

Eastern Oregon University Community Garden

Social Problem: One third of children are overweight and/or obese and have minimal access to whole foods on a daily basis. Children rely heavily on processed foods that do not provide the necessary nutrients for a healthy diet. This is evident in our Oregon public schools where, despite their goal of implementing the Oregon Wellness plan, have difficulty doing so due to the high cost of providing foods to children. School districts are struggling to succeed under this initiative. The children are put at risk due to poor diets and limited physical activity, which will lead to higher rates of obesity in adulthood.

Solution and Product: Our solution to the problem is to provide opportunities for local children to experience the entire agricultural process of food production, growing, harvesting, cleaning, and processing of organic foods. The Eastern Oregon University (EOU) Community Garden will provide fresh, whole produce to public schools in the La Grande, Oregon School District. This will be a solution to the two major issues of healthy food access and physical activity. Students will have the opportunity to experience all of these aspects of a healthy lifestyle in an outdoor setting through the development of the gardens on the EOU campus. In addition, in the classroom using educational programs they can share with their friends and family while receiving a tangible healthy reward.

Services and Program: The services are multi-faceted with a focus on providing less expensive whole foods to our local school children while simultaneously educating them about a healthy lifestyle. This will be achieved through:

- Cooperative educational food related programs between EOU and the School District through the involvement and mentoring of college with K-12 students.
- Lower food costs, which promotes regional sustainability. This includes limiting the cost of shipping foods into our region, which will reduce our carbon footprint. This includes the La Grande School District summer food program.
- Sustainable garden workshops throughout the region.
- Marketing of heirloom seeds to the region, which encourages increased plant diversity and food sustainability. K-12 children will be directly involved in the collection, preservation and marketing of the seeds.

Market Analysis/Targeted Population: According to the Oregon Health authority obesity rates in Oregon have jumped 121% since 1990. Among youth, obesity increased more than 50% between 2001 and 2009. Nearly 27% of eighth-graders and 24% of 11th graders were overweight or obese in 2009. Fueling these increases are high rates of physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Katrina Hedberg, M.D. M.P.H., State Epidemiologist reports that, “obesity-related illnesses kill about 1,400 Oregonians a year, making obesity the second leading cause of preventable death after smoking.” The Centers for Disease Control and National Institutes of Health report that obesity-related chronic diseases cost Oregonians about \$1.6 billion in medical expenses each year, with \$339 million of that paid by Medicare and \$333 million paid by Medicaid. This is also reflected in La Grande, Oregon where one third of our children have been documented as overweight and/or obese. There are seven schools (2,166 students) in the La Grande School District that would benefit from this program.

Financial Plan:**Start Up Funds (Year 1-2)**

\$150,000	Full-time Coordinator (salary, benefits, and fringe)
\$25,000	Plants (seeds/trees)
\$15,000	Wildlife proof fencing (one time cost)
\$1080	Phone
\$5,000	Equipment and supplies (one time cost)

In-Kind Funds (Year 1)

\$6,000	EOU donated office space and utilities per year
\$300,000	EOU donated land (10 acres)
\$2,000	Advertising with local media owners
\$3,000	Donated compost and amendments from local farmers and ranchers
\$88,000	100 volunteers at \$8.80 (minimum wage equivalent) for 100 hours each
\$25,000	Equipment, maintenance, and fuel provided by local volunteers
\$5,000	School pick-up of food (using own vehicles)

Direct Sales: (Starting Year 1)

\$50,000	Sale of produce to the schools
\$12,000	Educational conference on community gardens
\$15,000	Sale of heirloom seeds (based on analysis done spring 2012)

Long-term Financial Goals: Expanding the Eastern Oregon University Community Garden project to the rest of Union County public schools and partnering with neighboring county school districts to grow similar programs. There is available land owned by EOU where the project could expand, including 853 acres of nearby farmland. Additional areas are available in nearby Baker and Wallowa Counties in order to provide the same type of services to their local schools. This educational program would be achieved through the efforts of our Full-time Coordinator as well as EOU student interns.

Impact Summary: The Eastern Oregon Community Garden will provide both supplemental whole foods and the opportunity to experience the entire food production process to students in the La Grande School District. Researchers have shown that children are more likely to choose whole foods if they are involved in the entire production process (Findholt, Jerofke, Michael and Brogoitti 2010). Our region is able to become more sustainable in terms of the availability of healthy, whole foods. Specifically, our children will have available to them the knowledge of the importance of whole foods, as well as the joy associated with eating them. Finally, the EOU Community Garden leads to a healthier and sustainable community joined together in the common goal of improving access to healthy whole foods for our children.