

Harvesting Social Change



What can a small
nonprofit funder do
to support just
and sustainable
food and agriculture?

An evaluation of five years of grantmaking

by Nancy Ross, PhD

Associate Professor of Environmental Policy, Unity College
Chair, Advisory Committee, The Harvest Fund at Maine Initiatives

HARVESTING SOCIAL CHANGE:
WHAT CAN A SMALL NONPROFIT FUNDER DO
TO SUPPORT JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE?
AN EVALUATION OF MAINE INITIATIVES HARVEST FUND

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Executive summary

The Harvest Fund provides short-term grants to Maine groups working for sustainable agriculture and food security. In five years, the Fund has supported 85 projects with grants ranging from \$200 to \$5000.

We conducted an evaluation to assess the impact of the Harvest Fund and its funded projects on sustainable agriculture and food systems in Maine, to examine reasons for successes and failures, and to make recommendations for program improvements that better meet grantees' needs and the Fund's goals. Grantee final reports were analyzed and interviews conducted with a sample of grantees stratified into three categories: community gardens, innovative enterprises, and education/outreach.

Over 90% of projects were found to have achieved their own and Harvest Fund goals. Harvest Fund monies were critical to the success of more than half the projects, attracted additional monies in nearly half of cases, and often helped grantees become more credible and stable organizations.

The grantees are community-based, three-quarters make strong use of volunteers, and nearly half are linked in partnerships with other organizations. Most see themselves as operating on both the local and global levels. They perceive the Fund as operating with a high level of knowledge and effectiveness.

To make the Harvest Fund even more effective, grantees would like to see more outreach to other potential grantees, increased media promotion of Harvest Fund goals, a proactive approach to grant-making, closer oversight of projects, and technical assistance for grantees in fund raising, evaluation, networking, organizational management, and advocacy. The evaluator recommends that the Fund carry out its mission in more strategic fashion by increasing the number of projects, prioritizing areas of concern, and adopting a systematic approach to provide technical assistance to grantees.

Introduction and purpose

Maine Initiatives is a public foundation that makes major grants to projects that promote social, economic, and environmental justice in Maine and Maine's communities. The Harvest Fund began in 1999 when Deborah Felder, executive director of Maine Initiatives, convened practitioners and professionals in rural development, sustainable agriculture, and food security to discuss funding needs. At the time, these needs were largely unaddressed by other Maine foundations.

The strategy recommended and adopted for the Harvest Fund was to underwrite many small, community-based projects across the state. The goal was to create a movement for just and

sustainable food systems and, in the process, leverage new foundation, corporate, and individual donor support for this cause.

The Fund supports projects that address system-wide issues and make connections among access to healthful food, environmentally sound food production, local land use, social justice, and marginalized people in Maine. Grants are available for start-up funding, research and development, advocacy, public policy, general support, education and training, and community organizing. (See Appendix A for Harvest Fund guidelines.)

Once the advisory group (See lists of initial and current advisors in Appendix B) established the funding need and parameters, Maine Initiatives approached the Sandy River Charitable Foundation for a start-up challenge grant. Sandy River provided \$25,000 a year for four years, which was matched with funds from individual donors and other foundations. Continuation beyond Spring 2007 will require additional funding.

From its first grant in December 2000 through December 2005, the Harvest Fund supported 85 projects with grants ranging from \$200 to \$5000. Twelve of these were state-wide in reach. Others focused on communities and regions from Aroostook County in northernmost Maine to York County in southernmost Maine and from easternmost Washington County to westernmost Oxford County.

Along with geographical balance among grantees, the Harvest Fund seeks to support groups that have strong volunteer support and programs with potential for replication. Specific stated goals are:

- Increase the amount of food grown in Maine using sustainable practices.
- Integrate food access, community development, and sustainable agriculture.
- Support underserved, marginalized, or special needs populations.
- Involve collaboration with other groups and individuals.
- Address root causes and offer systemic solutions.

In 2005, as the end of the initial funding period approached, staff at Maine Initiatives and advisors to the Harvest Fund recommended an evaluation of the program. The committee and staff approved a research design for the evaluation (Appendix C). The research design also received approval from Unity College's Internal Review Board.

