in this issue >>>

OCDC Updates
Seed Grant Program
October is Co-op Month
Southern Ohio Growers Co-op
Food Hub Network Update
Upcoming Events
The Ohio Cooperative Development Center works with new and emerging cooperatives and cooperative-like businesses in rural Ohio and West Virginia in an effort to support economic development. The center provides services and resource linkages, including formation counseling, member education, bylaw development, board training and consultation and assistance with feasibility studies, strategic plan development, business planning, and policy development. OCDC strives to provide services based on the individual needs of clients and to develop an ongoing relationship with clients to ensure their continued success. For more information, visit southcenters.osu.edu/cooperatives, call 740-289-2071 x227, or email scott.1220@osu.edu.

OCDC Services

Formation Counseling:
Interested in forming a cooperative, but aren’t sure where to start? OCDC provides counseling on the co-op formation process, including identifying a purpose and members as well as developing articles of incorporation and bylaws.

Cooperative education:
OCDC provides education on the cooperative business model throughout the region. These sessions are useful for those interested in forming a co-op, becoming a co-op member, or joining co-op leadership.

Board training:
Directors elected from and by the membership of a co-op provide oversight and governance for the business. OCDC provides training on the unique roles of co-op directors.

Feasibility, marketing plan, and business plan assistance:
OCDC offers help to new and emerging cooperatives with the foundational plans for their business, including exploring the feasibility of start-up and the resources required for success.

Ohio Cooperative Development Center Updates

The Ohio Cooperative Development Center’s current program year will end on September 30, 2016. We’re pleased to be wrapping up another successful year, details of which are included throughout this newsletter, and are looking forward to continuing and expanding our current work.

In 2016-2017, OCDC looks forward to providing assistance to new and emerging cooperatives throughout Ohio and West Virginia, particularly those in Appalachia. The center is focused on building our own and our stakeholders’ capacity for and awareness of cooperative development.

In an effort to provide relevant, timely and engaging information about cooperative development, OCDC will be transitioning this newsletter to a monthly blog post on the OSU South Centers Business Development Network Blog. The blog is a collaboration of the programs that make up the OSU South Centers Business Development Network and includes a wealth of information related to small business development, particularly in Southern Ohio.

We invite you to explore the blog and to sign up to receive weekly digests to your email at the following link!

https://u.osu.edu/osubusinessdevelopmentnetwork/
OCDC Seed Grant Program: A resource for new and emerging cooperatives

Often one of the most challenging aspects of developing a business is securing adequate financial resources for the business’ needs. This is true even for cooperatives. The Ohio Cooperative Development Center’s Seed Grant Program is offered as a resource to help address this challenge for new and emerging cooperatives in Ohio and West Virginia.

Seed grants are available to new and emerging co-ops in the region for use on exploratory or expansion projects. The grants, which are a reimbursement, matching grant, are to be used by groups to support feasibility, formation, or expansion. Past projects have included membership loan and gift campaigns to generate financial resources for a new cooperative and work with legal and accounting professionals to develop articles of incorporation, bylaws, and accounting systems, among many other activities.

OCDC’s 2015-2016 Seed Grant Program saw a record number of proposals, awarding approximately $12,000 to five projects throughout the region.

The 2016-2017 Seed Grant Program is set be released in October. A group that is interested in the program should:

- Access the seed grant page on the OCDC’s website for program information
- Fully review the 2016-2017 Request for Proposals and contact OCDC staff with any questions
- Submit a proposal after developing a project for their co-op that both meets their needs and the program requirements
- Manage successful awards in a manner that will ensure compliance with requirements of the program

October is Co-op Month

The 2016 Co-op Month theme is “Cooperatives Build.” Share your story about how cooperatives help build community, jobs, and more throughout the month!

October is the time to recognize and celebrate co-ops! Since 1964, October has been recognized as Co-op Month, a time to educate the public about the many advantages of the cooperative business model.

