

ACCESSION NO: 0219711 **SUBFILE:** CRIS

ROJ NO: ILLW-2009-03796 **AGENCY:** NIFA ILLW

ROJ TYPE: OTHER GRANTS **PROJ STATUS:** TERMINATED

CONTRACT/GRANT/AGREEMENT NO: 2009-49400-05943 **PROPOSAL NO:** 2010-03303

START DATE: 01 SEP 2009 **TERM:** 31 AUG 2012

GRANT AMT: \$750,000 **GRANT YR:** 2009

INITIAL AWARD YEAR: 2009

INVESTIGATOR: Spaulding, T.

PERFORMING INSTITUTION:

ANGELIC ORGANICS LEARNING CENTER

547 ROCKTON ROAD

ALEDONIA, ILLINOIS 61011-9572

COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL FARMER-TO-FARMER TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROJECT

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY: Beginning farmers are entering the field as the markets for organic and local farm products are booming. In the greater Chicago market alone, a recent marketing study by Prairie Partners Group reported that organic sales annually totaled more than \$63 million, and that less than 3% of these sales were captured by local farmers. The USDA 2007 Ag Census reports that direct sales to consumers are up 49% and represent \$1.2 billion in sales nationally. As there are not enough farmers to meet the current demand, not to mention the market growth projections of more than 10% annually, consumers and civic leaders are calling for programs to encourage more farmers to enter the market. In March 2009, the IL Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, authorized by the IL state legislature, issued its recommendations for building a local food system. The Task Force has set the ambitious goal to train 5,000 new local and organic farmers by 2020 so that at least 10% of all local food purchases are from local farms. The collaborating partners to this project have helped to stimulate and prepare a growing pool of beginning farmers who want to meet the rising public demand. However, most are still in the vulnerable first five years of business start-up or are just preparing to enter farming. These beginning farmers, according to our evaluations and needs assessments, need training and services to address, during the first five years, these four key barriers to their success: 1) lack of access to training, education, and technical assistance; 2) lack of access to land; 3) lack of access to capital and credit; and 4) lack of access to markets. The project proposes to address all four barriers during each of four learning stages for beginning farmers on their path from entering farming to a viable farm enterprise. The four learning stages are -- 1: Prospective (recruitment stage); 2: Farmer-to-Farmer Training (formal study and gaining hands-on experience); 3: Farm Start-up or Transition; and 4: Growing the Farm (the first five years after farm start-up). The stages were outlined by the CRAFT farmer steering committee - in partnership with the collaborating partners to this project - to help beginning farmers, their mentors, and the support organizations match appropriate training and services to each stage of a farmer's development. By working together, the partners will be able to provide a web of support and training over multiple years and learning stages that increases the success rates of beginning farmers. The project rallies the resources of more than 65 successful sustainable agriculture farmers in the CRAFT farmer alliance and three leading nonprofits with more than 40 combined years offering farmer training and services to help beginning farmers not only enter farming but create viable farm enterprises. The project helps to expand and enhance the existing program and services. Also, seeing that our combined strength, in terms of addressing the four barriers, is in the area of farmer training, the project enables greater planning and program development targeted at increasing farmer access to land, financing, and market development.

OBJECTIVES: 1. Expand existing and develop new farmer training and technical assistance programs. Outputs: Enhance curriculum and expand farmer-to-farmer support services in CRAFT; deliver year-long SFB program; offer Whole Farm Production Workshops and develop a new CSA Management Course; enhance and expand Farm Business Development Center at Prairie Crossing Farm to full capacity; outreach to 80 prospective farmers/year through "Farm Dreams"

