Spring 2015

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Signs: News from a Colleague in Mansfield, CT
A colleague in Connecticut followed up on information shared by our associate, Samantha Dunn, and applied for a Department of Transportation tourist attraction sign. Looking sharp!

YELLOW WOOD ASSOCIATES, INC.

About Yellow Wood Associates & Yellow Wood Notes
Yellow Wood Notes is a twice yearly publication of Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. We publish this newsletter to maintain contact and share ideas with friends, colleagues, and clients. We appreciate your feedback and suggestions.

Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. is a private, for-profit firm specializing in rural economic research and training for community capacity building since 1985. We provide clients with research services including feasibility studies and Green Community Technologies®; and training and facilitation services including WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators, See the Forest® and You Get What You Measure®. Our clients include small towns, nonprofit organizations, federal, state, and county governments, foundations, and the private sector. Staff: Shanna Ratner, Principal; Melissa Levy, Senior Associate; Samantha Dunn, Associate; Ginger Weil, Office Manager.
A Future for Forestry in Vermont

Yellow Wood has been working with the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) Forestry Subcommittee to study the forestry industry in Vermont. So far, Yellow Wood has completed a market sector analysis that included secondary research as well as key informant interviews with representatives throughout the industry. Yellow Wood also developed, implemented and analyzed a Forestry and Wood Products Sector Survey. We have just completed four focus groups with representatives of the forestry industry in four regions of the state, including the Northeast Kingdom, Northwest Vermont, Central Vermont and Southern Vermont.

From the focus groups, and with the help of the WLEB Forestry Subcommittee, Yellow Wood will be determining the most promising market opportunities for the forestry industry moving forward. These market opportunities will be the focus for the remainder of the project. Yellow Wood will be designing value chain workshops for 3–4 promising market opportunities and identifying gaps. A value chain is a business model in which independent producers, buyers and other players in the chain work together to create value and share risk and reward.

In the value chain workshops, we’ll be working with the forestry subcommittee to invite the right players for each market opportunity. At these workshops, we’ll be working with the value chain partners to map the value chain, determine what the gaps are in the chain, and figure out who else needs to be at the table.

Once the workshops are completed, Yellow Wood will review all the information that has been collected, synthesize the findings, and make recommendations on strategies and methods to strengthen the forestry and wood products industry through the development and support of promising value chains that will be responsive to market demand.

These strategies will be presented at a statewide summit to a wide audience. After the summit, there will be a final executive summary of findings for WLEB and for dissemination to the legislature and other promising parties. It will highlight issues that cut across subsectors, promising demand driven value chains and gaps to be addressed within sub-sectors.

WLEB will target resources toward interventions that will strengthen existing systems and create new market driven opportunities, and promote the forestry and wood products sector within the state.
Updates on our work

Hinesburg Economic Development
Melissa Levy and Samantha Dunn facilitated a public meeting in the Town of Hinesburg (where Melissa lives and is Chair of the Economic Development Commission). Using You Get What You Measure®, Melissa and Samantha walked participants through the process of writing indicators of progress toward three town economic development goals, and analyzing those indicators in a systems context to arrive at key leverage points for the three goals. The Commission is currently developing an economic development plan for the town using the key leverage points as the basis for strategies moving forward.

For the workshop summary we produced for the Town of Hinesburg, go to: http://yellowwood.org/hinesburg-economic-strategy-workshop-summary.html

Measuring the Impact of Community Conservation
Yellow Wood was asked to work with the Land Trust Alliance, a national conservation organization that works to save the places people love, to measure the impact of community conservation. The Alliance developed its community conservation program in an effort to listen to and engage people from all walks of life in conservation work so that it addresses community needs and helps people experience a deep connection to the land. The Alliance is interested in developing metrics to measure the impact of community conservation. Melissa Levy will be working with the Alliance and a variety of land trusts throughout the country to develop goals for community conservation and then identify indicators of progress. The result will be a set of measures that can be added to the National Land Trust Census and perhaps some that will be measured separately.

Walton Nature Based Tourism
Over the past year, Melissa Levy and Samantha Dunn have been working with nature-based tourism grantees of the Walton Family Foundation to inventory tourism assets, develop itineraries, identify gaps and potential partners, fine-tune goals, and develop measures of progress. In September, they traveled to Helena, Arkansas to meet with grantees, as well as individuals from the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee, Arkansas Game and Fish, City of Helena, Quapaw Canoe Company, and others to discuss goals and identify leverage points for the future of the Lower Mississippi River region around nature-based tourism. Yellow Wood was also working with Solimar International, a tourism consulting firm partner, on a tourism development plan for the City of Helena.
Updates on our work

Cornell Rural Urban Linkages
Shanna Ratner is working with Cornell University to facilitate working sessions with their research and extension advisory teams to systemically apply the WealthWorks theory of how wealth is created and retained in rural areas to the rural-urban linkages created by New York City’s Green Markets. This work will include the facilitation of two all-day meetings in Ithaca for researcher collaborators to fully conceptualize and articulate the rural wealth creation framework with respect to re-localization of food systems and urban-rural distribution of impacts; leadership and facilitation for one all-day meeting in Ithaca of the project’s core extension partners to refine conceptual framework and discuss appropriate metrics for case study evaluation; and internal consulting with the core project team, including reviewing and commenting on survey protocol and survey design, and support with data interpretation.

