

Organization Interview Protocol

The purpose of interviewing North Country organizations working to support connections between local and regional food producers and local and regional consumers is to: (1) understand what each organization is doing to explore opportunities for collaboration on a regional basis and (2) understand the impacts these organizations have on farms and communities in the North Country.

Along these lines, the guiding questions for the interviews (i.e., questions the investigator must keep in mind during the interview) are:

1. Why does this organization support local and regional food connections?
2. How does this organization support local and regional food connections?
3. What would enhance this organization's ability to support local and regional food connections?
4. How might collaborative work with this organization strengthen local/regional food initiatives in the North Country?

Each organization we interview will have as one of its primary programming areas support for "local and regional food" markets (retail and wholesale), supporting connections between local and regional producers and consumers. Working together, the North Country Regional Foods Initiative project team will identify organizations that meet these criteria. To the extent possible, we will strive to include organizations within each of the six North Country counties involved in the Initiative.

Once the organizations have been identified, the organizational interviews will be implemented as follows:

1. Extension educators will send a letter introducing the project and requesting an opportunity to interview a representative of the organization to the director of the organization (*see "Letter of Introduction" included in this document*).
2. Three days after the educator has sent the letter, the educator will call the executive director of the organization, reference the letter and the project, and request an opportunity to interview him or her, or a designated representative of the director.
 - a. If the director agrees, the educator will schedule a meeting.
 - b. If the director declines to meet, the educator will ask if the director would be willing to reconsider given more information about the project.
 - i. If the Director agrees, the educator will call Katherine or Heidi to share more information.
 1. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the Director is then willing to participate, the educator will be advised to contact the Director and schedule a meeting.

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2. If, after conversing with Katherine or Heidi, the Director is still unwilling to participate, Katherine or Heidi will thank the Director for his or her time.
 - ii. If the Director disagrees, the educator will thank the Director for his or her time.
3. Once the meeting has been scheduled, the educator will send a confirmation letter (*See "Confirmation Letter" below*), indicating the time, and referencing the following documents which will be included in the confirmation letter mailing
 - a. The Human Subjects approved informed consent form (double-sided)
 - b. The 'Organization Interview Guide'
 - c. The 'Organization Background Information Form' (double-sided)
4. Before going to the scheduled meeting the educator should print the following materials to share with the interviewee during the interview: (1) Two copies of the informed consent form; and (2) A second copy of the "Organization Background" form, and a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang at CCE St. Lawrence County, which should be used for returning the completed "Organization Background" form.
5. The educator will then meet with the Director or Representative as scheduled to conduct the interview according to the following protocol:
 - a. After introducing herself, the educator will hand the director a second copy of the informed consent form and read the form with the director.
 - b. The educator will then ask the Director/Representative if he or she has any questions about the project and the informed consent form.
 - c. The educator will then ask the Director/Representative to share his or her understanding of the project.
 - i. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the Director/Representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the Director's files and one for the project files (send this one to Heidi at CaRDI).
 - ii. If the understanding is not accurate, the educator will clarify the issue at hand and assess the Director's/Representative's understanding again.
 1. If the understanding is accurate, the educator will ask the Director/Representative to sign two copies of the informed consent form; one for the Director's files and one for the project files.
6. Once the informed consent form has been signed, the educator will:
 - a. If given permission to do so during the informed consent process, turn on a tape recorder and proceed with the interview, also taking notes.
 - b. If not given permission to use a tape recorder, proceed with the interview, recording it with notes only.
7. At the end of the interview, the educator should:
 - a. Introduce the form we are asking them to fill out on their own
 - b. Address any questions or let them know their question will be addressed by the project coordinators

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- c. Ask that the completed form be returned in a pre-addressed, stamped envelope within one week's time.
 - d. Thank the Director/Representative for his or her time, and remind him or her that we will send them a draft copy of any publications relating to their interview, for their approval prior to publication and a final copy of the published document.
8. Once back at the office, within two days of the interview, the educator should:
 - a. Send the Director/Representative a signed thank you note, including a reminder to complete the "Organization Background" form, and a second copy of the form, along with a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang.
 - b. If the form has not been received within two weeks of the interview, follow-up with a reminder that we need the form, and a third copy of the form, along with a stamped, return envelope addressed to Katherine Lang
 - c. Send the signed informed consent form to Heidi
 - d. Send the interview notes (one copy each) to Katherine and Heidi.
9. No more than six months after the interview, destroy the interview tapes (Heidi).
10. No more than three years after the interview, destroy the interview notes and data (Heidi).