workshop; provide farmer-training stipends for beginning farmers in CRAFT and SFB to attend advanced farmer training workshops and educational programs; create a farmer technical assistance pool in the CRAFT farmer alliance that provides 10 beginning farmers/year with technical assistance from farmers/consultants; enhance and develop interpretive material that guide farmers-in-training and beginning farmers through personal learning stages from novice to viable farmer 2. Expand existing and develop innovative new partnerships to protect farmland and provide secure, affordable access to land for beginning farmers. Outputs: Identify innovative farmland tenure models and farmland in close proximity to partner institutions and mentor farmers for beginning farmers to use via long-term lease agreements, purchase, or other; provide access to land for beginning farmers via agreements with institutional landowners; develop an online bulletin board for beginning farmers with emphasis on land opportunities and land ownership/use issues; develop and implement land tenure workshops for beginning farmers and landowners on benefits, challenges and best practices for long-term lease arrangements beneficial to all parties; create a farmer technical assistance pool that provides TA on land access to beginning farmers in years 2-5 of farm start-up or transition 3. Provide beginning farmers with access to options for financing/credit for farm start-up, scale-up or transition. Outputs: Identify existing financing sources for beginning farmers to grow their businesses and incorporate into curricula; conduct a feasibility study and plan a regional micro-loan program for beginning farmers in collaboration with lending institutions; assess feasibility and develop a plan to launch an agricultural IDA program that helps beginning farmers to finance their farm businesses; create a farmer technical assistance pool that provides TA on farm financing and credit to beginning farmers in years 2-5 of farm start-up or transition 4. Plan and develop new programs to assist beginning farmers with market development. Outputs: Create and distribute a menu of group marketing models to 200 beginning farmers via CRAFT and collaborating organizations 5. Link project partners to national farmer training collaboratives/networks to share project outcomes and replicate best practices. Outputs: Take part in the national Farm Beginnings Collaborative and USDA conferences to share best practices, outcomes of this project for replication, and to learn from the experience of others; set up a national CRAFT website page that links all regional programs and convene a national CRAFT session at the Organic Farming Conference in 2011 for sharing CRAFT training models

APPROACH: Angelic Organics Learning Center will undertake a process and outcome evaluation with the project collaborating partners and other stakeholders that documents project results using an evaluative logic model developed under the guidance of Ann Williams Research and Evaluation. Dr. Williams is an experienced outside evaluator who has worked with AOLC to track project results for the past four years. She will work with staff and major stakeholders to complete a logic model and refine the statement of work for the proposed activities so that it can guide the evaluation and assist staff to develop appropriate evaluative tools, including questionnaires for participants and stakeholders. Each participant will complete written or oral surveys. Project trainers, staff and partner organizations will also be surveyed and asked to rate: their direct experiences working with participants in the planned activities; their assessment of the effectiveness of activity design, process and content; the usefulness of the activities for their organization and their constituents. The process and outcome evaluation will assess inputs and outcomes over the grant period and beyond (short-, medium- and long-term). Quantitative tangible indicators to be measured include: # of farmers who take part in project activities and are aware of and utilizing project training tools and resources; # of farmers who have completed strategic farm business plans and are implementing them in their farm enterprises; # of additional underserved producers who are exposed to and gain access to farmer training and support services; # of training and technical assistance support organizations/providers who are better able to meet the needs of beginning farmers. Quantitative intangible indicators to be measured include: how well did target populations receive the training and technical assistance and was it relevant and useful; were the training modules, activities, and materials easily understood by participants; did the training and technical assistance enable targeted farmers to a) enter farming or b) improve their existing farming enterprises; are the training modules, activities, and materials useful to other farmer training and support organizations These quantitative indicators will be measured with a variety of instruments designed in cooperation with Ann Williams Research and Evaluation. First,

Baseline data is compiled with a pre-activity registration form. Then, post-surveys will be done with each participant taking part in the training provided, either in written or oral form. All participating stakeholders in the project will be asked for recommendations and lessons learned that would be incorporated into planning for future programming. The results of our project evaluations will be shared with at least 8 other regional farmer-training initiatives each year via the national Farm Beginnings Collaborative, the network of CRAFT farmer initiatives, and other networks. We will present the results at the network meetings and respond to individual requests from other farmer-led initiatives with up to two consultations per year.

