

**Brown County WNEP Hmong Entrepreneurial Education and Assistance
Report to District Resource Management Team
FINAL**

The Brown County UW Extension conducted food security research that provided a basis for many community-based hunger and food security activities, launching the Brown County Food Security Initiative. Due to the high degree of food insecurity and hunger in the Hmong community a partnership was formed with the United Hmong Community Center, UW Extension and the Brown County Food & Hunger Network that was instrumental in securing funds through the USDA Community Food Systems Grant Program. The purpose of the grant was to assist the Hmong community in reducing food insecurity by strengthening elements of their local food system and in expanding opportunities for agriculture and food-related micro-enterprise development.

The USDA Community Food Systems Grant allowed for three years of foundation-building activities; renovation of the kitchen facilities, purchasing of equipment for an inspected and licensed commercial kitchen, a written business plan for the kitchen and cold storage facility. Over 30 Hmong people were trained in Food Service Sanitation and there are at least 10 people that had indicated an interest in starting their own food-related micro-enterprise or business utilizing the commercial kitchen and cold storage facility. For this reason, we submitted a proposal for District Resource Management Funds to address this need...

Using \$5000.00 for the District Resource Management Funds, and an additional \$7000.00 received from the Campaign for Human Development, we were able to hire a Hmong individual with business experience who recently relocated to Green Bay from St Paul to manage the project. Much of the success of this project is attributed to having found the right individual to manage the project. He knew the community from living here previously and has gained leadership and business experience over the past 20 years in Minnesota and California. In addition, a long time friend and retired multi-generational family food business owner has volunteered his expertise for guidance and mentoring the project manager and to also serve as a liaison to agencies and contacts where language and culture are sometimes a barrier. The goals of the proposed project have been achieved and have re-energized the Hmong community to pursue food related entrepreneur businesses.

Goal 1: To provide food business development assistance, mentoring and coaching

Outcome: Five Hmong individuals interested in using the commercial kitchen to start a food micro-enterprise business will be assisted in their ventures

Evaluation: Assistance Satisfaction interview will be conducted with each participant

Results: Thirty-five Hmong and one Caucasian have received business development assistance, mentoring and coaching such as business research, business plan development, financial and marketing research, license applications etc. See attached list. All participants have been satisfied and grateful for the assistance and continue to work toward their business goal.

Goal 2: To provide specific education in food safety and sanitation, product development, preparation, processing and marketing for food-related business owners

Outcome: 25 Hmong individuals will receive education and assistance

Evaluation: Written evaluations will be obtained at all educational offerings. Pre- and Post knowledge and behavior scales will be used to gauge effectiveness of training and assistance

Results: 25 Hmong individuals completed the Food Safety and Sanitation course taught through NWTC. The three day course was taught at the United Hmong Community Center by a Hmong teacher. We had learned from the USDA grant experience that tutoring was critical to improve the success rate of passing the exam so tutoring was also provided. The number of students receiving a passing grade was much lower than anticipated in spite of this tutoring and the rates in the past. Five of the 25 students passed on the first try. Another group tutoring session was scheduled to assist others in receiving the certification. The grant covered the cost of the training and the first exam. Eight people chose to retake the exam at their own expense and passed with an average passing score of 82%. A total of 13 out of the 25 students have received their certification. The remaining 12 students learned. The exam serves as the evaluation of the education.

Goal 3: To provide education and assistance that will improve sales of market gardeners by extending shelf life through proper handling and cold storage and selling produce by weight.

Outcome: Ten Hmong individuals involved in growing and direct marketing of garden produce will receive education and assistance

Evaluation: Yields and sales will be measured and compared to last year's figures from those willing to share the information

Results: The manager has met with six farmers market venders to encourage cold storage of produce between markets and to sell as many items as possible by weight instead of by the bundle. Twelve venders rented scales purchased with USDA grant funds for use during this past growing season. Sharing information on personal finances relating to yield and sales is not a common practice with the Hmong. More venders are expected to utilize cold storage this coming year. In addition a new market, Flea Market International, is planned for the 2006 season.

The development of Flea Market International was an unexpected outcome. Many of the entrepreneurs who have received mentoring plan to participate in this market which will run from May through October. The City Council has recently approved the use of centrally located city parking lot for this venture. The public response and media coverage has been positive. See the attached poster and article from the Green Bay Press Gazette.

A collaborative venture between the Small Business Development Center, other partners at the NWTC Business Assistance Center, the United Hmong Community Center and UW Extension Nutrition Education Program is in place to apply for cross divisional funds for continuing this work to support the Hmong community. To initiate this venture a Hmong Entrepreneur Banquet was held on March 4 from 4 to 9 pm. Approximately 50 people attended including the majority of potential food entrepreneurs that have received coaching and mentoring. A variety of speakers addressed business financing resources, and business start-up strategies.