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the Harvest Fund's grant making and the funded projects on sustainable agriculture and food systems in Maine, to examine reasons for successes and failures, and to make recommendations for program improvements that better meet grantees' needs and the Fund's goals. This paper describes the process, findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation.

Methods

Harvest Fund grantees are required to make final reports (See report form in Appendix D) that discuss accomplishment of project goals, final budget, successes and failures, impact of Harvest Fund funding, visibility of the project, other support received, and the grantee's feedback on the

Harvest Fund process. Each of these factors was analyzed using final reports received from grantees by December 2005.

In addition, the final reports were used to examine use of in-kind donations, volunteer staffing, and community partnerships; to categorize projects that included advocacy, gardening, and/or educational components; to mark innovative and replicated projects; and to see if groups sought and/or received technical assistance from the Harvest Fund.

A second component of the evaluation was a series of interviews conducted with a sample of grantees. Grantees were grouped into three categories:

1. Community and school gardens
2. Education and outreach (technology transfer, public education, advocacy, skills development and/or training, etc.)
3. Innovative enterprises and approaches (to sustainable business ventures, farmland protection, connections among producers and consumers, etc.)

These categories are not mutually exclusive; indeed, several grantee projects met criteria for inclusion in all three. The purpose of the grouping was to identify a broad range of grantees with which to thoroughly explore input and feedback about the Harvest Fund.

Within each of these categories, staff and the evaluator selected at least two representative grantees and at least one atypical grantee to interview. Emphasis was given to selecting thoughtful, methodical, and candid individuals with some familiarity with the world of grant making.

We recognized that there could be problems with self censorship of remarks in order to please the funder. We sought individuals likely to speak their minds. One barrier to candor was removed in most cases; two-thirds of the interviewees had already received the maximum two grants from the Harvest Fund and were ineligible to receive additional funding.

Interviews were carried out with informed consent, following a semi-structured and open-ended interview guide (Appendix E). They were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Findings

Of the 85 funded projects, 70 were funded in the first four years. These 70 projects, all scheduled for completion prior to the evaluation, were examined for this report. Of the 70 projects, all but five were carried out in a manner that accomplished all or most of the project's goals. All but one of the five unsuccessful projects returned monies to be used to fund other Harvest Fund projects.

Kinds of projects funded

Over half (53%) of the 65 funded and completed projects involved school or community gardens (Table 1). All but one of the gardening projects provided food for low income or disadvantaged members of the community. Almost half (47%) of the gardening projects involved – and taught gardening skills to – members of underserved groups (Table 1).

All but one of the gardening projects used sustainable practices. After 2002, when the Harvest Fund advisory committee learned of the use of chemical fertilizer in one grantee project, eligibility requirements were amended to explicitly ban synthetic fungicides, insecticides, herbicides, and fertilizers – and require natural systems in all projects that involve growing plants.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of the funded and completed projects had an educational or outreach component (Table 1), often in gardening, but including, too, such areas as nutrition, seed saving, and farm production and marketing skills. In many cases, education was part of the overall mission of a funded educational institution or nongovernmental organization. In other instances, farmers markets and trade groups conducted outreach in areas such as nutrition and local food production.

Forty-four percent of the funded and completed projects were, in the opinion of the evaluator, notably innovative in design or scope (Table 1). Two different micro enterprises involved high school students, in one case running a bakery using local products and in another carrying out a heritage seed-saving venture. Several community gardens used volunteers and local decision-making in creative ways to teach skills and to empower, in different projects, county jail inmates, at-risk youth, homeless people, and recent immigrants along with older ethnic minorities.

A range of groups held workshops that provided skills and networking opportunities to such audiences as young farm apprentices, prospective women farmers, and farmers seeking promotional materials for their businesses. Groups organized to advocate for better regulation of genetically engineered crops, to create systems to compost restaurant food waste, and to bring Salvadoran farmers to speak out in Maine communities about globalization and working conditions in Central America.

Advocacy was a feature in about a quarter (24%) of funded and completed projects (Table 1). The proportion of advocacy projects among all projects proposed was at a lower level than the proportion of advocacy projects funded.