PROGRESS: 2009/09 TO 2012/08

OUTPUTS: Through the Comprehensive Farmer-to-Farmer Training and Support Project, conducted during the period of September 1, 2009-August 31, 2012, the project partners expanded existing and developed new farmer training and technical assistance programs. The partnership offered a total of 253 training and mentoring programs. Angelic Organics Learning Center (AOLC) offered the following programs: 33 CRAFT field days, 1 Advanced Workshop on farm land tenure, 1 farmer training development scholarships, 19 Technical Assistance Pool (TAP) consultation matches for 32 participants, 3 Grower Groups, 3 Stateline Farm Beginnings (SFB) courses (27 sessions) for 83 individuals, 9 "Farm Dreams" workshops for 166 participants, and 6 CRAFT steering committee meetings. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) conducted 62 Whole Farm workshops for 641 registrants, and offered a pilot CSA planning course and a second year of the course for a total of 39 farms. The Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center (PCFBDC) expanded from 2 farmers at project start to host 12 farmers at its incubator in Grayslake, IL and graduated three farmers in Year 3 of the grant. In Year 3 of the grant, PCFBDC offered four courses for 53 participants, 3 field days for 41 participants, and 4 monthly field walks for 10 participants. In total, the partners created or maintained 151 newsletters, 49 websites or pages, received 30 media exposures, have been cited in two books aimed for publication, and created and distributed 13 brochures and fliers. AOLC made significant database and online communications improvements, and initiated and implemented a weekly CRAFT e-newsletter and e-blasts. The partners have also shown leadership in the national Farm Beginnings Collaborative, and AOLC serves on the steering committee. AOLC also hosted a Farm Beginnings Collaborative meeting in September of 2011 as well as the regional Midwest young farmer gathering, which served 34 early career farmers. In Years 1 and 2 of the project we conducted a comprehensive needs assessment, and microlending feasibility study. In Year 3 of the project, we also finalized a report titled "Profit in the Field: A Primer on Direct-Market Farm Business Models for Beginning Farmers, Lenders and Investors," which was shared at state and regional levels to inform state-wide planning around the topics of farmer training and local food aggregation. Liberty Prairie Foundation identified additional land opportunities in LaSalle and Lake Counties, protecting farmland with easements and developing initial agreements with private individual landowners. We contracted Chris Blanchard of Flying Rutabaga Works, who visited 5 farms to conduct whole farm assessments and produced a report summarizing the common successes and obstacles at each farm. Chris also helped us complete a Cooperative Marketing Decision Tool, which we plan to share with our farmer audience.

PARTICIPANTS: Angelic Organics Learning Center, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, and Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center completed the project with the following staff: Angelic Organics Learning Center Executive Director, Tom Spaulding, PD/PI, committed 14% of time for 3 years to the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Director, Farmer Training, Sheri Doyel, committed 42% of time to the project. In May of 2011, Jesse Strassburg replaced Sheri Doyle as Program Director, and committed 42% of time to the project. In May of 2012, Jenny Meyer replaced Jesse Strassburg as Program Director, Co PD/PI, and committed 42% of time per year for the remainder of the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Manager, Farmer Training, committed 90% of time (75% FTE) for 3 years to the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Assistant, Farmer Training and CRAFT, committed 75% FTE of time for 3 years to the project. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Director of Farm and Food Education Janet Gamble, will commit 2% of time for 3 years to the project. In October of 2011, Smaranda Andrews, Education Programs Consultant, assumed leadership for the project as the new Co-PD. Smaranda committed 2% of her time per year for the remainder of the project. Liberty Prairie

