



FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND INNOVATION Grant Report for 2017 Farm Intern Program

Crown Point Ecology Center is grateful for the support from the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation for our 2017 Farm Internship Program. We are pleased to provide this final report for the \$5,000 grant awarded in July, 2017.

Grant Contact Information

Organization-

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Brief History of the Organization and Its Purpose

The mission of Crown Point Ecology Center is to demonstrate the practical applications of ecology and to connect spirituality, community, social justice and environmental protection.

Located on a 115-acre historic farmstead in Bath, Ohio, Crown Point Ecology Center is a biologically diverse living laboratory that serves to demonstrate practical applications of ecology. Our beautiful country setting consists of an eight-acre certified organic farm, woodlands, meadows, a wetland-pond ecosystem and 5.5 miles of hiking trails. Crown Point is a Summit County, Ohio, and regional model for sustainable agriculture and environmental education. The organization believes that ecological land stewardship encourages positive structural and social change through local food production; creates positive impacts on the environment; improves the health of citizens; and contributes to local economic development. Activities are designed to engage individuals, families and groups in the basic processes of ecology and to challenge society to live with simplicity and mindfulness.

Summary of Proposal

Funds were requested to support our Farm Internship Program. The program has trained more than 50 adults in the skills necessary to own and operate an organic farm. In 2017, Crown Point proposed to increase the number of farm interns from four to six, to provide increased educational opportunities for the interns, increased services to the community and greater productivity for the organization as a whole.

Our intern program helps to address a trend where the average age of the nation's farmers is increasing (the current average age is 58) and the number of beginning farmers is decreasing. This reality poses serious implications for the future of local food production and will reduce the capacity of communities to feed themselves. Additionally, our emphasis on teaching young people to enter the business of farming with a strong sense of environmental conservation and social justice will lead to better use of our natural resources and the creation of a farming system that cares about the social outcomes of food production. Our interns provided essential skilled labor that enabled Crown Point to fulfill our mission to model sustainable land use, provide hunger relief and offer environmental education.

Outcomes

In 2017, we welcomed one 9-month intern and three 6-month interns. One of the 6-month interns left after 1 week and was replaced with three 3-4 week interns. This is a change from the 30-week program we have offered for the last decade. Additionally, we partnered with the Akron Urban League youth employment program and hired one of their young participants. This new strategy offered greater flexibility for potential interns and expanded the number of applicants whose schedules can accommodate the program. Intern participation overlapped to ensure that the farm had the greatest number of interns on board during the most active months of the year (May through September), but still allowed us to take advantage of the fringe growing periods in early spring and late fall.



Interns completed a survey where they self-assessed their farming knowledge at the beginning and at the conclusion of their tenure at Crown Point. Additionally, three of our interns engaged in additional projects. The Farm Intern Program included formalized training, self-directed research projects and hands-on experience in small-scale organic vegetable farming with a permaculture strategy.

Interns engaged in all of the routine tasks of a commercial organic vegetable farm, including: Farm planning, planting and harvesting activities; Budget management; Business practices that help to generate revenue to sustain a farm. They helped plan and implement our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, a system in which a farm operation is supported by community shareholders who receive produce in exchange for an investment. They provided consultation with CSA customers and wrote the weekly newsletter to increase patron knowledge about the farm food products they receive. They participated fully in our May Annual Organic Plant Sale from growing the plants in the greenhouse to helping us host the event. They also were lead instructors in a soils program for 6th graders from Akron City schools and interacted with children from our Summer Farm & Science Camp. Interns were integral to the success of our First Fruits Initiative, in which Crown Points partners and donates food to the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank.

During the internship period, interns learned first-hand the workings of the farm and the essentials of vegetable farming, including the following skills.

- Greenhouse management
- Tractor operations
- Field preparation
- Crop production
- Planning crop rotation
- Soil testing and interpretation
- Transplanting and direct seeding
- Trellising and hoeing
- Organic nutrient management
- Weed and pest management
- Maintenance/safety
- Irrigation setup and management
- High-tunnel management
- Harvest techniques
- Post-harvest handling
- Record-keeping



While the methods and systems used at Crown Point are based upon the soils, topography, infrastructure, markets and mission-driven values of this facility, most of the skills and knowledge gained by interns are applicable across a variety of locations.



Research Projects- Each intern consulted with Crown Point's executive director and farm manager to determine individual areas of interest and then engaged in a simple, practical or research based project that enhanced their educational experience and also contributed to the knowledge and productivity of Crown Point. Two of our interns chose to focus on bee-keeping and established and maintained two hives onsite. One hundred lbs. of honey

were harvested from these two hives in the early spring of 2018. Another intern chose a project focused on composting and presented a written assessment of our current system and how to improve it.

Other Farm Visits and Farm Field Days

Our interns visited three different farms that focus on permaculture and regenerative practices with different production emphasizes, all located within 60 miles of Crown Point.

Zoe farm in Stark County specializes in farm-direct grass-fed beef, pasture raised chicken, forest raised pork, free range eggs and seasonal fruits/vegetables. Spice Acres, an organic farm located within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park produces annual vegetables, woodland pastured heritage pigs and high tunnel ginger and fig tree production.

Muddy Fork Farm LLC in Wayne County, specializes in perennial vegetable production and rotationally grazed sheep.

In addition to those informative outings our team also participated in the Ohio State University OFFER (Organic Food and Farming Education and Research) crop field day held at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Topics covered included soil balancing experiments, cover crop inter-seeding, variety trials of oats, corn and red clover, weed management, vegetable tillage, microbials, grafting and season extension.

Our interns assisted Community Food Initiatives (communityfoodinitiatives.org) Seed Saving Workshops and learned methodology to save seed, in particular processing seeds with heat treatment and other sanitary techniques that minimize seed borne diseases.

Follow up on Intern Activities a year later

We were able to follow up on three of our most active interns:

-Josh Handley is now the Greenhouse manager for TOAST, a restaurant in Cleveland that grows food in the city.

-Mara Momenee is working as Urban Farm Systems Coordinator (VISTA) at Franklinton Farms (franklintonfarms.org), in Columbus, Ohio.

-Samantha Phillips has three jobs in agriculture. She is the garden manager for the First Congregation Church of Akron, taking care of 2000 sq. Ft. of raised beds, making weekly deliveries to food pantries feeding 80 families, as well as attending the Summit Lake Farmers' market weekly. She also teaches job and gardening skills to the residents of Haven of Rest Homeless Shelter in Akron and is the farm manager for the village of Richfield gardens.

Expenses for Farm Internship Project

Payroll expenses	20,885
Travel and workshops	234
Bee-keeping expenses	660
Total	\$21,779

Conclusion

We believe we have met the goals of the grant proposal with positive outcomes.

We met our obligation of providing our interns with training and a good working environment with fair wages. Our intern program helped train new farmers. It is clear from their career choices following their internships that they have entered the agricultural job force with strong sense of environmental conservation and social justice. Our interns provided essential skilled labor that enabled Crown Point to fulfill our mission to model sustainable land use, provide hunger relief and offer environmental education. We are very grateful to FSI for supporting the farm intern program that helped us have a productive and fun 2017 farming season.