

Rooting Opportunity: Doing Economic Development Differently



Network Building

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Core Project Partners

- Alabama Sustainable Agriculture Network (ASAN)
- National Wildlife Federation
- Perry County Center for Economic Development
- The Cottage House
- The United Christian Community Association

Alabama Partners

- Children's Defense Fund
- Mississippi Action for Community Education
- Quitman County Development Organization
- Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative
- Winston County Cooperative
- Mileston Cooperative
- Tougaloo College

Mississippi Partners

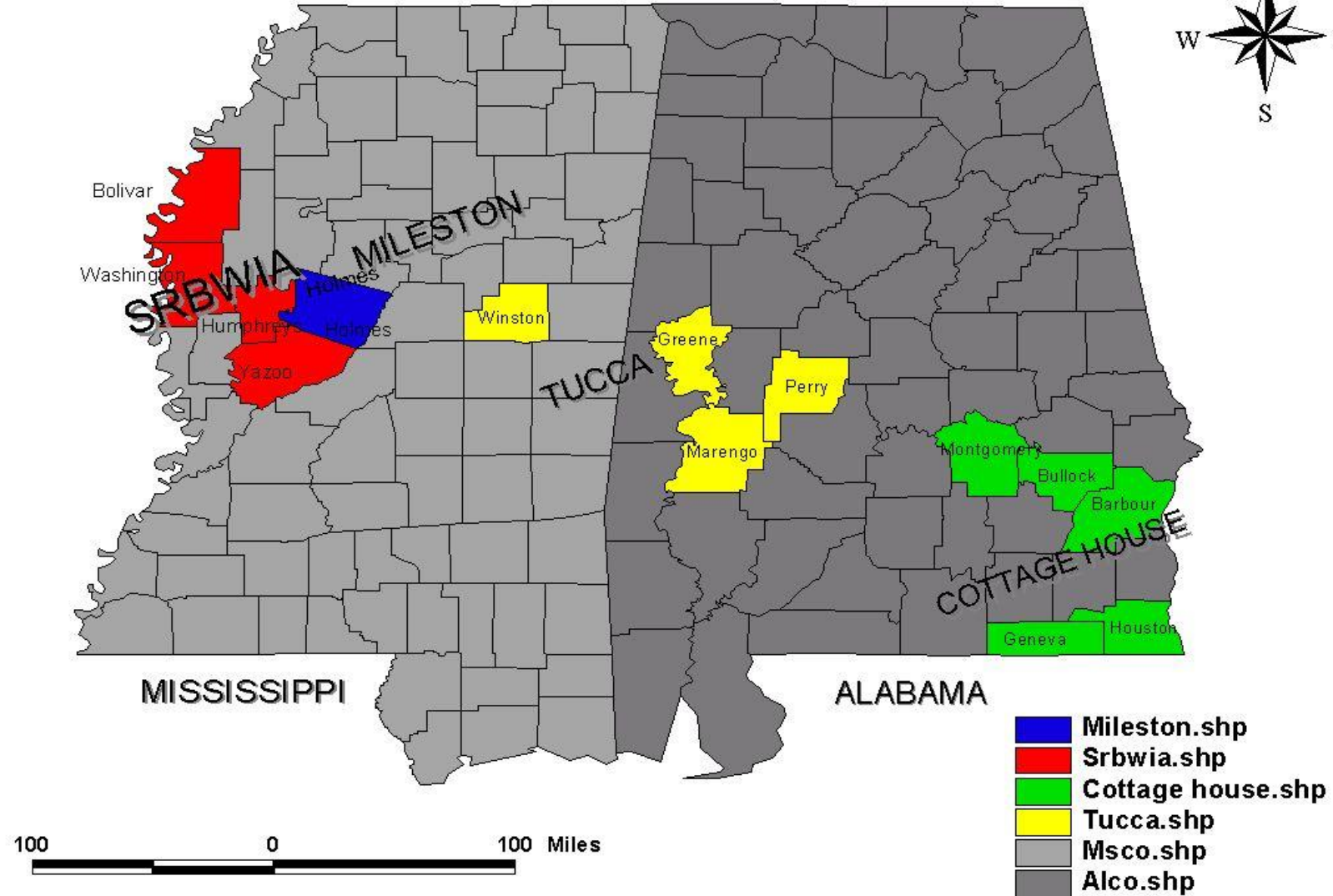
Funding Partners

- Ford Foundation
- Yellow Wood Associates
- Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
- McIntosh SEED

Supporting Partners

- McIntosh SEED
- Rural Support Partners

DEEP SOUTH COMMUNITY AGRICULTURAL NETWORK



Demographics

- **Population:**

- Alabama- 4.8 Million
- Mississippi: 2.9 Million

- **Poverty Rate:**

- Rural Mississippi: 25.8%
- Rural Alabama: 21.8%

Entrenched Poverty

- **USDA Strike Force Counties:**

- Wilcox- 39.4%
- Winston- 26.5%
- Holmes- 42.6%

2010. USDA Economic Research Service

Accompanying Issues

- Apathy
- Low Education Rates
- Low Ranking on the Human Development Index
- Limited History of Collaboration
- **Systemic Racism**
- **Land Loss**
- Exodus of Youth
- Depopulation

Systemic racism - still prevalent in many formal systems, institutions, and policies – is the underlying cause of many of these issues. It continues to hinder economic development efforts in the Deep South.