oundation/Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center Senior Associate, Mike Sands, committed 15% of time, for years to the project. Liberty Prairie Foundation/Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center Executive Director Brad Leibov committed 52% of his time to the project for three months to serve as the Finance Consultant. Contract Farmland Protection and Land Access Consultant, Kathryn Ruhf, committed 320 hours, approximately 40 days total, to the project. Contract Evaluator Ann Williams will committed 116.66 hours over 3 years, approximately 5 days per year. TARGET AUDIENCES: The target audience served by this project included beginning farmers. In Year 1 of the project we served 413 beginning farmers and ranchers. Participants attending face-to-face or internet based workshops and training programs have reported the following demographic information: 314 or 76% are currently farming, 72 or 17% have been farming less than one year, and 232, or 56% are female. At the end of Year 2 of the project, our target farmer audience was composed of 452 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB graduates served through technical assistance, CRAFT member farmers, 162 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farms Workshops, 20 farmers trained in the CSA course, and 8 farmers through PCFBDC. Year 2 participants reported the following demographic information: 331 or 74% are currently farming, 23 or 14% have been farming less than one year, and 296, or 66% are female. At the end of Year 3 of the project, our target farmer audience was composed of 470 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB graduates served through technical assistance CRAFT member farmers, 162 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farms Workshops, 20 farmers trained in the CSA course, and 8 farmers through PCFBDC. We can report the following demographic information for the past program year: 17% of PCBDC farmers are socially disadvantaged. 17% of these farmers also have limited resources. 53% of program participants are female, and 33% are male. 54% are currently farming, and 42% are planning to farm. A cumulative count of all three years of the grant shows the following statistics for our farmer population: 60% are female, 71% are currently farming, and 13% are planning to farm. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: The project partners determined to discontinue the development of the originally proposed study tracks. The partners based this decision on the results of in-depth meetings with and feedback from two contracted consultants. In both meetings, we faced difficult questions regarding the appropriateness of the tool and the positive impact it would have on our new farmers. We determined to focus our staff time on other programs, including the Grower Groups, further development of the Marketing Tool, and attentive assessment of the Technical Assistance Pool.

IMPACT: 2009/09 TO 2012/08

At the close of the project, our evaluations show a definite need for the programs and services offered by the project partners. Our surveys of participants of programs in Year 3 report that 49% of participants plan to start farming and 100% plan to continue participating in our trainings, demonstrating continued need for our farmer training programs and services. At project start, our target beginning farmer audience consisted 341 individuals, including current Stateline Farm Beginnings (SFB) students, SFB grads, CRAFT member farmers, 150 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farm Workshops, and 5 farmers at PCFBDC. At the end of Year 3, our target farmer audience is composed of 470 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB graduates, CRAFT member farmers, 177 farmers trained at MFAI Whole Farms Workshops, 16 farmers trained in the CSA course, and 12 farmers at the PCFBC. For several outcome measures (change in knowledge, change in attitudes, and change in skills), greater than 70% of participant survey respondents report positive changes as a result of our services immediately after attending a program, with 100% experiencing changes in knowledge and attitudes. In-depth evaluations of a subset of our participants, SFB graduates and farmers at the PCFBDC who are recent graduates of these programs, exhibited the following characteristics one year after program participation: 75% continued farming, 12% started farming, 39% changed farming/land management practices, 87% continue to participate in our training programs, and 42% plan to expand farm operations in 2013. An earlier graduation class demonstrated the following statistics two years after participating in the program: 46% continued farming, 4% started farming, 22% changed farming/land management practices, 40% continue to participate in our trainings, and 17% plan to expand farm operations in 2013. Finally, our graduates three years out of the program reported the following: 78% continued farming, 46% changed farming/land management practices, 72% continue to participate in our training programs, and 40% plan to expand farm

perations in 2013. Additionally, our most recent survey (Sept 2012) of our farmers' economic viability found that 68.5% of 54) of farm operators responding to the survey expected their farm revenue to increase in 2012, and 83.3% of farm operators expected their 2012 farm revenue to at least equal 2011 levels. These results were gathered during the worst drought in over 25 years and do not include crop insurance indemnities, which few farmers in our network qualify for. This data aligns with a needs assessment we conducted earlier in the grant; many of those who have continued farming plan to expand their businesses, and their land management plans change quickly. These outcomes also show that we have created a strong peer-to-peer training network through which farmers continue to access training and mentoring services. We have responded to this increased demand for training, land access, and financing opportunities by conducting research and development efforts to create more tools for farmers to access land and financial resources.

