necessary capital agreements, and initiating project development

Precedent Examples and Additional Resources

RUSSO PRODUCE

This Syracuse-based produce distributor which is currently operating out of two warehouses on the Central New York Regional Market campus. In recent years, the operation has partnered with an organization in Oneida County, securing an additional 30,000 square feet for value-added production. Russo has invested in space and installation of machinery to custom cut fresh fruit and vegetables as well as repackage (tray wrap, overwrap, bag, and clamshell) product according to vendor needs. The business has been in contact with local school districts and institutions in an effort to expand their value-added product processing distribution network.

Ideally, Russo is seeking to consolidate its operations and locate its packing and processing facilities in or near its existing warehouse in the Syracuse area and is currently scoping opportunities for a 40-60,000 square foot facility. The company has also expressed interest in linkages to a central commercial kitchen facility operation. It is estimated that the expansion and relocation could result in the addition of 10-30 new direct jobs as well as new and expanded demand for local agricultural products from area farmers.

THE WALLACE CENTER

The Wallace Center has developed resources to improve food hubs' operation and raise awareness of this critical link in the value chain by developing a one-stop location for information. Structured in many forms, from co-ops to multi-farm CSAs to big, bustling warehouses, food hubs are a critical component of a viable thriving local food economy. Resources include tools and information related to individual enterprises, food hub management, food safety and quality information (e.g., the USDA GroupGap program), funding and financing tools, value chain coordination, and leadership and equity within the food system. For more information, see <https://foodsystemsleadershipnetwork.org/resource-library/topic-areas/>

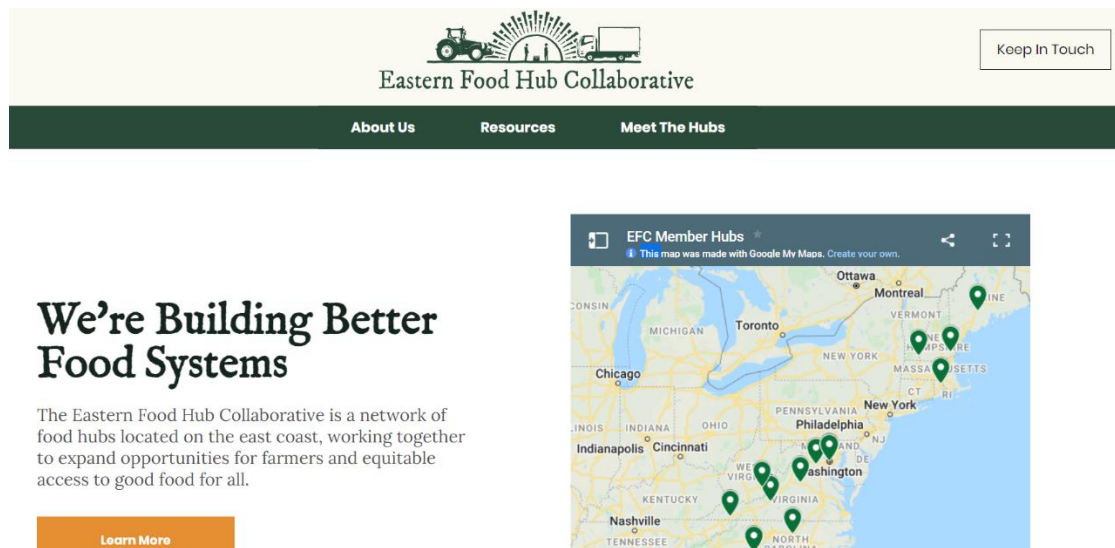
THE EASTERN FOOD HUB COLLECTIVE

The Eastern Food Hub Collective has a framework outlining how a collection of food hubs can work together to expand market opportunities for farmers, improve operational efficiency, and grow regional food system

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AGRICULTURE & FARMLAND PROTECTION PLAN

influence. By participating in the collective through a Memorandum of Understanding that sets agreements on prices, food quality, sustainability, equity, and community, local producers and buyers can leverage a larger buying power across the east coast. For more information, see <https://www.easternfoodhubcollaborative.org>.



Source: Screenshot from <https://www.easternfoodhubcollaborative.org/>

CAYUGA MILK INGREDIENTS EXPANSION, AUBURN, NY

Cayuga Milk Ingredients continues to be one of the largest producers of dried milk in the world. They are currently in the midst of a \$90 million expansion to install a new reverse osmosis filtration system, evaporator, and feed system to their current dryer. This will increase their capacity and allow production of additional products.

AGRIBUSINESS PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY

This study defined subsectors within the food processing sector to focus economic development attraction efforts. Industrial sites throughout the County were assessed for the attributes (utilities, transportation, workforce, etc.) necessary to attract new companies within the designated industry sectors. For more information, see <https://www3.erie.gov/agriculture/agribusiness-park-feasibility-study>