Regional Community-Based Food Hub: SPROUT MN

PROJECT GOALS
SPROUT MN has two components:

1) Establish a regional food hub for the aggregation and distribution of locally produced foods, in order to bring products from small farmers into the wholesale market and continue to grow the farm to institution program in Central Minnesota.

2) Extend the growing season through the use of locally manufactured solar thermal collectors combined with high tunnels, in order to address Central Minnesota’s short outdoor growing season, which dampens Farm to School efforts and limits farm profitability.

As a result of this work, we ultimately anticipate improved local health outcomes; increased access to fresh local foods in food deserts, schools, and other institutions; increased revenue for small local farmers through expanded market opportunities, value-added agriculture, and season extension and creation and retention of local jobs.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS
Community impact and social sustainability is fully integrated when farmers get to tell their stories and consumers place value on their purchases because they are connected to the land and the farmer. Community impact is easily measured when school aged children can tell the story of where their food comes from and quite possibly have visited a local farmer who produced their food.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS
Environmental sustainability is easily measured by the miles food travels as well as farming techniques used by farmers currently working in the network (low input and sustainable farming techniques).

ECONOMIC IMPACTS
Economic sustainability is written into the three year business plan of SPROUT MN. At full capacity, this project has the potential to create 2.2 direct jobs for every $100,000 of local commodity traded. Indirectly, the potential of a food hub in Central Minnesota has the capacity to create numerous jobs for area farms, institutional kitchens, retail markets, solar technology sectors and more.

COMMUNICATION AND REACH
Project partners include University of Minnesota, Otto Bremer Foundation, Northwest Area Foundation, USDA, Hunt Utilities Group, Rural Renewable Energy Alliance (RREAL), Prairie Bay, Independent School District 181, Grand View Lodge, Central Lakes College Small Business Development Center, Central Lakes College – Staples Campus (diesel and biodiesel programs), The Farm on St. Mathias, Rush Foundation, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to name a few. These project partners are committed to making the connections to the value of creating a regional local food economy; reduction of VMT's, increased incomes of small agricultural producers (wealth creation), reduction of sprawl (keeping agricultural land in agricultural production), increased access to nutritional foods (health benefits), making the URBAN-RURAL connection, and adding to our QUALITY OF PLACE. Several economic impact studies have been published regarding the positive community multiplier as a result of sourcing local foods.

CRSDP INVESTMENT
$50,000