To encourage more advocacy projects and more projects of regional, statewide, and national significance, the Harvest Fund's original funding level of \$2,000 or less was altered in late 2003. The new funding schedule, which went into effect in the spring 2004 granting cycle, grants up to:

- \$1,000 to community gardens
- \$2,000 to projects that have regional impact or meet more than one Harvest Fund goal
- \$5,000 to projects with statewide or national impact meeting more than one Harvest Fund goal.

Since the change in funding schedule, the proportion of gardening projects funded has fallen from 58% to 31% and the proportion of advocacy projects funded has risen from 20% to 33% (Table 2). While neither of these changes is statistically significant (in part because the number

of completed grants since revision of the schedule is small), the trend appears to follow the direction the advisory committee and staff would like to see.

Importance of Harvest Fund to project success

The support of the Harvest Fund was critical to the success of more than half (52%) of the funded and completed projects (Table 1). “It was very helpful,” said one grantee, “especially with family foundations. There was kind of a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.”

A second grantee reported, “It was the first grant [we] received and [it] demonstrated to the immigrant community participants that we could support their participation in the project in areas that were important and meaningful to them.”

Said a third, “The grant made a significant difference. It was the launch for this project. Once we received it, we had confidence that our small committee would be able to take on such a large task and raise the rest of the funds needed.”

For 45% of grantees, funding from the Harvest Fund attracted additional monies. In 19% of cases, particularly for start-up groups, grantees remarked that the Harvest Fund grant they received helped their organization become more credible and more stable (Table 1).

“It increased staff and volunteer morale to pursue and receive other foundation funding,” reported one grantee. “Since this was our first grant, we were especially grateful for both the human and financial resources that were shared with us.”

Grantees applauded the Harvest Fund’s willingness to take risks by supporting very small and inexperienced groups. Said one, “We’re kind of an oddity out there and they’ve taken a chance on us.” Another grantee credited the Harvest Fund with helping their organization “learn to be a nonprofit.”

Grant project characteristics and Harvest Fund goals

Community involvement. A great many grantees that operate at the regional or local level are deeply rooted in their communities. “We hold really high expectations on how to make sure this is community run and accountable to the community,” one grantee explained. For example, her group is “trying to create a kind of ladder up for community members and youth to take on full staff positions.”

Over two-fifths (43%) of grantees received in-kind donations from community businesses and individuals. Three-quarters (74%) made vigorous use of volunteers (Table 1). One grantee noted that volunteers contributed over 1,500 hours in 2004. A grantee involved with school gardening spoke of broadening the volunteer base beyond parents and teachers – to seniors and other community groups. That “is something that we’ll focus on next year, to map out how to reach these groups and get them to make a more long term commitment.”

Partnerships. Half (49%) of funded projects were linked in partnerships with other organizations (Table 1). “Insights from this first year of the project confirm for me that success is dependent on taking enough time to build relationships,” said one.

Another grantee stressed that partnerships made a project possible: “We did a lot of work directly with the WIC office. We had things in their office, they put things in their brochures, and they did a lot of stuff like that to promote going to the Farmers’ Market. [Also] we had a couple event type days where the folks from the WIC office and Extension and two or three other groups came out, and we just tried to get as many WIC customers, senior citizens, and other groups there as we could.”

Models for change. Nearly three-quarters of the funded projects (72%) received media attention (Table 1). “The publicity generated by this project has been good for the farm,” said one grantee, noting that the Harvest Fund “has given us great exposure and networking opportunities through your publications and events.”

The percentage of projects that have been – or are expected soon to be – replicated is small: 15% (Table 1). However, this proportion can be seen as relatively large, given the small size and start-up nature of most of the projects and most of the groups.

Almost all grantees interviewed see themselves as operating on both the local and global levels. One grantee summed it up, “We aren’t sending out literature to other areas of the world and talking about farmland protection or growing new farmers. We’re just doing our best here. To the extent that we’re a model that people can say ‘Oh look, this can be done,’ that’s the global effect we hope we’ll have.”

Harvest Fund effectiveness as seen by grantees

Connections. Grantees see the Harvest Fund as operating with a high level of knowledge and effectiveness. “Your people are very well connected,” said one grantee. “I think you have either on the board or as advisors almost all the people that are actively engaged in [sustainable agriculture and food systems] in the State of Maine.”

