NORTHWEST REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

Linking Partners: A SNAP-Ed Partnership

JUNE 2016

The Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (NWRSDP) promotes healthy food access in Northwestern Minnesota by growing and strengthening the network of partners connected to healthy food production, education, and access. In fall 2015, a SNAP-Ed Community Partnership grant supported the NWRSDP in measuring the growth, diversity, and strength of the region’s food network, and fostering and spreading innovative models of healthy food access. This fact sheet highlights grant goals and activities through spring 2016.

BACKGROUND

Northwest region counties tend to have high values for the food environment index, which measures distance from a grocery store and food insecurity. Income inequality is also relatively high throughout the Northwest region, contributing to health disparities. Strong regional partnerships and innovative solutions are needed to reduce health disparities and ensure healthy food access for all Northwestern Minnesota residents.

Over the past several years, the NWRSDP has invested in projects that build capacity for local food production. Projects include fruit and vegetable production in high tunnels, increasing food access with community gardens and farmers markets, and hosting an online webinar series called Local Food College (localfoods.umn.edu). NWRSDP works in close partnership with SNAP educators, Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) partners, schools, emergency food providers, and other community partners across the region.

Extension’s SNAP-Education Community Partnership Funding supports 15 local, regional, and statewide agencies through grant money for 2016. Partner agencies work to improve the health of Minnesotans with limited resources by implementing changes in the policies, systems, and environment in their communities.

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VISION
Increase healthy food access and food security for all Northwestern Minnesota residents by growing and strengthening partnership.

STRATEGIES
Large, diverse, strong networks drive innovation. Through the SNAP-Ed grant, the NWRSDP promotes healthy food access by growing and strengthening the network of related partners across the region by:

• Conducting a social network analysis to characterize the relationships, and identifying strategies to strengthen and expand the network (summer 2016).

• In partnership with SHIP, hosting in-person and online conversations linking farmers market managers, vendors, and community garden champions to SNAP-eligible households, the emergency food system, and public health and health care providers (throughout 2016).

• Sharing ideas and models for healthy food access through the 2016 Local Foods College online webinar series and the Northwest Minnesota Farmers Market Gathering (Jan-Mar 2016).

• Funding 8 pilot projects that increase healthy food access. (summer-fall 2016).

• Funding 2 pilot projects addressing physical activity (summer-fall 2016).

• Sharing and replicating effective models (Oct – Dec 2016).

Linking Partners pilot projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECTS, COMMUNITIES, AND PARTNERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bemidji – One Vegetable, One Community – Deb Dilley and Bemidji Community Food Shelf</td>
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<td>Crookston – One Vegetable, One Community – Megan Janssen and Polk County Public Health</td>
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<td>Laporte – Active Hallways and Outdoor Active Trail – Kathryn Lien and Laporte Public School</td>
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<td>Nevis and Park Rapids – Active Hallways and Outdoor Active Trail – Donna Anderson and Park Rapids and Nevis Schools</td>
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REGIONAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS
The University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) connect local community innovators with University of Minnesota researchers and seed funding to drive sustainability in four areas: agriculture and food systems, tourism and resilient communities, natural resources, and clean energy. Five Regional Partnerships (NW, NE, Central, SE, and SW) located around Minnesota build community and University partnerships through citizen-led boards. Learn more at www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?
The NWRSDP seeks to include a broad and diverse group of regional food partners in the initiative and regional dialogue. Please contact NW RSDP Executive Director Linda Kingery at kinge002@umn.edu to learn more.

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