PUBLICATIONS (not previously reported): 2009/09 TO 2012/08

- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training 2010 Handbook
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Farmer Development Scholarship 2010 Program Description
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Stateline Farm Beginnings Year 6 Program Components and Schedule
- . Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2010. Whole Farm Workshops 2010
- . Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2010. CSA Planning Course Brochure
- . Prairie Crossing Farm, 2010. Meet our Farmers Brochure
- . Ranney, Vickey, Kirley, Keith, and Sands, Mike, 2010. Building Communities with Farms: Insights from developers, architects, and farmers on integrating agriculture and development
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training 2011 Handbook
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2011. Farmer-to-Farmer Training Brochure
- 0. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2011. Whole Farm Workshops Brochure
- 1. Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2012. Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training 2012 Handbook
- 2. Munsch, Jim, Toohill Kathleen, Sands, Mike and Angelic Organics Learning Center. 2012. Profit in the Field: A Primer on Direct-Market Farm Business Models for Beginning Farmers, Lenders and Investors.
- 3. Blanchard, Chris, and Flying Rutabaga Works, 2012 Whole Farm Assessments: A Summary Report
- 4. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2012. Whole Farm Workshops Brochure 2012

PROGRESS: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

OUTPUTS: In Year 2 of the grant, October 2010-September 2011, the project partners expanded existing and developed new farmer training and technical assistance programs. We held 9 CRAFT field days (2 more remain), 21 Whole Farm workshops, 8 programs at Prairie Crossing, 3 consultation matches through the Technical Assistance Pool (TAP), 4 Grower groups, and 9 Stateline Farm Beginnings (SFB) sessions (18 farm units), facilitated 2 CRAFT steering committee meetings, 3 "Farm Dreams" workshops, and 2 national Farm Beginnings Collaborative meetings. To implement the project, we created or maintained 9 newsletters, 7 brochures, 2 audio tapes or CDs, and 5 websites, have had at least 6 media exposure opportunities, and offered 51 face-to-face or internet based workshops and training programs. Farmers served through these programs (452) reported the following demographic information: 331 or 74% are currently farming, 63 or 14% have been farming less than one year, and 296, or 66% are female. We enhanced curriculum and expand farmer-to-farmer support services in CRAFT; delivered the year-long SFB program to 28 new farmers; offered 21 Whole Farms workshops for 38 registrants, including 162 farmers, and we reached 44 prospective farmers/year through "Farm Dreams" workshop. We launched the pilot CSA Management Course, and completed the course manual and curriculum. PCFBDC has expanded to include 8 participating (4 new in 2011) farmers in its farm incubator program. All 8, plus mentor farmer, have successfully completed organic certification for 2010 season. 18 Hispanic participants leased plots in Mano a Mano Hispanic community's new garden. We also provided technical assistance to the Farley Center (Madison, WI) and Fondy Food Center (Milwaukee, WI) for disadvantaged (Hmong & Latino) beginning farmers to access land and farming opportunities in their communities. We visited existing long-term lease models in Intervale (VT), and Rappahannock, Loudon and Albemarle