“I think it’s great,” said another grantee of the Harvest Fund and sustainable food and agriculture. “It’s tapping into historically what [Maine has] done well and what are some of the best things about this place.”

A third grantee spoke of a ripple effect created by the Harvest Fund. “The Harvest Fund is doing a really good job of broadening the reach of issues in sustainable agriculture and food systems,” she said. “Other funders are saying, ‘Okay, Maine Initiatives has a specific fund for this,’ and they pay attention to that. I think that because Maine Initiatives does have a much larger scope in general in what they fund, other organizations start to view sustainable agriculture and food systems as an issue of social change and justice.”

Support. Grantees had high praise for staff. “The feeling of encouraging ordinary people to do extraordinary things was present in the attitude and conversations with anyone who was part of

the Harvest Fund.” “They were very, very encouraging when they would send an e-mail or a letter stating, ‘How you doing over there, send us some pictures, send us something, let us know how you’re doing; keep in touch.’”

“[Harvest Fund program officer] Charlie Bernstein has been exceptionally helpful, walking me through the application process.” “There were times when I turned to Charlie and said, ‘I don’t know how to do this,’ and he gave me pointers.”

“I thank God for the Harvest Fund; I really do,” said one particularly grateful grantee, “because a lot of funders treat a lot of organizations just like our rural residents. They’re invisible.”

Process There was also near uniform praise for the application and granting processes. “The application and the process I thought were quite simple and easy to get through. I’ve worked on a couple of other grants since then that have been very difficult.” “When I did it with [another funder] they were somewhat off the wall. We had to call up and ask ‘What’s going on here, where’s the money, who am I talking to?’ It was really bad. So the Harvest Fund was a dream.”

“There was a minimum amount of paperwork and bureaucracy so that we were able to take the resources and do our project and say, ‘Wow, here’s what we accomplished.’ And that was very good, because basically people need that kind of support where they can take it and run and get it done.”

One grantee noted that the “application and final report processes sparked much needed evaluation, reflection, and action.” Another said, “The nonspecific nature of the grant is greatly appreciated – I know best where the money is most needed.”

Involvement Several remarked on how much their involvement in annual celebrations meant to them. “I especially enjoyed the Harvest Fund Annual Award ceremony and would certainly encourage you to continue to promote the work of the agencies that you help underwrite each year through this event.”

A student gardener said, “The Harvest Fund and Maine Initiatives people are the greatest. I love going to their dinners and celebrations. They make me feel like a celebrity myself. Everyone is so excited to see us when we go, everyone talks to us, like we are doing great work. We meet such amazing people who get other grants from Maine Initiatives. I always come home inspired and want to make our project really work.”

Mission. Others stressed the importance of the Harvest Fund’s scope and special mission. “I think the Harvest Fund is looking for unique ideas, and I don’t think there are a lot of other funders out there taking that approach.”

“I really like its approach of small amounts of money that are applied discretely to specific issues that make a big difference. I think of that as kind of spot watering where you see a plant strug-

gling and you give a little extra boost here and boom, she blooms and takes off.”

Potential for improvements

Awareness. Several of those interviewed called for more outreach to prospective grantees. One suggested “finding all the farms in Maine and making them aware” of the Harvest Fund at the state Agricultural Trades Show and similar venues.

Another noted that “some of the projects that you funded wouldn’t have been found through normal agricultural channels – vocational ed teachers, people serving underrepresented folks, the Healthy Communities projects, etc.” She recommended placing information about the Fund in newsletters of these and similar groups.

Many of those interviewed saw a role for the Harvest Fund in raising general awareness about sustainability, food choices, and access to farmland. “Buying Maine grown product is a way to preserve farmland, make farming economically viable,” said one. “Just get people to understand what an attribute it is to the community and to the economy.”

Grantees also wanted media attention for issues of hunger and access to food. “Some people say, ‘Oh well, we’ve got food pantries everywhere so nobody should be hungry,’ but it’s income [that’s the issue] and ways to get food with dignity.”

“Not just spin it but actually frame it and show what sustainable agriculture and food systems have to do with healthy, just communities,” stressed a grantee who explained that her group works with food systems “because we can get someone with their hands in their neighborhood in the soil making change right there and then they can use that experience to say I want to participate in making change on this level or on this level or in this way.”

