

Sample Specialty Crop Competitive Grant

Lettuce Trials

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Alaska Grown Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

SAMPLE PROPOSAL

Problem Statement

As a producer trying to tap into the food service industry in Alaska, I have had difficulty finding a lettuce variety that both performs well in Alaska and is desirable to Chefs. Interest in buying local and supporting Alaska Grown farmers seems to be on the rise. This project is both timely and important because it will identify lettuce varieties that meet the needs of both the producer and the end users which could potentially increase the utilization of Alaska Grown in the food service industry.

Goals & Objectives

This project will develop a valuable resource for all farmers' market managers in Alaska, both established, start-up and potential managers. All farmers' market managers, vendors, and potential participants will directly benefit from the development of this guide book.

Goal #1

Identify 15 lettuce varieties that perform well in Alaska.

Objectives for goal #1

- Perform variety trials, tracking all costs including input needs, pests, yield, etc.
- Prepare a written report including professional quality photos of growth stages, maturity dates, harvest characteristics, post-harvest handling performance, etc.

Goal #2

Rank the top 15 varieties by Chefs preferences.

Objectives for goal #2

- Perform taste testing evaluations with at least 10 professional Alaska Chefs.
- Prepare a written report documenting all comments, rankings and preferences.

Goal #3

Increase familiarity amongst Alaska Grown lettuce farmers and Alaska Chefs.

Objectives for goal #3

- Host an "Alaska Grown Lettuce Day" event on the farm.
- Invite area farmers to tour the test plots.
- Invite Chefs to share their comments and preferences with the growers.

Project Description

As soon as funds are awarded, work will begin on the project.

Perform variety trials, tracking all costs including input needs, pests, yield, etc.

- First I will poll the 15 Alaska lettuce producers to identify lettuce varieties that they are currently using. This will eliminate unnecessary research.
- I will purchase 30 different seed types for the variety trials. Joe Smith of UAF has agreed to perform the variety trials on my farm to ensure scientific results. A letter of support from Joe Smith is attached.

Prepare a written report including professional quality photos of growth stages, maturity dates, harvest characteristics, post-harvest handling performance, etc.

- Joe Smith of UAF has also agreed to assist me in creating the written report that will document the variety trials.

Perform taste testing evaluations with at least 10 professional Alaska Chefs.

- 10 Alaska Chefs have agreed to participate in a taste test event to help evaluate which lettuce varieties present desired characteristics including flavor, color, texture, shape and size. A list of the 10 chefs is attached.

Prepare a written report documenting all comments, rankings and preferences.

- I have created a score sheet with guidance from Barb Jones of the Alaska Culinary Institute. All 10 chefs have agreed to provide feedback with the form. After completion of the taste test event, all of the score sheet information will be compiled into a written report. Barb Jones has agreed to compile the information using industry standards. An email expressing her support of the project is attached.

Host an “Alaska Grown Lettuce Day” event on the farm.

- The 10 chefs have agreed to participate in the Lettuce Day activities at the farm including taste testing and evaluating all 30 varieties. They will also participate in the ‘meet & greet’ with the farmers who attend.

Invite area farmers to tour the test plots.

- I will work with Division of Agriculture staff to identify growers in the south central area to invite to the Lettuce Day event. I will prepare and send an email invitation as well as create a poster to be distributed to CES offices and linked to the Division’s online calendar.

Invite Chefs to share their comments and preferences with the growers.

- I will ask the Chefs to each pick a lettuce to highlight to the group of growers, discussing what qualities make it the most desirable or the food service industry.

The timeline for completing the above is:

<u>Time</u>	<u>Goals</u>
Oct – Dec	Poll farmers for lettuce varieties. Order seeds and variety trial supplies.
Jan – Mar	
Apr – Jun	Plant lettuce seeds.
Jul – Sep	Conduct research. Host Lettuce Day.
Oct – Dec	Prepare and distribute written reports.
Jan – Mar	Present findings at Produce Growers Conference.

Measurable Outcomes

Success of the project will be measured in a number of ways:

- The written report documenting the research trials will be available by request only to allow me to track the number of farmers who request the information. I anticipate at least 15 producers will request the information.
- The written report documenting the taste-test information will be available by request only to allow me to track the number of people who request the information. I anticipate that at least 15 producers and 15 chefs will request the information.
- The Alaska Grown Lettuce Day event will be considered a success if at least 15 producers attend. 10 chefs have already agreed to participate in the taste-test and evaluation portion of the event. Additional chefs will be invited. The event will be considered a success if at least 10 additional chefs participate.

Budget

Cost Category	Requested Dollars
Personnel (salary and benefits)	4400
Supplies (printing, mailing, etc)	5600
TOTALS:	\$10,000

Budget Description:

Personnel:

Field Trial Research: 200 hours x \$20/hour \$4000
 This is representative of ½ the time Joe Smith estimated it would take to conduct these research trials. UAF has agreed to pay ½ of his time for the project.

Taste Test Research: 20 hours x \$20/hour \$400

Supplies:

Seeds 30 varieties \$1000
 Shipping \$50

Compost & Fertilizer \$1000

Row cover \$2000

Field trial tools: stakes, clipboards, lettuce knives, harvest totes \$500

Document preparation supplies: printer cartridge, photo paper \$500

Taste test supplies: knives, plates clipboards \$550

April 21, 2011

Dear Mrs Pettit,

My name is Joe Smith and I am a research technician at UAF. I am excited to support Tom Jones Lettuce Trial project. I have extensive knowledge in field trial design and implementation as well as report writing. I look forward to this opportunity to assist Alaska Grown producers in their efforts to expand their markets.

If you have any questions, please contact me at JoeSmith@abc.com

Sincerely,

Joe Smith

My name is Barb Jones and I am the director of the Alaska Culinary Institute(ACI). We do a variety of Chef trainings, product testing and other food service related activities at ACI. I look forward to working with Tom Jones on his Lettuce Trial project. This effort is the first of its kind and could prove to be quite instrumental in increasing the use of Alaska Grown products in area restaurants. I am impressed with the list of Chefs that Tom has compiled and look forward to meeting the producers.

Sincerely,
Barb Jones

List of participating Chefs:

Chef Paul Simon
Chef Dave Matthews
Chef Hank Williams Jr.
Chef Willie Nelson
Chef Alison Krauss
Chef Martina McBride
Chef John Cash
Chef John Mayer
Chef Jewel
Chef Jason Aldean