counties (VA). We scheduled two land tenure workshops for October 2011. We provided 16 stipends for trainees to attend advanced training, launched a Technical Assistance Pool (TAP), with three trial matches, and added a fourth Grower Group. In 2011, we discontinued the on-line CRAFT forum development, and implemented a weekly CRAFT e-newsletter. We have grown leadership in the national Farm Beginnings Collaborative, hosting the first mid-season meeting at AOLC in September. With advisor Jim Munsch of Deer Run Farm, we are developing and Cooperative Marketing Tool, an on-line resource. We conducted research of our target audience and have produced two documents: a needs assessment of the RAFT farmer network and a report titled "Profit in the Field: Guiding Principles and Key Lines of Inquiry for Direct Market Food-Producing Farm Business Planning." We have neared completion of the microlending feasibility study. We identified 10 acres in the Waukegan Savanna Forest Preserve and an 80-acre parcel in La Salle County, IL through our work with Growing Home and a landowner for long-term tenure opportunities for several new farmers. An adjoining 80 acre parcel may be available for future use. PARTICIPANTS: In the reporting period, the existing partners Angelic Organics Learning Center, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, and Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center completed the project with the following staff: Angelic Organics Learning Center Executive Director, Tom Spaulding, PD/PI, will commit 4% of time for 3 years to the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Director, Farmer Training, Sheri Doyel, Program Director, Co PD/PI, will commit 42% of time for 3 years to the project. In June of 2011, Jesse Strassburg replaced Sheri Doyel as Program Director, Co PD/PI, and will commit 42% of time per year for the remainder of the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Manager, Farmer Training, Program Manager will commit 90% of time (75% FTE) for 3 years to the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Assistant, Farmer Training and CRAFT, will commit 75% FTE of time for 3 years to the project. Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Director of Farm and Food Education Janet Gamble, will commit 2% of time for 3 years to the project. In October of 2011, Smaranda Andrews, Education Programs Consultant, will assume leadership for the project as the new Co-PD. Smaranda will commit 2% of her time per year for the remainder of the project. Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center Executive Director, Mike Sands, will commit 15% of time, for 3 years to the project. Contract Farmland Protection and Land Access Consultant, Kathryn Ruhf, will commit 320 hours, approximately 40 days total. Contract Evaluator Ann Williams will commit 116.66 hours over 3 years, approximately 40 days per year. TARGET AUDIENCES: The target audience for this project included Beginning Farmers. In Year 1 of the project we served 413 Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. Participants attending face-to-face or internet based workshops and training programs have reported the following demographic information: 314 or 76% are currently farming, 72 or 17% have been farming less than one year, and 232, or 56% are female. At the end of Year 2 of the project, our target farmer audience is composed of 452 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB graduates served through technical assistance CRAFT member farmers, 162 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farms Workshops, 20 farmers trained in the SA course, and 8 farmers through PCFBDC. These participants report the following demographic information: 331 or 74% are currently farming, 63 or 14% have been farming less than one year, and 296, or 66% are female. We surveyed individuals who have taken a workshop in Year 2 of programming, and learned that 78% of these individuals are currently farming. The percentage of socially disadvantaged participants in our audience continues to grow. Women and minorities are growing in number, and many of our participants have low-income levels. Stateline Farm Beginnings served 2 immigrants and 3 minorities in Year 2 of this grant, comprising 20% of the class body. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

IMPACT: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

At the end of Year 2, we have expanded our target audience base and have made progress in providing these farmers with greater access to land and financial resources. At project start, our target beginning farmer audience consisted of outreach to 341 individuals, including current Stateline Farm Beginnings (SFB) students, SFB grads served through technical assistance through CRAFT, 150 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farm Workshop, and 5 farmers at PCFBDC. At the end of Year 1 of the project, our target farmer audience is composed of 413 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB graduates, CRAFT member farmers, 176 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farms Workshops, and 5 farmers through