Organization Interview Letter of Introduction

***To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.*

Business Name

Business Address Line 1

Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Organization Director]:

I am an Educator, specializing in _____, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of _____ County. I would like to interview you about your organization as part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. You may have read about this project in the paper. The purpose of this study is to document the impact local/regional marketing has on a farm or food business, and the role local food markets play in North Country community and economic development. Ultimately, our goal is to use this impact analysis to help the North Country better support farm and food businesses utilizing local and regional markets to sell their farm and food products.

Specifically, we would like to interview you about [the name of the organization] to better understand how and why organizations in the North Country are supporting local and regional food initiatives, and how your efforts might be better supported through a regional approach. As you know, there are many New York farmers who are interested in direct marketing and local foods. Furthermore, there are many consumers who are interested in knowing where and how their food is produced. Learning about your organization will help us to better understand the impacts of and opportunities for local and regional foods in the North Country.

This interview should take about 1 hour. I will call you in a couple of days to follow-up on this letter and, if you are willing to participate in our study, set up a time when we can meet to do the interview.

Thanks very much for your time,

Sincerely,

[Name of Interviewer]

Organization Interview Confirmation Letter

***To be printed on letterhead of the Association staff conducting the interview.*

Business Name

Business Address Line 1

Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Organization Director]:

On behalf of the North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in our study of the social and economic impacts of local and regional food markets in the North Country.

This letter is to confirm that you've agreed to be interviewed by me on [day of the week, Month, date] at [time of the day.] As we discussed, I will meet you at [location where you agreed to conduct the meeting.]

In preparation for the meeting, I've enclosed the *interview guide* I will be using to talk with you about your organization and an "*informed consent form.*" The informed consent form describes the focus of our study, the nature of the questions I will be asking you and your rights as a participant in the study. Although I will go over both the interview guide and the informed consent form with you prior to the start of our interview, please read both of these documents prior to our scheduled interview time and call me if you have any questions or concerns about either document. My number is [interviewer's phone number.]

Thanks again and know I look forward to talking to you soon.

Sincerely,

[Interviewer's name.]

Organization Interview Guide

Interview Introduction and Informed Consent Review

***Hand form to interviewee prior to reading the statement below.*

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. As I mentioned, I am an Educator, specializing in _____, with Cornell Cooperative Extension of _____ County. This interview is part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. You may have read about this project in the paper. It is designed to understand the impacts of regional (including local) foods in the North Country and identify ways to enhance positive impacts for the benefit of North Country farmers and communities. Towards this end, we have identified several organizations like this one which support local and regional food markets and are interviewing them to (1) understand their work and the impacts it has in the North Country and (2) explore ways we might collaborate in support of that work.

The information we will be asking you to share includes some financial data about the organization. This and the other information you will be providing with us WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with that of other direct marketing/local foods organizations will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment in the region. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.* You may contact Cornell University’s Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at uchs@cornell.edu, phone (607-255-5138) and website (<http://www.irb.cornell.edu>).

***Interviewer breaks from reading the informed consent form to address the following:*

Do you understand these conditions? If so, please tell me what your role in this project is and the rights you have as a participant in this study.

If not, please let me know what I haven’t explained sufficiently. [Clarify anything that the interviewee was unclear about.]

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*\*Once it is clear that the interviewee understands the project, his/her role in it, and his/her rights, continue on to finish reading and ask them to sign the informed consent form:*

*Organization Interview Guide*

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published.

I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to agreeing to participate, I hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ / do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ or do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Interviewee)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

Project Coordinator Contact Information:

Katherine Lang  
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension  
1894 State Highway 68  
Canton, NY 13617  
Phone: 315-379-9192  
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman  
Community and Rural Development Institute  
Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall  
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853  
Phone: 607-255-0417  
Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

\*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on January 29, 2008.