CODESPA and Opportunity International Nicaragua
In 2011, Opportunity International asked Yellow Wood to develop a conceptual framework for how an agricultural value adding enterprise (yucca processing) initiated by a nonprofit group (Opportunity International Nicaragua (OIN)) could be transferred to local ownership and control over a period of twenty years. This work formed the basis of a grant to Opportunity International from the Inter-American Development Bank to begin to implement the framework. OIN selected CODESPA Foundation as the prime contractor for this work and specifically requested Yellow Wood’s continued involvement. Yellow Wood is acting in an advisory capacity as well as conducting research on topics including alternative methods of contracting with growers, community savings groups, and supply chain logistics to determine which approaches are likely to yield greatest benefit for growers while contributing to the overall profitability of the value chain in processed yucca. Our work included a trip to Nicaragua to see conditions on the ground. On our visit to a farm, this gentleman brought along a bit of Nicaraguan wildlife!
Updates on our work

Rural Health Network of South Central New York

Yellow Wood continues to work with Rural Health Network of South Central New York (RHN) to evaluate their AmeriCorps program and provide technical assistance on designing and implementing evaluation changes required by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). This summer and fall, in addition to working with RHN we worked directly with eight organizations that host AmeriCorps members throughout Delaware, Tioga and Broome Counties to help develop and implement new data collection tools and processes. This technical assistance helped individual sites to better evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and RHN to understand the impacts (both individually and collectively) of the AmeriCorps members working in the region.

Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program

Yellow Wood wrapped up The Actual and Potential Impacts of Invasive Species on the Adirondack Park: A Preliminary Assessment for Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP), housed at The Nature Conservancy, last fall. This report is a first of its kind for the region, looking at current spending as well as potential economic impacts of invasive species on specific sectors. The report provides a preliminary foundation for informed discussion about economic risks of invasive species and associated costs and benefits of taking action. It is being used by a wide range of organizations and policy makers to inform decisions about appropriate spending and activities to protect the Adirondack Park from invasive species.

“This report enhances our understanding of invasive species’ impacts beyond the ecological. It shows that our economy is already being impacted by invasive species and that multiple sectors are increasingly vulnerable,” said Brendan Quirion, Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program coordinator. “On the plus side, we know that we can make strategic investments in cost-effective prevention and management to protect our lands and waters and our economy.”

Rural Broome Counts

RURAL BROOME COUNTS

Yellow Wood is providing coaching and technical assistance to Rural Broome Counts, a multi-year assessment project that will provide organizational leaders, decision makers, policy makers, service providers and funders with a comprehensive report on the needs and assets of rural Broome County, New York.

This innovative project seeks to work with partners to collect and analyze data related to the needs and assets of Broome County and use the data to inform more equitable resource and service allocation to rural Broome County.

Connecticut Land Conservation Council

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) works to increase the pace, quality and scale of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state. As CLCC wraps up its first five years, the organization invited Yellow Wood to lead the steering committee in a full-day You Get What You Measure® workshop to identify a new set of strategic priorities for the next five years.

Becoming a Measurement Guide

Yellow Wood is offering its 3 day Becoming a Measurement Guide training again April 8–10, 2015 at our offices in St. Albans.

Download a registration form at: http://yellowwood.org/assets/resource_library/resource_docs/bmgregistrationformapril2015_fillinversion.pdf

You Get What You Measure® Onsite Option

Yellow Wood is also offering a new way of interacting with the You Get What You Measure® process.

For organizations that want to use the process in their own work and do not currently wish to train Guides, Yellow Wood is offering the option of You Get What You Measure® workshops for multiple groups (e.g. non-profits, governments, associations, etc.) at the same time, all working on their own goals. These workshops could be organized by a regional group like a Council of Governments, or a Regional Planning or Economic Development Organization.

Organizations participating in this process will go home with goals, indicators of progress, and leverage points, which will inform organizational strategies. Please contact us if you are interested in having us come to your community and are able to bring together 5–6 organizations that would be interested.
Tool: Value Propositions as a Collaboration Tool

Melissa Levy presented a 4-hour workshop at the Board Summit at the Land Trust Alliance Rally in Providence, Rhode Island in September, on increasing impact through collaboration. One tool that was used in this workshop was about finding complementary value propositions.

Step 1 - Rate Strengths and Weaknesses

First, participants were asked to rate their strengths and weaknesses pertaining to the competencies of effective land trusts on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is weak, 3 is average, and 5 is strong.

Land trust competencies included:

- Administration/operations
- Mapping
- Ethics
- Board governance
- Management, sharing staff
- Volunteer, staff and consultant management
- Compliance with laws
- Fundraising for programs or operations
- Financial and asset management
- Recordkeeping
- Title investigation and subordination
- Appraisals
- Purchasing land/purchasing easements
- Evaluation and selection of conservation projects
- Easement drafting
- Etc.