Opportunity

Utilize region-based organizations to form a Network

Potential

- Minority farmers still own substantial amounts of land
- Many have much more capacity on the supply side
- A robust agricultural supply chain could serve markets both inside and outside the Delta
- Some minority (and many white) farmers already export crops and value-added products to corporations (e.g., Mars)
- If organized, producers could capture more substantial regulated market opportunities.

Anticipated Results

1. Increase income for all farmers
2. Increase income for low-wealth minority farmers,
3. Capitalize on the increase in statewide vegetable and fruit production
4. Improve, connect and fully utilize existing built capital
5. Increase financial capital within the region.

Why the Network Model in Alabama & Mississippi?

- ❖ Moves from isolated projects to a systems approach
- ❖ Provides opportunities to pursue larger more diverse markets
- ❖ Gives farmers the tools, capacities, support and connections to significantly improve their own livelihoods
- ❖ Provides opportunities for food & farm entrepreneurs
- ❖ Creates multiple forms of wealth that is locally owned, controlled and reinvested into rural communities

Steps to forming the DSCAN Network

COMMUNICATION 101

Building Social Capital

Tell us about you: Where do you live? Where do you work? Who do you serve? What are your successes? What are your challenges? What are your investment needs?

- Production, aggregation, distribution, and infrastructure
- Organizational and partnership development
- Branding, marketing, and educational campaigns
- Capital development

Building Social Capital... *continued*

- Identify areas of commonality in your work, community, values, etc...
- Are there any intersections or cross-pollination of our work?
- Can we work together to expand your/our capacity?
- Can we work together to address the challenges?
- Can we work together to capitalize on the OPPORTUNITIES that exists within our region?
- **Focus on the ASSETS!!!**

LOTS & LOTS of TEAMBUILDING Exercises

“Can we talk?”

- Monthly Conference Calls
- Quarterly Gatherings
- Peer Learning Journeys
- Executive Committee Calls
- Site Visits to each Organization
- Trainings & Workshops
- One-on-One Consultations
- Weekly Progress Checks: Produce Update



Mapping Exercise

- Each organization collectively mapped the core components of their value chain on a large map of Alabama and Mississippi.
- The organizations collectively identified the following:
 - producers
 - direct sales
 - PAD (processors, aggregators, distributors)
 - wholesale buyers
 - Consumers
 - waste management
 - input suppliers
 - labor
- The organizations also identified key investment needs with their value chain, how they are working together across teams, and lessons learned from their research.

Mapping Exercise: Regional Area "Assets"



Feasibility Study #1

- What do you know about specific demand for the primary products or services you might produce?
- Who are the key partners or potential partners who might be able to help you?
- What is the economic impact of launching this project in your community?
- How will this project be grounded in local ownership and control?
- How will this project help with the upward mobility of local low-income people?
- Will you be able to create jobs?
- Are there opportunities for small business enterprises/entrepreneurship?
- How will the youth or next generation of farmers be engaged?

Phase I: Exploration and Research 2011 & 2012

- ❖ Research/analyze the various components of the value chain: product demand, production capacity, aggregation/ distribution infrastructure, etc.
- ❖ Engage, inform, & connect value chain stakeholders
- ❖ Developed a common understand, vision, and language related to value chain research and construction
- ❖ Discover connections, common visions and possible ways project groups can work together
- ❖ Develop individual & collective action plans
- ❖ Strengthen our skills, knowledge & capacities
- ❖ Document tools & lessons to help other groups working to construct value chains

Goal:

Develop a vision and collective understanding of the impact we are trying to have on the region.

- Do we **want** to work together as a Network?
- **How** do we want to work together as a Network?
- Do we want to develop **branding** as a Network?
- What **impact** will the Network have on the region?
(Local economy, jobs, businesses, food, housing, education, health, etc...)

Vision Statement (2012)

To work toward the development of a sustainable agriculture network focused on building fruit, vegetable, and livestock value chains for the purpose of improving rural livelihoods at the local and regional level in Alabama and Mississippi.



The goal is to work together to **maximize the payoff** for **EVERYONE** involved.