To help celebrate, the Co-op Month Planning Committee, made up of professionals from various cooperative associations has made available a multitude of resources for co-ops and cooperative developers. Visit http://www.coopmonth.coop/ to view posters, social media templates, videos, and more! Share these items or others to help build awareness in your community.
Cooperating to Access New Markets: Southern Ohio Growers Cooperative

Can you do something better together than you can as individuals?

This question often guides the Ohio Cooperative Development Center’s work with groups that are interested in forming a co-op. Because the co-op model is based on serving a mutual need, it is vital that the members identify and build their business around that need in a way that benefits the entire group.

When farmers in southeast Ohio were approached by large retailers to supply their stores and distribution centers with fall pumpkins, they weren’t able to individually service these large markets. However, multiple farmers in the region came together to explore the opportunity, they realized they would be better able to access these large markets as a group.

These exploratory meetings began in September 2015, facilitated by the OCDC and Ohio State University Extension. Interested farmers learned about the co-op business model as a method to collaboratively market their pumpkins and they explored the feasibility of a co-op as a method of selling into large retail markets.

In early 2016, the Southern Ohio Growers Cooperative was formed. Members of the co-op jointly explored market channels and organized the co-op’s structure.

Members of the co-op are responsible for producing and marketing quality pumpkins through the co-op. Members coordinated their production at the beginning of the growing season, with each farm making volume commitments to the co-op, in order to ensure alignment between markets and production. Members are also responsible for leadership of the cooperative. They make up the board of directors, which oversees the co-op’s activities.

By late August, the group was selling pumpkins to retailers, some of which will likely be distributed throughout the region.

Coming together under the cooperative model allowed the farmer-members of the Southern Ohio Growers Cooperative to access new markets, markets that they were not able to access individually.
Site Visits Create Valuable Learning Opportunity for Food Hub Network

The Ohio Cooperative Development Center (OCDC) is leading an effort to cooperatively develop local and regional food systems by working with new and emerging food hubs and incubator training farms in the Ohio & West Virginia Food Hub Network.

By now, we hope you’ve heard about OCDC’s work with the Ohio & West Virginia Food Hub Network! The educational network has been meeting since the fall of 2014 to address the challenges faced by food hubs and incubator farms in the region. This year, the network placed a renewed emphasis on peer exchange by creating opportunities for hubs to share with one another. This exchange is particularly useful as hubs begin operating and have highly specific questions related to best practices for their processes and procedures. What better place to find answers for these questions than operating aggregators? It is was with this goal in mind that OCDC coordinated quarterly meetings that included site visits to existing produce aggregation and distribution companies this year. In May, participants learned first-hand the ins and outs of aggregating, distributing and even processing fresh produce on tours of Sanfillipo Produce Co., DNO Produce, LLC, and DNO, Inc. of central Ohio. In August, participants toured the Highland Market in Davis, West Virginia — a local foods grocery aggregating product from over 80 small-scale farmers.

Jill Young of the Natural Capital Investment Fund’s Value Chain Cluster Initiative explained the value of these site visits, “The opportunity for shared learning builds awareness and trust amongst our hubs. That opens the door for stronger regional partnerships and real collaboration on future projects.”

The next activity of the Ohio & West Virginia Food Hub Network is an educational webinar scheduled for October 13, 2016. The 11:30am webinar will feature representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency sharing information about loan resources for growers.
Mark Your Calendar!

Thursday, October 13th

Webinar, “Financing Resources for Growers”

This free webinar will detail resources available to growers through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency. Sponsored by the Ohio Cooperative Development Center.

Access the webinar at go.osu.edu/financingforgrowers

Thursday, October 20th

Webinar, “Cooperatively Marketing your Products”

This free webinar will detail the co-op model for agricultural producers interested in marketing their products jointly. Sponsored by the Ohio State University Extension Direct Marketing program.

Access the webinar at http://carmenconnect.osu.edu/marketingyourproducts/

Tuesday, November 15th

Ohio & West Virginia Food Hub Network Meeting

Stay tuned for the details for this quarterly meeting of the Food Hub Network.

Please contact Hannah Scott at scott.1220@osu.edu or 740-289-2071 x227 if you are interested in participating in the network.