This exercise gave the land trusts a sense of where they were strongest (where they have something to offer a potential partner/collaborator) and where they were weakest (what a potential partner/collaborator might have to offer them).
Tool: Value Propositions as a Collaboration Tool (cont.)

Step 2 - Identify Collaborators
Next, we asked them to think about places/organizations they might look to that could help offset their weaknesses.
- What kind of organization might be the best collaborator for them?
- What are the characteristics of this organization?
These might not always be other organizations of the same type. For example, one land trust realized that hospitals/health institutions might make good collaborators, as the land trust was doing a great deal to improve the health of its residents.

Step 3 - Consider Reciprocity and Value Propositions
The next step in this exercise was about reciprocity and value propositions. Land trusts were asked to make a list of possible collaborators. Then they were asked to think about the value propositions for these partnerships.
- What is in it for each possible collaborator?
Land trusts considered their list of strengths as clues to those value propositions.
- What are you bringing to the table?
- How does it help to meet a need of your potential collaborator?
- What are the problems your potential collaborating organization is facing?
Then land trusts were asked to think about what was in it for them to collaborate with a potential partner. This is where they were asked to review their list of weaknesses, as something that could be strengthened through collaboration.

Generalizing the Process
This process or set of tools would come in handy for any organizations thinking about potential partners.

Competencies could be developed for all kinds of different organizations, whether land trusts, community health agencies, economic development organizations, etc.
Deep South Community Agriculture Network
WealthWorks Learning Journey
Shanna Ratner participated in a WealthWorks learning journey with the Deep South Community Agriculture Network (DSCAN) in October 2014. The learning journey was hosted by The United Christian Community Association (TUCCA), located in Marengo County, AL, and The Cottage House in Ariton, AL.

Highlights of the learning journey included a tour of the Deep South Food Alliance Facility, a day of on-farm educational activities for youth at the Rose Hill Family Farm, visits with area farmers, strategic discussions with Network participants, and a community-wide dinner and celebration.

For more information on the great work DSCAN is doing check out their website: www.deepsouthcan.org.

Read Shanna’s full reflections on the learning journey and see her photos from the trip at: http://www.yellowwood.org/blog/dscan-learning-journey-october-2014/

3rd WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators
Shanna Ratner and Barbara Wyckoff delivered the third WealthWorks Training for Coaches and Coordinators at Pendle Hill on October 19–22, 2014 to an engaged class of participants from Utah, New York, Maine, Maryland, Ohio, and Minnesota. The third class is just getting ready to start value chain mapping of value chains in the food, agroforestry, forestry, tourism, and health care sectors.

Participants in previous WealthWorks trainings are sending their colleagues to be trained so that they have more people on the ground who share the same vision and understanding of the work. Two of the members of the third class have colleagues at home that have already been trained. We can’t wait to see what happens as they join forces!

Learn more about the WealthWorks Training: http://www.yellowwood.org/wealthworks.html

Community Development v.45, i.5, Special Issue: Rural Wealth Creation as a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy
Shanna Ratner served along with Deborah Markley of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship as guest editors for a special issue of Community Development focused on Rural Wealth Creation as a Sustainable Economic Development Strategy. The issue was published in September 2014.

For more information about the special issue: http://yellowwood.org/community-development-special-issue-wealth-creation.html
Goodbye and Good Luck to Our Talented Associate, Samantha Dunn!

After six years of work together, we are saying goodbye and good luck this spring to our Associate, Samantha Dunn. We will be very excited to hear more about the next steps in her work, and expect that we will continue to collaborate with her in the future.

Samantha Dunn joined Yellow Wood Associates in June of 2009. Since then, she has contributed to a wide range of excellent work at Yellow Wood.

In her first several years with Yellow Wood, Samantha coordinated our multi-year work with the United States Forest Service on the Wood Energy Utilization Services Project and worked with the Biomass Energy Resource Center and the North Country Resource Conservation and Development Area Council on a Community Roadmap to Renewable Biomass Energy.

Recently, Samantha has worked with clients throughout the New England region, including Renewable Energy Vermont, the University of Southern Maine, and the Rural Health Network of South Central New York.

Samantha will be taking some personal time over the next several months to welcome the newest member of her family. Come June 2015, she plans to hang out her consulting shingle as Samantha Dunn LLC. We look forward to working with Samantha on many projects in the future. Thanks for six great years, Samantha!

Reading & Watching

Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well
by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen

I just read this (fairly) new book this spring. The information was clearly presented and extremely useful. The writing is nicely balanced between accessibility and precision.
- Ginger

Finding Vivian Maier

Finding Vivian Maier is a 2013 documentary film about the photographer Vivian Maier, whose extraordinary work was largely unknown in her lifetime. This story of how her work came to light and is being championed by a young man with enough curiosity to figure out who she really was, an eye good enough to appreciate the value of her work, and enough energy to bring it to the public eye is genuinely intriguing. You can read about the project and watch the trailer at http://www.findingvivianmaier.com/.
- Shanna