Accountability 101



Work Plans

What do we need to know?	Who will complete this task?	Timeline	What research or other supports are needed?
Contact existing aggregators to id demand for the products identified: White peas, purple hull peas, watermelons, squash, tomatoes, collards, strawberries, blueberries	Barbara Shipman, Karen Wynne, Andrew Williams	By end of April	
Complete demographic data for south AL	Alice Evans, Karen Wynne	Mid-April	
Complete inventory of existing value chain	Everyone	End of April	
Consult with prisons	Barbara Shipman	End of June	
Research value-added options like fresh-frozen and discuss demand with existing aggregators	Everyone as we are able	May -June	
Develop next steps in branding program and promotion	Andrew Williams, Keisha Abrahams	April - May	

Budgets:

National Wildlife Federation Budget Breakdown Phase 2: February -May 2012

Expenses	Amounts
Salaries and Benefits (NWF)	\$4,000
Partner Support *(3)	\$6,000
Mentors (3)	\$4,500
Other Direct Costs**	\$3,700
Overhead (10%)	\$1,820
Total Expenses	\$20,020.00

(Partial) Contracts:

RE: Six Month Contract including: project objectives, deliverables, participation requirements, and budget for the first 6-month phase of the Value Chain Project.

This agreement, dated May 29, 2015 is made By and Between _____, hereafter referred to as “Coordinator”, and _____, hereafter referred to as “Consultant.”

Project Objectives, Timeline, and Deliverables

The goal of this project is to establish a regional network and build two beginning stage agricultural value chains across Southeast Alabama, West Alabama & East Mississippi, and the Mississippi Delta.

6-Month Deliverables Identified by Consultant, _____

In the next 6 months, the Consultant will have:

Markets are expanded with produce sold to Belle Food in Birmingham, AL.

Partnerships exist and are maintained with The Tuskegee University Wal-Mart Project and New North Florida Farmers Cooperative Association.

Farmers have the necessary training in crop succession planting and are prepped for GAP certification.

Farmers are well prepared for planting season. They have assessed their water and soil quality. And coordinated seed orders, planting dates, and administrative needs.

Reports

Organization		
6 Producers	New North Florida Cooperative, conventional wholesale buyers	Total sales exceeded \$12,000
Producer	Sells To	Amount Of 2012 Sales For This Product
RB	New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)	\$535.50
EM	New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)	\$246.50
RS	New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)	\$1,120.50
ST	New North Florida Cooperative (NNFC)	\$1,113.50
DB Brothers	AG Groceries, Calhoun Groceries, Piggley Wiggley, Smute Community Restaurant	\$9,360.00

Goal

Collaboratively connect and strengthen sustainable regional agricultural network

- Growing to Scale
- Meeting Large Market Demand
- Sharing Labor/Youth Labor
- Providing Training and Certification Workshops
- Sharing Equipment and Transportation
- Sharing Cool Storage
- Sharing Liability Insurance
- Growing Collaboratively
- Developing Growing Protocols
- Developing Crop Rotation Plans
- Fundraising: Investment & Capital

Goal

To establish a clear structure

In the beginning, we had working committees:

- **Executive/Steering**
- **Media**
- **Fundraising**

2015 Officers

President	Andrew Williams (TUCCA- Alabama)
Vice-President	Calvin Head (Mileston- Mississippi)
Secretary	Gloria Sturdevant (SRBWIA- Mississippi)
Treasurer	Barbara Shipman (The Cottage House- Alabama)

Memorandum of Understanding

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby made and entered into by and between the member organizations of the Deep South Wealth Creation Network, hereinafter referred to as DSWCN.

The Deep South Wealth Creation Network is a collaboration of five organizations from Mississippi and Alabama who are working to develop vegetable and livestock value chains for the purpose of sustaining the natural resources and improving the livelihoods of rural families in the Deep South region.

Network partners include the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative, Broader Horizons, and the MileSton Cooperative, located in Mississippi. Alabama partners include The United Christian Community Association and The Cottage House.

This MOU defines our shared principles and expectations of member participation in the network.

Vision - The Deep South Wealth Creation Network members envisions a day when the region's deep agricultural knowledge is celebrated and vast amounts of underutilized land are capitalized on to create real economic opportunity and contribute to a high quality of life for all. We envision a time where today's youth are tomorrow's farmers, who implement the knowledge gained from elders to cultivate their land and contribute to the health and livelihood of their communities. We see our region recognized for not only inspiring the historical, cultural, and political changes that have transformed the United States over the past 50 years, but also influencing a new and just economic model that promotes local ownership, empowers families, ensures resilient communities, and protects our natural systems.

Our Mission - To build vegetable and livestock value chains that create multiple forms of local wealth, reduce poverty, accelerate the agricultural economy, empower communities, engage youth, and improve the livelihoods of rural people in the Deep South.

Network Building!

- Alabama groups are growing and selling leafy greens to meet market demand.



- Mississippi groups are growing and selling bell peppers to meet market demand.



“Skin-in-the-Game”

Each member organization has committed to investing **\$1,000.00** towards the sustainability of the Network.



Deep South Community Agricultural Network

(Video Link)