

Title:	Rotating Apprenticeships Farmer Training in Chicago		
Sponsoring Agency	NIFA	Project Status	COMPLETE
Funding Source	Non Formula	Reporting Frequency	Annual
Accession No.	229395	Grants.gov No.	
Project No.	ILLW-2012-00735	Proposal No.	2012-00735
Project Start Date	09/01/2012	Project End Date	08/31/2015
Reporting Period Start Date	09/01/2012	Reporting Period End Date	08/31/2015
Submitted By	Jifunza Wright	Date Submitted to NIFA	11/29/2015

Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

Project Director

Jifunza Wright
773-410-3446
blackoakscenter@gmail.com

Recipient Organization

BLACK OAKS CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE
10249 S HALSTED ST
CHICAGO, IL 60628
DUNS No. 962756511

Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

RAFT-P (Rotating Apprenticeship Farmer Training-Pembroke) Training a new generation of African American Farmers sustainable farming methods. 20-25 men and women between 18-25 years old. Pembroke Township, 60 miles south of Chicago, was once one of the largest African-American farming communities north of the Mason Dixon Line. Today, more than 25 elder farmers grows produce for local and Chicago markets against great odds:lack of equipment, incursions by commodity farmers onto their land, and little access to labor to help them.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

RAFT-P will address five of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program's Priority Topics. 1a) Enhancing land stewardship through mentoring, apprenticeship, and internship activities. 1b) Curriculum development. 3a) Diversification and marketing strategies. 4c) Innovative farm and ranch transfer strategies, including training for absentee landowners to bring their land into production. 5d) Production, processing and marketing of safe and nutritious food. Long Term Goals-To create a new generation,20-25 African American Farmers to supply high demand markets in food desert communities in and around Chicago. To prevent further black land loss through land transfer (lease &/or purchase) upon completion of RAFT-P

What was accomplished under these goals?

IA. Enhancing Land Stewarship through Mentoring, Apprenticeship and Internship Activities

RAFT-P is facilitating economic stability and the restoration of this historic black farming community by implementing agricultural projects on subsistence farms and ranches in need of Apprentices, equipment and applications. The following farms and ranches are benefitting:

BOC

is moving towards being a model farm for the community at large to continue to learn and be exposed to farming: pasturing chickens & goats, green manures, vegetable production both high tunnel with seasonal extension and field, apiary, fruit and herb production, dairy will begin next year. All farms and ranches have come to BOC for some training hands on and didactic.

In the life of the grant, 786 students, families, teachers and adults interested in farming have come to learn more about local food systems and sustainable agriculture. From this number, 30 have been continuous trainees ie have returned for trainings more than 4 times and multiple locations. 10 have participated consistantly for the 3 years (1-2 teaching activities per month (March to Nov.) for 1 or more years)

Boots N Saddles

An iconic Pembroke fourth generation ranch. It is the incubator/nursery location for chicken production. Here, the baby chick

care is shared amongst 4 farms. Once at age, they are moved to pasture on the 4 farms. This allows all 4 farms to share the responsibilities of intensive chick care while supporting the ranch that has the greatest capacity to handle hundreds of baby chicks. The Lorenzo R. Smith Sustainability & Technology Academy (LRSSTA) is committed to purchasing a portion of the chickens raised as well as the Pembroke Pride Chicken CSA marketed to secure sales to covers cost and allow for profit generation.

Iyabo Farms

Is a location for chickens to go on pasture once they have come of age. This farm has egg layers which is the son, a LRSSTA 6th grader's business. This will support this family in scaling up their chicken business.

Noble Farms

This is a restart farm. Grandparents once farmed this land that this family is resurrecting. Chickens pasturing here using a whole farm model for soil regeneration.

Rohoboth Blueberry Patch

Apprentices have been able to learn about the care, harvesting and post harvest handling of blueberries

Ivy Farms

80 year old Pembroke Farmer in need of passing on his knowledge and young to be farmer to help cultivate his land

Basu Natural Farms

Has been an excellent location for Apprentices to see on farm production, value added, U-pick and farm stand business

Nichols Fruit Farm

2 acre orchard, learn about the care of fruit trees

Qiana's Apiary

Qiana is one of our lead Apprentices who purchased 10 acres of land in Pembroke months into the program. Apiary is the first rural project on her land while she continues to prepare to implement her farm plan.

Legget Ranch

The descendant of largest black farms in Pembroke currently raises cattle on the land that remains of the thousands of acres his father once owned and farmed. This is a location for livestock training.

Royal Farm

Is bringing land from her parents back into production with a focus on livestock feed: hay

LRSSTA:

- Nation's 1st School Based Regional Food Hub: Lorenzo R. Smith Aggregation Services
- Aquaponics
- Farm to School: Farms in the area are stabilized by the school purchasing their produce for lunches as well as the fruits & vegetables program
- The school has land that will be developed into a farm that students will integrate STEM and agriculture.

