Required from Wholesale Success/Food Safety partners:

1. **Name and mission/brief bio of organization?**

The Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) is a unique partnership between the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota Extension, and the Sustainers' Coalition, a group of individuals and community-based nonprofit organizations.

MISA’s mission is to bring together the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond.

1. **Organization’s experience in delivering a project like this to farmers in your region?**

MISA has extensive experience in collaborative workshop delivery. In 2010 we collaborated with the University of Minnesota Extension Farm-to-School program, the U of MN Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, and a variety of other statewide and regional organizations to deliver “Farm to Cafeteria” workshops in five regions of Minnesota plus two in the Twin Cities metro area. These were very well attended by 90 to 120 people at each location, and have led to a proliferation of farm-to-school programs in the state, now involving 145 school districts and 68% of Minnesota’s K-12 population. MISA has also delivered workshops in the past year on Food Access (60+ attendees) and Selling Meat (90+ attendees), both of which were also done collaboratively although MISA was the lead organizer.

1. **Name, contact info, brief bio (including similar experience to tasks outlined below) of primary lead person?**

Jane Grimsbo Jewett

Research Fellow

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Jane Jewett holds a B.S. degree in Agronomy and M.S. in Plant Breeding from the University of Minnesota, and has worked for the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture since 1999. She has experience in assembling and coordinating advisory teams for a variety of projects including publications and workshops; collecting and managing workshop registrations for collaborative workshops; and coordinating delivery of workshops including managing speakers and presentations and working with food service.

1. **Current and Pending support report for this person (attached form)**

Jane Jewett holds a 75% FTE Professional & Administrative position within the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) at the University of Minnesota. Other MISA staff who would assist with workshop coordination and delivery include Dr. Helene Murray, executive director of MISA; and Kate Seager, Information Exchange Program Associate. Office support from a part-time work/study student will also be available to support this project.

1. **Letter of Support (draft attached)**
2. **Types of farmers your organization serves?**

MISA works primarily with small-scale diversified farmers, producers of both livestock and crops, specialty crop producers, organic farmers, and farmers with a strong interest in conservation and land stewardship. Many of our connections with farmers are through our formal partner organizations, including the Land Stewardship Project, Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota, and Minnesota Food Association.

1. **Number and type of produce farmers you serve? (and, are they any of the following?)**

 **Producers located in Arkansas, Mississippi and Georgia;**

**New and Beginning Farmers;**

**Women Producers and Ranchers;**

**Hispanic Producers and Ranchers;**

**African American Producers and Ranchers;**

**Native American Producers and Ranchers;**

**Limited Resource Producers and Ranchers;**

**Asian American and Pacific Islander Producers and Ranchers;**

**Transitional Farmers and Ranchers;**

**Senior Farmers and Ranchers;**

**Small Acreage Producers;**

**Specialty Crop Producers;**

**Returning Military Veterans Producers and Ranchers.**

 MISA’s services and resources are available as a public service to all farmers in Minnesota. For this project we would focus on the following groups:

1. Immigrant and minority farmers served by the Minnesota Food Association (MFA). The workshop would be offered at their annual Immigrant and Minority Farmers Conference, which draws about 200 farmers. These are primarily Hmong farmers but also include Bhutanese, Karen, Somali, Kenyan, and Hispanic farmers from in and around the Twin Cities metro area. Per feedback from previous conference attendees, MFA would work with us to design a more basic, very hands-on and participatory version of the workshop for this venue. It would be simultaneously translated into four languages at the conference, with translation services provided by MFA.
2. Beginner and small-scale farmers of vegetable crops in the Northfield, MN area; including current and potential suppliers of fresh produce to the Just Food Co-op located in Northfield and to the food co-ops and farmers’ markets in the Twin Cities metro area. The Cannon River Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association would be one of our partners for this workshop offering.
3. Beginner, small-scale, and limited resource farmers of vegetable crops in the Bemidji, MN area. Bemidji is located in Beltrami County, MN which has a 20% poverty rate. Bemidji is near three Native American reservations, all of which have established or beginning agricultural programs. It is also near a large Amish community that currently supplies some produce to the Harmony Food Co-op in Bemidji. MISA would work with local partners including the Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership and the Harmony Food Co-op to reach out to these agricultural communities and develop a workshop offering that meets their needs.
4. Market vegetable growers in the west-of-Twin Cities metro area. This location for a workshop would reach many vegetable and fruit producers who currently or could potentially supply fresh produce to Twin Cities food co-op stores, mainline grocery retailers, and distributors in the metro area.
5. **Why do your farmers need this project?**

MISA staff members have been having conversations with buyers of fresh produce in the Twin Cities metro area and in areas outside of the metro. We are hearing some common themes in these conversations. Produce buyers say that they could use more local produce if it were cleaned, trimmed, and packaged in the way their customers want it. The buyers spend too much time trying to work with farmers who are trying to sell at a scale that is not appropriate for their farm. Buyers want to see better invoicing practices from the farmers. Buyers want to work with farmers who have had some food safety training. There is a cohort of produce buyers in Minnesota who are very interested in local produce, but they are limited in part by lack of farmer training in the topics that would be covered by the Wholesale Success workshop.

