



Farm-Based Education & Training  
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## Highlights of our accomplishments July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

Programmatic accomplishments. During this reporting period we offered several educational and training programs:

- 1) Our Farm Business Incubator Program served three new American beginning farmers in 2014, providing land, infrastructure, equipment, support services, training, and mentoring to assist them in launching their farm businesses. In 2015 we enrolled 3 additional farmers in the program. Two farmers have had to drop out of the program for health and personal reasons, leaving 4 farmers now working on the site in 2015. Three of the four participants at our Incubator Farm are new Americans, two from Myanmar and one from Armenia. The fourth “participant” is a group of people with developmental disabilities who are working with Challenge Workforce Solutions staff to develop a cut flower business.
- 2) Our winter Farm Business Planning Course engaged 12 beginning farmers in a ten-week, intensive class, offered in partnership with Alternatives Credit Union’s Business Cents Program and CCETC.
- 3) The 2015 Year-Round High Tunnels class began in January and runs through November with monthly sessions engaging 23 trainees.
- 4) The Finger Lakes Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) engaged 58 participants in 2014 and 32 so far in 2015. This program runs May-October with monthly farm tours and workshops at 6 Mentor Farms.
- 5) Draft Animals Practicum: September 20-21, 2014, engaged 14 trainees and 5 experienced teamsters who served as Farmer Educators. The Spring Practicum, May 2-3 2015, engaged eight trainees.
- 6) We coordinate several peer-to-peer learning groups:
  - i) Our Cooperative Farming Network engages 50 people in an interactive email listserv. Smaller numbers participate in the monthly network meetings.
  - ii) Finger Lakes Orchards Exchange. This peer-to-peer network was organized by graduates of our 2014 Holistic Organic Orchards Management Course. They have been meeting monthly to continue sharing knowledge and support, however participation during the growing season has been low.
  - iii) Our Homestead Farmers & Gardeners Network hosts monthly gatherings during the growing season. 29 people are currently enrolled although smaller numbers participate in each gathering.

Organizational accomplishments:

- We received a second three-year grant from USDA’s Beginning Farmer & Rancher Development Program totaling \$707,726.

- We received a fourth year of funding in the amount of \$50K from the Park Foundation for general support.
- We rented an awesome, versatile office space right next to Agway, which enables us to host meetings, classes and small events right in our own space.
- We continued to strengthen Advisory Board leadership and engagement in preparation for transition to a new Director in March 2016; recruited 3 new Board members; Launched a strategic planning process.
- Our Advisory Board and staff worked together, very effectively, to conduct a rigorous search process, and hired Becca Rimmel as our new full-time Education Program Manager.

Communications & Engagement. We participated in community and regional events including the NY Veterans in Agriculture Summit, Feeding Our Future Food Systems Networking events, Finger Lakes Social Entrepreneurship Institute, Food Justice Summit, and the new Food Policy Council Planning Group. We published 12 monthly e-newsletters describing our programs, trainees, and volunteers, transitioning from MadMimi email marketing service to MailChimp. We rebuilt our website and blog, moving from a Joomla platform to Wordpress. We greatly increased our use of Facebook and also began actively using Instagram. We are continuing to integrate our CiviCRM database with the new Wordpress site and MailChimp to streamline our contacts management and communications.

**As a Project of the non-profit Center for Transformative Action, Groundswell seeks to uphold the following principles of transformative action:**

- *Breaking the silence that surrounds injustice*
- *Building an inclusive movement across social and ideological differences, so that adversaries can become allies*
- *Articulating an inspiring, proactive vision*

Groundswell has a strong commitment to supporting beginning farmers from historically disadvantaged populations, including people of color, immigrants, and those with very limited economic resources, who have often been excluded from the sustainable farming and local foods movements. Our goal is to foster a new generation of farmers that reflects the diversity of culture, color, and class in our region. We believe Groundswell's ongoing efforts to build relationships with communities and individuals of color, our procedures for trainee outreach, application and enrollment, and our efforts to educate ourselves regarding racism and white privilege, are helping us to begin to address the injustices inherent in our food and farming system, specifically relating to opportunities and barriers for "socially disadvantaged" beginning farmers.

**Groundswell is helping to build an inclusive community that works for everyone.** We are working hard to find ways to support aspiring farmers from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Three of the four participants at our Incubator Farm are new Americans (two from Myanmar and one from Armenia). The fourth "participant" is a group of people with developmental disabilities who are working with Challenge Workforce Solutions staff to develop a cut flower business. We know that it is much easier to support aspiring farmers who do not face cultural and language barriers, and who have ready access to resources and support networks. But we are committed to eliminating the barriers facing people who would otherwise not have the opportunity to become farmers and to own their own businesses.

**Emerging collaboration with Cornell's Community Food Systems Minor**

In April of 2015 Groundswell was asked by faculty leaders of the new university-wide Community Food

Systems Minor to become one of six “Community Partner” organizations. The concept – still in development - is that Groundswell will host and mentor students from the Community Food Systems minor in an internship-style “practicum” beginning in 2017. We will be working over the next year with Cornell partners to develop a memorandum of understanding describing what students will do and how Groundswell will be compensated for our work as community partners to train and mentor students.

#### **Groundswell Advisory Board members**

- Olivia Armstrong [therhc@hotmail.com](mailto:therhc@hotmail.com)
- Peter Bardaglio, [pbardaglio@gmail.com](mailto:pbardaglio@gmail.com)
- Sharon Clarke, [sclarkenc@gmail.com](mailto:sclarkenc@gmail.com)
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- Matthew Weiss [mw84@cornell.edu](mailto:mw84@cornell.edu)
- Mary Kate Wheeler [marykatewheeler@gmail.com](mailto:marykatewheeler@gmail.com)

#### **Staff**

- Joanna Green, Director, [Joanna@groundswellcenter.org](mailto:Joanna@groundswellcenter.org)
- Devon Van Noble, Incubator Coordinator, [Devon@groundswellcenter.org](mailto:Devon@groundswellcenter.org)
- Becca Rimmel, Education Program Manager, [Becca@groundswellcenter.org](mailto:Becca@groundswellcenter.org)
- Rafael Aponte, Outreach Specialist, [Rafa@groundswellcenter.org](mailto:Rafa@groundswellcenter.org)

#### **Current Regular Volunteers**

- Genevieve De Clerck, Database Guru, [gad14@cornell.edu](mailto:gad14@cornell.edu) (also a Contractor)
- Advisory Board (see above)
- Partner Farmers:
  - Donn Hewes, [tripletree@frontiernet.net](mailto:tripletree@frontiernet.net)
  - Maryrose Livingston, [tripletree@frontiernet.net](mailto:tripletree@frontiernet.net)
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  - Sally Wessels