Urban

- 82nd and King Drive Permaculture Classes & Project
- Qiana's Rainbow Eggs- raising layers in the city: 20 Arcanas supplied Healthy Food Hub Market Days

The Land Connection Mentoring

This partnering with the land connection allowed our Apprentices to be inspired as the challenge of Pembroke Farms working their way out of subsistence could be burdensome. We visit alumni of The Land Connection's Farmer Training Program, one of the oldest in the state. We purposely selected farms that have been able to farm successfully defined as this is a full time vocation/advocation that financially meets the farming family's needs. A wide range of farms throughout Illinois were experienced by our Apprentices. Upon visiting the farms, farmers and ranchers who were open to mentoring were available upon request and facilitated through The Land Connection. This mentoring was vital as it kept our Apprentices hopeful about being able to make a living farming and what it takes to get to that point. It has given them access to experienced coaches for implementation of their farm plans.

IB. Curriculum Development

Black Farming in the Midwest has become the focal point for curriculum development as the history of farming in the peri-urban area of Chicago's Southland began to unfold. What has been revealed is the historic account of farming in and around Chicago and a local food system network that stretched from Pembroke to Chicago to include a number of homesteads that are now the south east suburbs. Octagenarians interviews as well as historical research done by Dr. Larry McClellan is the basis for a trailer: **Black Earth-Black Roots** to raise monies for the development of a PBS documentary and curriculum K-12 with a focus on sustainability, local food system careers and STEM/agriculture integration.

III A. Diversification & Marketing Strategies

All of our trainees had an opportunity to be immersed in all aspects of local food system development. Aside from production and good agricultural practices for post harvest handling, Apprentices set up, ran and broke down operations for Market Days in Chicago. In the 3rd year, a number of Apprentices had tables at various city markets in addition to Market Days.

IV C. Innovative Farm & Ranch Transfer Strategies

While we were able to successfully support only 2 out of 3 land purchasings, what innovative farm and ranch strategies that seems to be most successful is putting absentee landowner's land into production. A number of elders who want their lands to go into production have approached the program about growing food on it for the next growing season. Some dont even want to lease it out, they just want someone to do what a love one wanted the land to be held for; growing food. So far, we have over 60 acres planned for production through this form of land access. This includes a partnership with The Nature Conservancy. Apprentices will continue to be trained and have a means of learning and earning in this way beyond the life of the grant.

V D. Production, Processing and Marketing of Safe, Nutritious Food

In the 3rd year, Apprentices had the opportunity to learn about sorting, grading, cleaning, packaging and processing. Farms were able to aggregate the produce prepared on farm and bring it to the aggregation center where it is prepared for Farm to School and Markets/Buyers

Black Land Loss Prevention

While we had hoped to garner more support for this and were able to have small victories of black lands being sold to new black farmer trainees, this was only a fraction of the many acres that continue to be lost yearly. The one thing we can do is continue to farm more and more existing farms to continue to inspire black land owners to return their lands to production.

This could be a basis for more support.

Long Tern Goal: 20 to 25 farmers & ranchers

While we achieved nearly 50% of our long term goal, it will take more than 3 years to achieve our desired outcome of 20 to 25 farmers & ranchers. RAFT-PC will extend beyond the life of this grant to continue to cultivate the next generation of black farmers. With this, I am certain that we will reach our long term goal inside of 10 years.

What oppourtunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

RAFT-PC has provided a model template for local food system development in the 2nd Congressional District. With the leadership of our Congresswoman, Robin Kelly, we will be restoring local food system networks in this district that has such rich history. Congresswoman Kelly has sponsored a bill that would incentivize farmers to feed low food access/food insecure communitites. In partnership, we will assist in the demonstration of the legislation in her district that spans urban, suburban and rural where there are pockets of food desert/food insecure communities and vegetable farms and ranches in the southern rural tip, including Pembroke. With this, RAFT- PC will truely be laying a peri urban framework as aimed for in the revised repurposing of the grant (10,000 dollars) .

Black Oaks Center is working towards partnering with The Land Connection and Prairie Fruit Farms to submit a BFRDG for 2016. This will increase our capacity to scale up training to meet the increase demand.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

E Newsletters
Facebook
Twitter
Community Forums/Meetings
Blog
Newspaper
USDA Conferences

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants

{Nothing to report}

Target Audience

Target Audience Reached
African Americans, socially disadvantaged, Latino, underserved
rural: LRS Sustainability and Technology Academy, K-8, ,11 farms and ranchers, veterans (3)
urban: 50 students, adults and families

Products

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
Other	Published	2015	YES

Citation

e newsletters, facebook, twitter, blogspot
Know Your Farmer, Know Your Funding Conference, USDA
Good Greens Meeting, USDA
Center for Humans & Nature Conference

Other Products**Product Type**

Other

Description

African American Farming in the Midwest research for documentary
Trailer for documentary in process
High Tunnel Production, greens central training experience with flooding. still harvesting salad greens, extended growing,
Chicken CSA Farm to School, Aquaponics

Changes/Problems

There was an overwhelming response from the community about the program. Having the organizational capacity to better serve the high demand is what is needed. In hindsight, getting the indirect cost approval would have paid for itself over and over and raising additional funds as all our participants were 100% socially disadvantaged and were allowed to participate even though they were unable to pay.

This need for increased organizational capacity revealed itself hugely in the aftermath of the 7 weeks of flooding in Pembroke. This affected our ability to execute all that was scheduled to occur even more so.

We are working to partner with The Land Connection and Prairie Fruit Farms to submit for further funding in 2016. This will allow for future trainees to have rich learning experiences, the mentors and the administrative support to fortify the existing farm projects and continue to attract new trainees to reach our long term goal.

We plan to charge for all RAFT-PC trainings going forward.