Proactiveness. While grantees wanted broad messages and connections when it came to media promotion, several suggested a narrower focus in proposal requests. “It would be helpful if they were a little more specific up front and said, ‘we’re particularly interested,’ or ‘this year our priorities are,’ or ‘we really want to get applications from farmers’ markets,’ or ‘we really don’t want applications from farmers’ markets.’ When they use broader language you don’t really know if this is the grant program that’s tailored to what you really want to accomplish.”

Other grantees wanted to see the Harvest Fund support more replication of successful grantee projects. Several noted that the two grant limit per organization was unnecessarily restrictive. “Other people are out there who need help and I realize that. But I would like to apply and get it for two years and then after two, three years see that you can reapply – just in case you need it.”

Funding. Most of those interviewed recommended funding more grantees as well as rethinking the two grant limit; however, no one seriously challenged the Fund’s small grants philosophy. “I really think that it’s better to keep things in small amounts and try to help multiple organizations.

We need to work harder at finding other ways to fund what we're doing; everybody does. You can't become reliant on some huge organization or huge amount of money to get you through."

At the same time, almost all of the interviewees would like more assistance in connecting with other funders. "If the Harvest Fund knows 'here's another organization that we feel believes in much the same thing we do and you might consider approaching them and let them know that you've gotten \$5,000 from us' – it's that kind of resource that I as a farmer may not have access to simply because of lack of time for sitting at the computer looking for it."

"More funding would be good," echoed another grantee, "knowing where those funds are, how to identify the right agencies to go through to apply. I know there's probably help out there for us but I don't know where to go to find it."

Another observed that "the Harvest Fund is giving small funding to a lot of usually small organizations who don't have [fund raising] capacity." She suggested "having a consultant who could do one-on-one or small group workshops on creating a sustainable fund raising strategy."

Oversight. Another form of support that some grantees sought was closer oversight of their projects. Said one, "I never felt any pressure for results. Maybe they could have put a little more pressure on me to be more organized."

A grantee whose project took longer than planned suggested a mid-project "two-paragraph summary of what you're doing and where you are now." This grantee wondered "if a little nudge at six months to see how we were doing would have taken my focus a little closer."

Evaluation. Others sought help in evaluating their programs. "We can do the work but we don't always have time to evaluate it and we certainly don't have time to teach other people how to do it. That would be something that the Harvest Fund could do to support us," said one of the grantees seeking this kind of assistance.

"We used to call them in the school reform community," he explained, "a critical friend. It's someone to come in and take a look at what you're doing and say 'here's what some other folks are doing,' someone who can see us from outside a little bit and let us know where we're probably not spending our energy efficiently, because I'm sure there are a lot of those areas."

Workshops. Grantees had high praise for the Harvest Fund's "Sustainability Day," a day of workshops on organizational skills and fund raising held three years ago. "Absolutely wonderful." "Especially helpful in terms of networking and skill-sharing. Such connections are vital to the long term success and impact of our programs."

Many grantees wanted to see the workshops continue on an ongoing basis – in the words of one “to create a space once or twice a year where people can get together and talk and tap into the expertise in the room.”

Along with workshops on fund raising, management, and evaluation, one grantee suggested “workshops on advocacy and activism. Maybe small ones all across the state so you don’t have too far to go.”

Networking. Grantees wanted more opportunities, in addition to workshops, to work cooperatively. “There’s a lot going on,” one grantee said, noting “a huge lack of connection between different sections of sustainable agriculture and food systems work in the state.” She proposed that the Harvest Fund underwrite “something that really built capacity by connecting a lot of that work.”

Another grantee suggested that the Harvest Fund act as a clearinghouse to help groups share models, best practices, and information. “There’s really a national movement,” he said. “While [the groups] are all going to be local and grassroots, we may start seeing an emerging consensus about the best way to do these things. The Harvest Fund may want to use some of your past grantees to help access that information and share it with other groups, or hook into some of that work yourselves.”

Conclusions

The Harvest Fund appears to be meeting its goals and most of its initial expectations. Eighty-five projects, across the state and in every sphere of concern, have been funded. The vast majority achieved their own goals as well as those of the Fund.