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**North Country Regional Food Initiative Organization Study**

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed. This study is part of a project called the *North Country Regional Foods Initiative*. You may have read about this project in the paper. It is designed to understand the impacts of regional (including local) foods in the North Country and identify ways to enhance positive impacts for the benefit of North Country farmers and communities. Towards this end, we have identified several organizations like this one which support local and regional food markets and are interviewing them to (1) understand their work and the impacts it has in the North Country and (2) explore ways we might collaborate in support of that work.

This interview should take about 1 hour. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. However, you are in no way obligated to participate in it. You will not be penalized in any way if you decline to participate in it. You may ask questions about the study both before committing to participate in it and at any time throughout the study. If you do choose to participate in the study, we would like to tape record our interview with you so we have something to refer to, to check facts. You may refuse to have the interview taped and still participate in the study. If you grant us permission to use the tape recorder, you may request that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. We will destroy the tapes no later than six months after the interview. We will destroy the interview guide notes and data no later than three years after the interview. You may also refuse to answer any question at any time and you may choose to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time.

The information we will be asking you to share includes some financial data about the organization. This and the other information you will be providing with us WILL be published in a research report. However, in no way will your name or other identifying factors be linked to individual economic data for publication purposes. Instead, this information along with that of other direct marketing/local foods organizations will be used to illustrate general estimates on levels of investment in the region. If there is something you prefer not to have publicly disclosed, please be sure to let me know. You will also be asked to review and approve any written materials before they are published. You will also be given a signed and dated copy of this consent form.\* You may contact Cornell University's Institutional Review Board (the institutional program that ensures studies are conducted in an ethical manner), with any questions, concerns or complaints. They can be contacted via: email at [uchs@cornell.edu](mailto:uchs@cornell.edu), phone (607-255-5138) and website (<http://www.irb.cornell.edu>).

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**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**  
**North Country Regional Food Initiative Organization Study**

I have read/heard and understand the above conditions for this interview. I understand that the information, including financial data about the organization, will be published in research reports exploring the impact of local and regional foods initiatives in the North Country. I acknowledge that I have been informed that I will have the opportunity to review and approve any written materials before they are published.

I hereby agree to participate in this interview.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to agreeing to participate, I hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ / do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to record this interview.

I also hereby give \_\_\_\_\_ or do not give \_\_\_\_\_ my permission for the North Country Regional Foods Initiative to include information about my organization in reports, and use the name of our organization in forthcoming publications.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Interviewee)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
(North Country Regional Foods Initiative Representative)

**Project Coordinator Contact Information:**

Katherine Lang  
St. Lawrence County Cooperative Extension  
1894 State Highway 68  
Canton, NY 13617  
Phone: 315-379-9192  
Email: kaa20@cornell.edu

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman  
Community and Rural Development Institute  
Development Sociology, 39 Warren Hall  
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853  
Phone: 607-255-0417  
Email: hmm1@cornell.edu

\*This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on January 29, 2008.

## *Organization Interview Guide*

Ok, let's get started.

1. Please describe the services provided or main goal (mission) of your non-profit organization.
2. What is your geographic focus?
3. How did it get started?
4. What is its organizational structure (nonprofit, not-for-profit, informal, etc.).
5. How is it organized in terms of staff and programming?

## *Organization Interview Guide*

6. Would you say that working to build and strengthen the local food system within your area is a primary goal of your organization --- a number one or two priority?
  - a. Please explain why.
  
7. Could you briefly describe the work your organization is doing in support of your goal to build and strengthen local/regional food systems and your major successes so far.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What would you say have been the impacts (i.e. social, economic, environmental) of your organization's work in support of local/regional food initiatives on the *individuals* and *communities* in the region you serve/North Country?

## *Organization Interview Guide*

9. Do you have any resources, which you've developed to promote local and regional foods (e.g. a local food guide)? [If so, is it on the web and at what address or could you send us a copy?]
  
10. What do you think are the strengths or assets within our region that position us to succeed in this local/regional foods work?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Where do you think there are gaps in our ability to pursue meaningful change in the local food system? In other words, what are the barriers you think must be overcome in order to build strong local food systems within the North Country.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. In what ways could we (a partnership of organizations and agencies working to support local/regional food initiatives) address these barriers?

## *Organization Interview Guide*

13. Would you be interested in being part of a “learning community or network of organizations working on local food projects in the North Country where you could share best practices, lessons learned and information with others?”