PCFBDC. At the end of Year 2 of the project, our target farmer audience is composed of 452 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB graduates served through technical assistance CRAFT member farmers, 162 farmers trained through WFAI Whole Farms Workshops, 20 farmers trained in the CSA course, and 8 farmers through PCFBDC. In Year 2, 78% of individuals served are currently farming, and 45 farm units completed or developed farm plans through SFB, the CSA planning course, or PCFBDC. Of past SFB graduates (2006-2010) surveyed, we learned that 100% use sustainable practices, and 85% had increased use of sustainable practices after taking SFB. 76% farmed in the past year, 91% plan to farm next season, and 73% plan to expand their operation next year. Other Outcomes and Impacts of Year 2 include: The Lake County Forest Preserve District approved land for a 40-acre parcel in the Waukegan Savanna Preserve, which needs to be developed for access to appropriate infrastructure. We will continue to review and update the Master Plan for the Liberty Prairie Reserve. The plan will include the reservation of up to 1,000 acres of protected farmland for long-term leases for beginning farmers. Partners include Liberty Prairie Conservancy, Lake County Forest Preserve District, Libertyville Township, Waukegan District and three private landowners. One 2006-2010 PCFBDC farm business has graduated from the incubator program, and has merged their business with an existing successful farm. Based on our comprehensive needs assessment, microlending feasibility study, and market research, we determined that lack of access to land and capital continued to present major obstacles to the new farmers. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the farmers surveyed expressed an interest in protecting land with a permanent land-use agreement. Approximately 77% expressed interest in purchasing or leasing protected farmland, and 59% expressed interest in making these purchases or leasing arrangements cooperatively with other farmers. Significantly, half (49% or 31) of the farm business owners surveyed were interested in expanding their farm businesses if they had access to additional credit. Of those, 75% (24) say they would be interested in taking out a loan for expansion. We continued to identify sources of financing, holding meetings with several regional lending institutions, and convening an informational microlending discussion with other farmer training groups.

PUBLICATIONS: 2010/09/01 TO 2011/08/31

- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training 2011 Handbook
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2011. Farmer-to-Farmer Training Brochure
- . Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2011. Whole Farm Workshops Brochure 2011

PROGRESS: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

OUTPUTS: In the October 2009-September 2010 grant period, the project partners expanded existing and developed new farmer training and technical assistance programs. In Year 1, the project produced 9 CRAFT field days (2 more remain), 21 Whole Farm workshops, and 9 face-to-face Stateline Farm Beginnings sessions for 28 individuals (18 farm units.) 12 of those 18 farm units were ready to be matched with a mentor by March 2010, our highest percentage in the 5 years of the course. Participants attending face-to-face or internet based workshops and training programs have reported the following demographic information: 314 or 76% are currently farming, 72 or 17% have been farming less than one year, and 232, or 66% are female. Other Outputs of Year 1 include: We enhanced curriculum and expand farmer-to-farmer support services through CRAFT; delivered year-long SFB program to 28 new farmers; offered 19 of 20 Whole Farm for 404 registrants with 176 farmers registering, and conducted outreach to 60 prospective farmers/year through "Farm Dreams" workshop. We developed the CSA Management Course Curriculum and a draft of the curriculum is under review. PCFBDC has expanded to include five participating (3 new in 2010) farms in full production. All five, plus mentor farmer, have successfully completed organic certification for 2010 season. Eighteen Hispanic participants leased plots in Mano a Mano Hispanic community development group's new community garden. The PCFBDC website and brochure were translated to Spanish, and the manual and contracts are in process of translation. New facilities have been installed, which include a transplant greenhouse, hardening off facility, composting field toilets, and a compost tea brewer. We provided 5 farmer-training stipends for CRAFT member farms and SFB graduates to attend advanced training, further developed a Technical Assistance Pool (TAP) through CRAFT to provide 30 beginning farmers/year with technical assistance from farmers/consultants. We divided the CRAFT network into three regions, or Grower Groups, and selected 3 Grower Group