Harvest Fund support made a discernible difference. Harvest Fund dollars attracted additional funding for nearly half of the projects and secured organizational stability for one-fifth of the groups funded. Without Harvest Fund support, more than half of all funded projects would not have happened.

Funded projects were overall of very high quality. Nearly half are notably innovative. A sixth have been or are soon expected to be replicated.

The grantees are community-based, three-quarters make strong use of volunteers, and nearly half are linked in partnerships with other organizations. Most see themselves as operating on both the local and global levels.

Grantees have high praise for the Harvest Fund. They applaud its mission, philosophy, process, staff support, and events.

To make the Harvest Fund even more effective, grantees would like to see more outreach to other potential grantees, increased media promotion of Harvest Fund goals, a proactive approach to grant-making, closer oversight of projects, and technical assistance for fund raising, evaluation, networking, organizational management, and advocacy. Workshops are a preferred means of

technical assistance, but one-on-one consultation and a clearinghouse role are also desired.

Recommendations

1. Secure funding to continue the Harvest Fund with a more strategically focused mode of operation (see 3, 4, and 5 below) for at least another five year period.
2. Maintain grant sizes at levels relatively similar to those in the current schedule.
3. Increase the number of grantees and projects funded.
 - a. Reach out to a wider group of organizations in the Fund's field of interest.
 - b. Allow grantees at the current two-grant limit to reapply for an additional grant every two years.
4. Adopt a proactive approach.
 - a. Set priorities for particular areas of concern in each grant cycle.
 - b. Identify organizations with particular skills, constituencies, or needs within the areas of concern, and facilitate their efforts to apply for funding.
 - c. Seek out organizations to replicate successful projects.
 - d. Develop media strategies to put the Harvest Fund and its goals on the public agenda.
 - e. Institute a brief and uncomplicated check-in at the six-month midpoint of funded projects.
5. Secure staff, consultants, and partners to provide technical assistance to grantees.
 - a. Hold workshops and conferences once or twice annually to meet needs of grantees and similar organizations in fundraising, networking, organizational management, and advocacy.
 - b. Provide consultation to troubleshoot specific grantee problems and issues in the above areas and to help evaluate programs.
 - c. Act as a clearinghouse to disseminate useful information and facilitate partnerships among grantees and others.

Table 1. Project attributes

<u>Project attribute</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>% (of those responding)</u>
School or community garden	32	53
Gardeners from underserved population	15	25 (47% of gardens)
Education/outreach component	48	74
Innovation	26	44
Advocacy	14	24
HF support critical to project success	28	52
HF \$ attracted more funding	24	45
HF support critical to organization success	10	19
Attracted in-kind donations	23	43
Used volunteers	39	74
Partnered with other groups	26	49
Received media attention	38	72
Model for replication	8	15

Note: Numbers and percentages represent those providing the information.

Table 2. Comparison of advocacy and gardening projects before and after change in funding schedule

<u>Project attribute</u>	<u>Before funding</u>	<u>After funding</u>
	<u>schedule change</u>	<u>schedule change</u>
	<u>% (#)</u>	<u>% (#)</u>
School or community garden	58 (30)	31 (4)
Advocacy	20 (10)	33 (4)

Note 1: Results are not statistically significant (small sample size).

Note 2: Numbers and percentages represent those providing the information.

APPENDIX A

The Harvest Fund at Maine Initiatives

Maine Initiatives created the Harvest Fund to provide small short-term grants to Maine groups working for sustainable agriculture and food security. Our purpose is to link environmentally sound growing practices with solutions to hunger that are economically viable and socially responsible over the long term. Within the state, we strive for an equitable geographic distribution of our resources. We fund projects and groups that already have strong local volunteer support, and we fund the replication of model programs in new communities.

Program goals:

While we do not expect one proposal to address every goal, the Harvest Fund is most interested in projects that:

- Increase the amount of food grown in Maine using sustainable practices.
- Integrate food access, community development, and sustainable agriculture.
- Support underserved, marginalized, or special needs populations.
- Involve collaboration with other groups and individuals.
- Address root causes and offer systemic solutions

What we'll fund:

Grants will be available for start-up funding, research and development, advocacy, public policy, general support, education and training, and community organizing. Examples include:

- Community-supported agriculture and community gardens.
- Improving agriculture opportunities and conditions for minorities, women, migrant workers, and youth.
- Biodiversity and genetic diversity projects.
- Development of alternative food crops and access to locally-grown food.
- Promotion of safe food supplies.
- Consumer education and empowerment.
- Technology transfer.
- Healing and health.
- Community organizing for new agriculture-related micro-enterprise.
- Grassroots organizing for farm/farmland preservation.
- Equitable food production and distribution systems.

