Incubator Farm

A land-based, multi-grower project that provides access to land, infrastructure, and training and technical assistance to aspiring and beginning farmers. New Entry Sustainable Farming Project coordinates the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI), which will be renamed the FIELD Network in 2020 (Farm Incubation and Education through Land-Based skills Development). We conduct a yearly survey of incubator farm projects (IFPs), for 2019 data, 27 IFPs completed the survey, the majority having been in operation for 6-10 years. The average plot size offered to a farmer ranges from 0.25 to 3 acres of land and most incubators host between 5-9 businesses on the land for a 3-5 year period.

More info: www.nesfp.org/nifti

2019 Incubator Farm Projects (IFPs)

Top Production Items

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<tr>
<th>Vegetables</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Flowers</th>
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<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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Years in Operation

- Pre-launch: 0-2 yr
- 2-5 yrs: 23%
- 6-10 yrs: 30%
- 11-19 yrs: 12%
- 20+ yrs: 2%

The Top Challenges for IFPs

1. **FUNDING**
   - Most IFPs funding comes from federal grants and then foundation grants. Only very small proportion comes from earned revenue and farmer fees.

2. **ACCESS TO LAND**
   - 64% lease land
   - 23% own land
   - 14% lease and own land
   - most plot sizes are <1 acre

3. **LANGUAGE BARRIERS**
   - 46% of IFPs offer multilingual programming and support.
   - 49% of participants are refugees or immigrants.

4. **RECRUITMENT**
   - The most effective recruitment practice was word of mouth. Other successful practices included: through relationships with partner organizations, farm website/other websites, listservs/email lists, posting in the local community, and social media.

Demographics

- Participants range in age from 20–82.
- 73,000 pounds of produce was donated in the year by 7 IFPs.
- 75% of IFPs donated food to food banks and community.
- US born: 30%
- Low Income: 23%
- Refugee: 3%
- Immigrant: 12%

How IFPs address barriers to entry into farming as participants transition towards independent operation

- 53% ongoing technical assistance
- 53% participating in programs that link new farmers with farmland
- 47% support to access to capital including grants, loans, etc
- 40% helping participants to learn how to find their own farmland
- 33% ongoing marketing support
- 27% providing access to infrastructure (irrigation, greenhouses, etc)
- 20% providing access to equipment (tractors, tools, etc)