facilitators to schedule and facilitate each group. The Region 2 meeting was held on September 21 with 12 farmers in attendance, Regions 1 and 3 will hold their meetings in October. The project has identified innovative farmland tenure models and farmland, including 40 acres in the Waukegan Savanna Preserve for long term lease for organic farmers. The project has also developed new programs to assist beginning farmers with market development, and attended several conferences to share experiences, including: SE Michigan Food System Economic Partnership & Kellogg Foundation Food & Society meetings, University of Illinois Landscape Architecture & Food Systems Short Course. Months of planning and development of AOLC's new web-based "Forum" (in which farmers can share information directly) are completed with launch expected in December 2010. PARTICIPANTS: In the reporting period, the existing partners Angelic Organics Learning Center, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, and Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center completed the project with the following staff: Angelic Organics Learning Center Executive Director, Tom Spaulding, PD/PI, will commit 4% of time for 3 years to the project Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Director, Farmer Training, Sheri Doyel, Program Director, Co PD/PI, will commit 42% of time for 3 years to the project Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Manager, Farmer Training, Kathleen Toohill, Program Manager will commit 90% of her time (75% FTE) for 3 years to the project. Angelic Organics Learning Center Program Assistant, Farmer Training and CRAFT, Joanne Wiedermann-Wolf, will commit 75%FTE of time for 3 years to the project Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, Director of Farm and Food Education Janet Gamble, will commit 2% of time for 3 years to the project Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center Executive Director, Mike Sands, will commit 15% of time, for 3 years to the project. Contract Evaluator Ann Williams will commit 116.66 hours over 3 years, approximately 5 days per year. TARGET AUDIENCES: The target audience for this project included Beginning Farmers. In Year 1 of the project we served 413 Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. Participants attending face-to-face or internet based workshops and training programs have reported the following demographic information: 314 or 76% are currently farming, 72 or 17% have been farming less than one year, and 232, or 56% are female. PROJECT MODIFICATIONS: Nothing significant to report during this reporting period.

IMPACT: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

Through this project, we were able to expand the base of farmers reached in Year 1 of the project and make progress in providing these farmers with greater access to land and financial resources. At project start, our target beginning farmer audience consisted of outreach to 341 individuals, including current Stateline Farm Beginnings students, SFB grads served through technical CRAFT member farmers, 150 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farms Workshop, and 5 farmers at PCFBDC. At the end of Year 1 of the project, our target farmer audience is composed of 413 individuals, including current SFB students; SFB grads served through technical assistance CRAFT member farmers, 176 farmers trained through MFAI Whole Farms Workshops, and 5 farmers through PCFBDC. Other Outcomes and Impacts of Year 1 include: The Lake County Forest Preserve District approved land for a 40-acre parcel in the Waukegan Savanna Preserve, which needs to be developed for access to appropriate infrastructure. This land is going into hay crop as transition strategy to organic certification. The review of the Master Plan of the Liberty Prairie Reserve has been completed and will include the preservation of up to 1000 acres of protected farmland for long-term leases for beginning farmers. Partners include Liberty Prairie Conservancy, Lake County Forest Preserve District, Libertyville Township Openspace District and two private landowners. Based on our year one activities, we have identified four potential investors to finance graduates of PCFBDC, and will continue to work with this group. We completed research on micro-lending for beginning farmers, with a feasibility study near completion. A needs assessment was written with external evaluator Ann Williams was administered (September 2010) to shape the TAP, micro-lending, IDA, market development and land tenure services. We have worked with Fresh Taste to establish USDA and Illinois Facilities Fund program to provide guaranteed pool of Program Related Investments (PRIs) for foundations interested in supporting beginning farm businesses. The Learning Center is in the final stages of outreach to farmers in order to conduct a feasibility study for a regional micro-loan program for beginning farmers, in collaboration with lending institutions.

PUBLICATIONS: 2009/09/01 TO 2010/08/31

- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training 2010 Handbook
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Farmer Development Scholarship 2010 Program Description
- . Angelic Organics Learning Center, 2010. Stateline Farm Beginnings Year 6 Program Components and Schedule
- . Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2010. Whole Farm Workshops 2010
- . Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, 2010. CSA Planning Course Brochure
- . Prairie Crossing Farm, 2010. Meet our Farmers Brochure
- . Ranney, Vickey, Kirley, Keith, and Sands, Mike, 2010. Building Communities with Farms: Insights from developers, architects, and farmers on integrating agriculture and development