Information provided by our partner organization, the Minnesota Food Association (MFA), indicates that the large Hmong farming community in Minnesota would greatly benefit from a Wholesale Success workshop tailored to their culture and learning style. Joci Tilsen, coordinator of the annual Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference sponsored by the MFA, stated that a hands-on, picture- and video-based workshop that is amenable to simultaneous translation; and that includes basic instruction in preparing an invoice; would be very valuable to the Hmong farmers served by the MFA. MISA has already had some conversation with Atina Diffley, FamilyFarmed.org’s trainer, about this need. MISA intends to work with the MFA and Atina to develop a Wholesale Success workshop specifically for the MFA’s clientele of southeast Asian farmers. This tailored workshop will then be available to FamilyFarmed.org to use in their programming elsewhere.

1. **What actions/changes in operations might your farmers undertake upon learning about managing risk in growing for and marketing wholesale?**

MISA’s desired outcomes for these workshops would include:

* 60% of participating farmers develop an on-farm food safety plan
* 80% of participating farmers improve their invoicing practices
* 60% of participating farmers pursue improved washing and trimming techniques for the produce they sell
* 60% of participating farmers pursue improved packaging and labeling methods for produce
* 40% of participating farmers make at least one new contact with a potential buyer
1. **Number of farmers you anticipate recruiting for this project? Are they the same type of produce farmers you indicated above?**

At the Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference we anticipate participation of 60 to 70 Hmong and other farmers of southeast Asian ethnicity in the Wholesale Success workshops. At the Bemidji location, a past Farm-to-Cafeteria conference drew 120 participants. We would anticipate at least 80 people at Bemidji for the Wholesale Success workshop. We anticipate 50 participants each at the Northfield and West Metro locations.

1. **Recruitment/publicity plan for the project?**

We will do extensive planning with local advisory groups in each of these areas. Representatives of local organizations who participate in these advisory groups will be tasked with outreach and promotions to their membership. MISA will work through University of Minnesota and U of MN Extension communications staff people to get press releases out to media outlets in the regions where workshops will take place. Also, MISA runs the “Sustag” listserv with 830+ subscribers, and prints the Sustainable Agriculture Newsletter with about 900 subscribers, and will advertise the workshops in those places as well as on our online calendar and news blog.

1. **The following are specific tasks we will look to you to provide, please add any tasks you feel would add further value to this project:**

**-Assistance in marketing and promoting the risk management opportunities to growers (and possibly trade buyers) in your network**

**-Assistance in planning and executing the dissemination and tracking of manuals, the dissemination and return of evaluations, the workshop, and follow up with growers**

**-Participation in the workshop**

**-Assistance evaluating the success of the project**

- Organizing and coordinating local advisory groups to tailor workshop offerings to the region, identify potential buyers for the grower-buyer networking sessions, assist with publicity, and assist with planning local food meals to be offered at the workshops.

And, to the best you can, please complete the following:

1. **Possible date/occasion for workshop?**

Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference, Feb. 2 & 3, 2013

Bemidji, MN – mid-March

Northfield, MN – late February

West metro area – early March

1. **Potential trade buyers to outreach to?**

Twin Cities Food Co-ops, J & J Distributing, Bix Produce Distributing, several independent grocers in the metro area, food co-op stores in the Northfield and Bemidji areas, others to be identified by local advisory groups.

1. **Plan for buyer outreach/recruitment?**

MISA intends to involve Renewing the Countryside in these workshops to run the grower-buyer networking component. Renewing the Countryside is a non-profit organization based in St. Paul with a strong record of success with this type of activity. They have successfully obtained several grants in the past to conduct farmer-chef networking and farmer-food service buyer networking sessions. They have their own extensive contact list and will be able to pull in some buyers as participants. We will also work through the local advisory groups that we will assemble and coordinate to identify potential local buyers. In those cases either MISA will approach the buyers directly about attending the workshops, or if there are relationships between buyers and local groups, we will recruit buyers through those channels.

1. **Plan to disseminate and track the dissemination of manuals?**

Manuals will be disseminated at the Wholesale Success workshops. We plan to distribute 50 manuals at each workshop location, for a total of 200 manuals. We do not anticipate having extra manuals left over after the workshops; in fact, we anticipate offering a sign-up sheet at workshop locations for ordering additional manuals. If there are manuals left over, however, we will distribute those via a request form on our website home page and will also announce availability of the manuals on our Sustag listserv. The website receives about 45,000 visits per month and there are more than 830 subscribers to Sustag, so there should be no difficulty in distributing extra manuals. Tracking of manual distribution at workshops will go along with workshop registration tracking. Participant registrations will be collected via an online form and participant data, including receipt of a manual, will be stored in an Excel spreadsheet file. Distribution via the website (which, again, is unlikely to be necessary) will be tracked by MISA office staff on an Excel spreadsheet which will be merged with the workshop spreadsheet.