14. Do you have any suggestions for how such a learning community ought to function or be organized.

*\*\*\*Interviewer hands a copy of the “Organization Background Information” form to the interviewee, along with a self addressed envelope for returning the completed form to the project coordinators. (Use Katherine’s St. Lawrence County address). Interviewer should review the question with the interviewee before leaving.*

*Note: If this form has been completed in advance of the interview, please be sure to ask the participant if he or she wishes to change anything now that they’ve read and signed the informed consent form.*

## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM

- 1) Name of your organization \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Address \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2) Name/title of person completing this questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3) Current number of full time employees \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) Current number of part time employees \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) How many work 20 to 40 hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) How many work fewer than 20 hours per week? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) Total number of volunteers \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 6) Total number of volunteer hours per month (on average) \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 7) When was your organization formed? \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) How long has your organization been doing local foods work? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 8) What was the total revenue for your organization in 2007 or for the latest year that figures are available? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 9) What percentage of your total organization expenditures were spent in the North Country (defined as Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, & St. Lawrence Counties during 2007 (or for the latest year figures are available)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 10) What was the total amount of your organizational budget committed to support for local/regional food programming in 2007 (or for the latest year that figures are available)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 11) What was your organization's payroll cost in 2007 (or in the latest year that figures are available)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 12) What was the percentage of revenue for your organization from each source listed below in 2007? (or for the last year that figures are available - this should be readily available on your 2007-year-end financial statements)
  - a) Federal sources of revenues/grants/contracts \_\_\_\_\_%
  - b) State sources of revenues/grants/contracts \_\_\_\_\_%
  - c) County appropriations \_\_\_\_\_%
  - d) Other grants/contracts \_\_\_\_\_%
  - e) Contributions \_\_\_\_\_%
  - f) Investment earnings \_\_\_\_\_%
  - g) Program/operating revenues \_\_\_\_\_%
  - h) Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_%
  - i) Other revenues \_\_\_\_\_% (please explain: \_\_\_\_\_)
  - j) Total: 100%

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**ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND INFORMATION FORM**

- 13) What percentage of your revenue came from these sources in 2007 (or for the last year available)? \_\_\_\_\_
- a) Inside the North Country (again, defined as Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, & St. Lawrence Counties) \_\_\_\_\_%
  - b) Inside New York State but outside the North Country \_\_\_\_\_%
  - c) Outside of the state \_\_\_\_\_%
- 14) What percentage of your services, programs or clients are located outside of the North Country (as defined above)? \_\_\_\_\_%
- 15) Please circle the categories that best describe your non-profit organization? \_\_\_\_\_
- a) education
  - b) human services
  - c) arts and culture
  - d) health
  - e) economic assistance
  - f) recreational
  - g) other – please list category \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) Does your organization attract visitors to the North Country (as defined above) (circle one) yes no
- a) If yes please estimate the number of visitors your organization brings to the North Country each year: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) What percentage of these visitors stay in the North Country for one or more nights? \_\_\_\_\_%
  - c) If your organization coordinates events related to local foods (e.g. harvest festivals, local food dinners, etc.) that draw visitors from outside the North Country, please estimate the dollar income generated by those events in total dollars \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
- 17) Please describe any economic impact your organization has in the region that would be missed by previous questions.

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**Thank you!!!**

*Organization Interview Thank you Letter*

Business Name  
Business Address Line 1  
Business Address Line 2

Date

Dear [Organization Director]:

On behalf of the entire North Country Regional Food Initiative Project team, I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me about [insert the name of the organization] in the context of its support for local and regional food markets. You have helped provide us with a snapshot of how local food market opportunities impact farm and food businesses and communities in the North Country region. We are grateful to you for your time and insights.

We will be compiling and analyzing the information you and other organization representatives shared with us and publishing it in a report on the social and economic impacts of regional foods in the North Country. Before our report is published, you will have an opportunity to review the information you provided us to be sure it is accurate. Once the report is published, we will also send you a copy.

If you have any questions regarding this project, please call either of the two project coordinators of our regional initiative:

Katherine Lang, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, 315-379-9192,  
x 261

Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Community and Rural Development Institute, Cornell  
University, 607-255-0417

Sincerely,

[Interviewer's Name]