



## **Apples, Carrots and Cows Call in the Executive Service Corps**

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A unique collaboration of local, state, federal agencies and organizations including the Executive Service Corps and private business consultants have been working to create business plans to improve chances for success for 20 small farms in New Hampshire.

The project, called the NH Agricultural Innovation Program (NHAIP), began when the North Country Resource Conservation and Development Area Council (RC&D), a non profit organization which cooperates with USDA and other public and private partners to advance natural resource conservation and related economic and community improvement, assembled a group which included the Southern NH Resource Conservation and Development Council, UNH Cooperative Extension Service, the NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets and Food, and the NH Farm Bureau Federation to pursue a grant from the USDA Rural Development Agency.

The goal of the NHAIP is to increase the business viability of beginning or transitioning small farms in NH. The funding is being used to establish a business plan support teams to work with farmers to establish and implement effective business plans. Charlene Andersen, a marketing consultant for Kamigo Marketing coordinates the project.

To facilitate the business plan component of the project, RC&D called on the Executive Service Corps (ESC) a nonprofit, volunteer organization of business experts who specialize in working with nonprofits and others on a wide range of issues. ESC volunteers serve as members of several of the business assistance teams and have supplied expertise in business planning, finance, and marketing applied to the specific needs of each farm.

Apple Annie produces low-spray apples in Exeter. The continued viability of the farm is important as the land around it succumbs to high priced housing development. ESC Consultant Lyn Rosoff, a marketing consultant provided pricing strategies, marketing materials improvements and improved outreach. Added to technical advice from other members of the team on crop strategies and equipment innovation, increased profitability of the farm is likely.

The Swain Family Farm is a small dairy farm in Sanbornton, which has a goal of developing a bottling operation as a way to help sustain the farm. ESC consultant, Tom Mongeon is helping the Swains achieve that goal.

At Bickford's Farm in New Durham, ESC consultant Richard van Bergen, skilled in marketing and finance and other agricultural experts worked to create a business plan to optimize current production as well as gradual introduction of additional product lines, all of which hold the promise of survival for this small fourth generation family farm.

ESC consultants Tom Mongeon and Bill Gould worked with Char-Belle Farm in Hooksett to develop community gardens and a children's learning facility aimed at furthering appreciation of agriculture. Says Roger Charbonneau of Char-Belle, "The consultants guided me through comprehensive business

planning analyses which resulted in realization of my true passion and plans to implement it in a viable business”.

All of the ESC consultants and farmers found the collaboration productive and enjoyable. Says consultant Mongeon, “I have found it very rewarding to guide farmers to define and plan their new business while identifying customer strategies and analyzing potential profitability”.

For more information on the Executive Service Corps, contact Michael Daily at (603) 362-9300, [mne@escne.org](mailto:mne@escne.org) or [www.nonprofit-consultants.org](http://www.nonprofit-consultants.org)

For more information on the NH Agricultural Innovation Program, as well as other projects and programs coordinated by the North Country RC&D Council contact Richard DeMark at (603) 527-2093 or visit [www.nhrcd.net](http://www.nhrcd.net).