

FarmLab Study
Phase 1 - Needs Assessment
Appendix I - Questions

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The proposed mission and aims for the FarmLab project cover a broad range of issues and activities bridging agriculture and education in Elkhart County:

The FarmLab is a farm-based education center that:

- Sustains and expands local agricultural knowledge
- Promotes agricultural career pathways
- Preserves agricultural land and productivity
- Improves access to local, healthy food
- Opens new markets for local food production

Phase 1 of this feasibility study surfaced many questions related to how these aims can connect with and support existing needs and resources. Some of these questions are addressed in the current report. Others are more complex and represent potential targets to guide further inquiry. All together, the questions below are intended to help frame the different dimensions of each aim, and the project as a whole, while beginning to focus on specific issues and considerations for further study.

1. Agricultural Knowledge:

- 1.1. What are the best ways to enhance agricultural knowledge while meeting standards?
- 1.2. What are the best resources for developing agricultural-related curriculum?
- 1.3. Where might such efforts best be focused?
- 1.4. What might be the best ways to use the pursuit of agricultural knowledge to improve overall instruction, promote innovation, and create an engaged and enthusiastic learning climate?
- 1.5. What are the best systems for training teachers and administrators to take advantage of existing and emerging opportunities?
- 1.6. Where in the community are there other contexts, beyond the schools, for improving local food literacy?

2. Agricultural Careers:

- 2.1. How might the concept of agricultural education be expanded to include food literacy at all grade levels using innovative strategies?
- 2.2. How might teachers across ages and disciplines learn to integrate agricultural education throughout the curriculum?
- 2.3. What capacities might enable Elkhart County's many small commercial farms to become more productive and create more opportunities for livelihood?
- 2.4. What might attract younger people from within or outside the community to see farming as a viable option?
- 2.5. What education or training do potential farmers need?
- 2.6. In what ways do traditional farming practices need to change in order to take advantage of potential innovations?
- 2.7. What shifting attitudes might be required for educators to see agriculture as more than "plows, cows, and sows" and how might those attitudes be addressed?

3. Agricultural Land:

- 3.1. What issues could be addressed at either the community level or the policy level to make farmland more affordable and accessible?
- 3.2. What kinds of policy shifts are necessary to protect existing farmland from further development?
- 3.3. What relationships and communication channels need to be built to facilitate farmers' access to best practices for farmland management?
- 3.4. What kinds of local support mechanisms might further incentivize innovation?
- 3.5. What kinds of social and economic structures need to exist in order to facilitate broad community support for and investment in sustainable agricultural management practices?
- 3.6. What kinds of social and economic structures need to exist in order to support the stewardship role of local farmers?

4. Access to Local Healthy Food:

- 4.1. What resources exist and which ones need to be developed in order to address poverty, nutrition, and healthy food access issues for food insecure families?
- 4.2. What steps need to be taken to bridge communication gaps between producers and consumers?
- 4.3. What steps need to be taken to facilitate new local supply chains between producers and potential markets?

- 4.4. Where will support, facilitation and resources most likely be found to pursue necessary infrastructure development?

5. New Markets for Local Food Production:

- 5.1. Where are the key intersections for establishing the relationships necessary to successful local marketing?
- 5.2. What kinds of education for both producers and consumers would best facilitate the relationship paradigm?
- 5.3. What distribution networks already exist locally and which ones need to be established in order for growers to gain access to available markets?
- 5.4. What products do growers need to produce in order to fill local demands?
- 5.5. How can networking opportunities be best pursued and where is the leadership capacity most likely to be found for such an effort?