To be eligible:

- Only Maine-based organizations may apply to the Harvest Fund.
- Applicants must be tax-exempt or have a tax-exempt fiscal sponsor. (Call us at 622-6294 if you're not sure.)

- Organizations may receive only one Harvest Fund grant per year.
- Organizations may receive no more than two Harvest Fund grants.
- Proposals must include an evaluation component undertaken within that funding period.
- Project proposals must have a funding period of one year or less.
- Projects that involve growing plants must use natural systems - no synthetic fungicides, insecticides, herbicides, or fertilizers.

Funding criteria:

While no one proposal is expected to address all of our funding criteria, projects will be selected for funding based on:

- Degree to which the project meets The Harvest Fund's program goals.
- Originality of the concept.
- Level of community and volunteer support and degree of outreach to other groups.
- Potential for success and visibility.
- Capacity to be imitated or reproduced.
- Potential for impact beyond the funding period.
- Quality of evaluation component.
- Degree to which Harvest Fund support is critical.

Size of grants:

The Harvest Fund will grant up to:

- \$1,000 to community gardens.
- \$2,000 to projects that have regional impact or meet more than one Harvest Fund goal.
- \$5,000 to projects with statewide or national impact meeting more than one Harvest Fund goal.

APPENDIX B

THE HARVEST FUND AT MAINE INITIATIVES

INITIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Jim Amaral - President of Maine Businesses for Social Responsibility and owner of Borealis Breads
Deborah Burd - Executive Director, Western Mountains Alliance
Alan Day - founding member of Maine Initiatives (MI), activist, and donor
Jim Hanna – Executive Director of Maine Coalition for Food Security
Robert Ho - Executive Director of Maine Rural Development Council
R. Logan Johnston – manager of Oaklands Farm
Mark Lapping – Distinguished Professor, Public Policy and Management Planning, Development & Environment at the University of Southern Maine
Neil Lash - Medomak Valley High School teacher and coordinator of the Heirloom Seed Project
C.R. Lawn - founder of FEDCO Seeds
Russell Libby - Executive Director of Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
Nicolas Lindholm – farmer and founder of Maine Seedsavers Network
John Piotti – Director, Maine Farms Project of Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI)
Bonnie Rukin Miller – grower, former MOFGA president, and Tanglewood 4H volunteer
Nancy Ross - PhD in Agriculture, Food, and Environment, MI Board member, and former executive director of MOFGA
Stuart Smith - Professor of Sustainable Agriculture, University of Maine
Fred Stocking - Maine Homestead Land Trust Alliance
Gloria Varney - Maine Women’s Agriculture Network

CURRENT HARVEST FUND GRANTS COMMITTEE -

Nancy Ross, Chair – Associate Professor, Environmental Policy, Unity College
Jo Anne Bander – From the Source Consulting
Wanda Braithwaite-Baril – On board of MI, Rural Community Action Ministry
Deborah Burd - Executive Director, National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
Alan Day - founding member of MI, activist, and donor
Jim Hanna – Director of New American Sustainable Agriculture Project, Maine Farms Project of CEI
R. Logan Johnston – manager of Oaklands Farm
John Piotti – Chair of Maine Legislature’s Agriculture Committee and Director of Maine Farms Project of CEI.
Fred Stocking – Stocking and Crotteau law firm

APPENDIX C

Purpose of the evaluation

To answer the following key questions:

1. What is the impact of the Harvest Fund's grant making and how can it be improved?
2. Did funded projects collectively make an impact on sustainable agriculture and food systems in Maine?
3. If not, why not? If so, how and why?
4. What is the measurable contribution of the Harvest Fund toward the success of the grantees in creating sustainable agriculture and food systems in Maine?
5. How can the Harvest Fund better assist grantees to meet their needs and Harvest Fund goals?

Research design

I. Analyze all grantee final reports received by the Harvest Fund to date, with telephone follow-up if needed

- A. Categorize grantee responses to required report questions (evaluation regarding accomplishment of goals, successes and failures, impact of Harvest Fund funding, visibility of project, other support, feedback on Harvest Fund process)
- B. Identify recurring variables and themes
- C. Describe patterns in responses and potential connections among variables

II. Conduct and analyze interviews with a selected sample of grantees

- A. Group types of grantees into three or four categories
 1. First draft categorization suggests three groups:
 - a. Community and school gardens
 - b. Education and outreach (technology transfer, public education, advocacy, skills development and/or training, etc)
 - c. Innovative enterprises and approaches (to sustainable business enterprises, farmland protection, connections among producers and consumers, etc.)
 2. Projects that fall into more than one category and will be placed in multiple categories
- B. Select at least two typical grantees and one atypical grantee from each group for in-depth interview
- C. Conduct, record, and transcribe semi-structured, open-ended interviews (See interview guide)
- D. Perform qualitative and, if appropriate, quantitative analysis of interview narratives

APPENDIX D

MAINE INITIATIVES THE HARVEST FUND FINAL GRANT REPORT

Please prepare and send us one copy of a concise final report (no more than three pages) and a financial statement. If you have recently sent us a recent communication that you think answers the following questions, it is unnecessary to send us another. If you have not, please answer the following:

1. What were the project goals? How did you evaluate how well the goals were met? What are the results of your evaluation?
2. What were the project's major successes and failures? Was the project or budget revised significantly? If so, how? What insights or experiences would be useful to The Harvest Fund and to others?
3. How did The Harvest Fund grant make a difference in the project?
4. Have you communicated your results to interested organizations and media over the past year? How and when? Please submit any press clippings about the project supported by The Harvest Fund grant.
5. Did The Harvest Fund grant attract other funding or leverage other types of support? If so, how much and what kind?
6. Please provide us with a financial statement for the past year that shows how The Harvest Fund and other funds were spent on the work related to your grant.
7. Please tell us what it was like for you to work with The Harvest Fund. Your candid feedback will help us better help other grantees.

This report is due by October 15 for fall grantees and April 7 for spring grantees. If possible, we prefer to receive your report by email – to save postage and trees. Please put your name and your organization/project name in the email on the subject line.

THANK YOU!

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APPENDIX E

Interview guide

Briefly describe the project that the Harvest Fund funded.

Current status? Changes? Challenges? Opportunities?

How does/did this project fit into the overall purposes and activities of your organization?

In importance?

In time frame?

Organizational growth?

Lessons learned?

If you did this project over again, what would you do differently?

Explain key details, major changes.

How would you describe the HF's knowledge about sustainable agriculture and food systems?

In Maine? Elsewhere?

How would you describe the way the HF treated your organization?

Prompts: Timeliness? Fairness? Accuracy and adequacy of granting process? Communication and information?

What improvements could the HF make in its process?

What should the HF learn/be aware of?

What improvements could the HF make in its structure?

How would you describe the overall effects of the HF in Maine?

How did the Harvest Fund money help you (or hinder you)?

At the time?

Later?

What would you have done if you had had less funding (no HF money)?

What would you have done had you had more HF funding?

How much more funding would you have liked?

If you could receive another HF grant, what would you do with it?

How much would you need to this out?

Where else could you get funding?

Did you receive anything other than funding?

Prompts: Advice? Technical assistance? Connections to other organizations and resource?

(Interviewer lists HF goals.)

What more could the HF (or another fund/agency) have done/do to help your organization meet HF goals

Prompts: Advice? Technical assistance? Connections to other organizations and resource?

What other funds/agencies help your organization meet HF goals?

How?

How did/does the funded project fit with HF goals?

How does your organization's overall work fit in with HF goals?

Prompts: How does sustainability fit in with your organization's mission? Do you see your organization as part of a global movement? and/or as serving a specific local need?

What should the HF be doing in the future?

Explain.

What do you see as the critical issues when it comes to sustainable ag/food security in Maine or in your community?

Explain.

(Follow up questions. Ask about issues with grant size and time frame if not mentioned earlier.)

(Clarifying questions.)



The Harvest Fund

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