Update On Our Work

eXtension Evaluation Community of Practice (CoP)
Kim Norris, Evaluation Coordinator for University of Maryland eXtension FSNE (SNAP-Ed) program, and a graduate of Yellow Wood’s Becoming a Measurement Guide, asked Yellow Wood to work with her eXtension Evaluation Community of Practice (CoP) to develop a strategic action plan for the next 12-24 months using You Get What You Measure®. The CoP purpose is to improve the integration, quality, and effective use of evaluation for program improvement throughout the national Extension system. Yellow Wood provided a webinar introduction to members of the CoP, after which members were invited to respond to starter goals and submit new goals for consideration. Yellow Wood assisted in reducing and reframing goals, and facilitated a two day workshop that included goal review, indicator development, indicator analysis, identification of key leverage indicators, definition of key terms, and action plans to include measurement.

Nature Based Tourism in the Lower Mississippi River Delta
Melissa Levy and Barbara Wyckoff have been working with four Walton Family Foundation grantees along the Lower Mississippi River on nature based tourism. Focus areas for this group have included paddling tourism, non-consumptive wildlife watching, hunting and fishing, and historical/cultural tourism.

This work has involved coaching and regional and local demand studies, and facilitating meetings of this group in Mississippi and Louisiana. Now that those studies are completed, we are strategizing with grantees about next steps, which may include connecting with state tourism directors in the region to think about collaboration for mutual benefit.

Puzzler:
Arrange the following shapes to create the house shape below.
USFS Wood Energy
Under the able management of Samantha Dunn, Yellow Wood completed a three year contract with the U.S. Forest Service to provide Wood Energy Utilization Support in the Northeast region. Through this program we reviewed applications for biomass pre-feasibility studies from 129 facilities in 11 states and completed reports for 64 facilities including schools, regional agencies, healthcare facilities, industrial facilities, town offices, and hospitality and recreational facilities. Over the past three years, fossil fuel prices have increased substantially. Fuel oil prices in Vermont increased from an average of $2.56 a gallon in 2009 to $3.59 a gallon in 2011. Biomass technology in the U.S. has evolved, making biomass energy practical for facilities across the Northeast.

A review of studies completed showed an average projected annual fuel savings of $76,000 from the use of biomass fuels. Some of the reports we completed are available on the US Forest Service website (http://na.fs.fed.us/werc/biomass/biomass_results.shtm) and we expect additional tools generated through the contract to be available in the coming months. Yellow Wood will continue to work with Richmond Energy Associates to provide biomass education and accessible analyses to help facilities decide if biomass makes sense for them.

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 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. Yellow Wood Associates are Shanna Ratner, Principal; Melissa Levy, Senior Associate; Samantha Dunn, Associate; Jackie LeBlanc, Project Assistant; and Ginger Weil, Office Manager.
National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA)

Shanna Ratner made two presentations at the NCBA Annual Conference. The first, on Smart Growth Triple Bottom Line Accounting, provided an overview of the ways cooperatives impact multiple “bottom lines.” Her presentation was followed by examples from two cooperatives: REI and PCC Natural Markets. The second presentation was on the preliminary results of the work Yellow Wood has been doing with six cooperatives around the country, helping them identify, assess and measure internal and external impacts on seven forms of wealth. Internal impacts are those within the cooperative itself; external impacts are those the cooperative has on the communities, regions, and vendors with which it interacts.

After Shanna’s introduction, Tony Beardless, CEO of Frontier Cooperative, a study participant, shared Frontier’s impacts, measures, and insights. These included a new perspective on the return on investment to Frontier in the form of reduced turnover correlated with users of on-site child care and through external investments in its suppliers.

By working with a range of cooperatives including food, agriculture, electric utility, and credit unions, Yellow Wood is identifying patterns of cooperative impacts. NCBA intends to make the cooperative assessment tools we have developed widely available.

Growing Health 2012

In October Shanna Ratner shared the podium with James Knickman, President & CEO, NYS Health Foundation, as keynote speakers at Growing Health 2012 in Binghamton, NY, which was hosted by the Rural Health Network of South Central New York. Shanna’s address, Your Role in Healthy Food Systems, included an introduction to wealth creation and value chains as well as an interactive exercise focused on gaps in the existing food systems around the state of New York.

Growing Health 2012 brought consumers, health care professionals, farmers and other agricultural entrepreneurs, business and community leaders, parents, county extensions and other educators, food businesses, food security advocates, economic developers, students, and more together to explore cross-sector solutions that connect health, food and community. For more information on Growing Health 2012, please go to http://growinghealth.rhnscny.org/.
Conferences, Presentations & Meetings

Wealth Creation in International Development

Action Aid is an international organization, working with over 15 million people in 45 countries for a world free from poverty and injustice. After hearing about the wealth creation approach, Action Aid approached the Ford Foundation to learn more. In response, Shanna Ratner and Barbara Wyckoff developed and facilitated a three day workshop to provide training to participants on the wealth creation framework and to “road test” that framework against the reality in several developing countries to assess applicability and explore possible collaboration.

This experience, combined with our work on the 5Capitals tool for measuring impacts of pro-poor value chains in international development, strongly suggests that the wealth creation approach is applicable to development practitioners wherever they may be. The 5Capitals tool is available at: http://www.catie.ac.cr/BancoMedios/Documentos%20PDF/book%205%20capitals%20completo.pdf.

Mel King Fellows

The Mel King Fellows met at MIT in September to continue work on a paper on transforming economic development with Karl Seidman as lead author. We attended lectures by MIT Professors Larry Susskind on consensus building theory and practice and Richard Lester on energy innovation systems. Three fellows, including Shanna Ratner, were selected to present our work to SPURS/Humphrey Fellows who study at MIT from around the world. In turn, we learned about their work in community and economic development overseas. The Fellows are a fascinating mix of urban and rural practitioners with a shared interest in sustainable development in theory and practice. For information on this year’s Mel King Fellows program, visit: http://web.mit.edu/colab/work-project-mel-king-2012.html.

"It was a great learning experience for me personally and for colleagues from Action Aid. There is a lot of enthusiasm to look at our value chains/access to markets work and use some of the tools and lessons, as well as looking at the wider program framework on sustainable development to see how we sharpen the focus on access to markets.” -- Action Aid Organizer

The workshop, held in September at the Ford Foundation in New York City, brought together Action Aid staff and partners from Bangladesh, Brazil, Senegal, Tanzania; Ford Foundation grantees working on value chain projects from Mozambique, South Africa, Arkansas, Georgia, and a former domestic grantee now in Costa Rica; and representatives of the Ford Foundation and the McKnight Foundation.
Updates on our work

Vermont Slaughterhouse Study
The Town of Fairfield received a USDA grant to conduct a feasibility study for a commercial scale zero waste slaughter and processing facility in Franklin County, for the benefit of Franklin County farmers. A commercial scale zero waste slaughter/processing facility only makes sense if there is both demand for what the facility produces and a sufficient supply of quality animals coming through the facility year-round to meet market demand and to support the cost of building and operating the facility. In researching existing slaughter capacity, Yellow Wood has had the opportunity to tour several slaughterhouses and has also conducted interviews with most slaughterhouses in the region, as well as livestock haulers and cattle dealers.

Mid-Tier Alpaca Fiber Value Chain
Yellow Wood completed a feasibility assessment of the needs, opportunities and possible approaches to creating a mid-tier alpaca fiber value chain for Suri Paco, LLC. This work, funded through a USDA Value-Added Producer Grant, researched and described the required value chain from aggregation of raw fiber from individual alpaca farmers through production of four value-added products: Graded Bales of raw fiber, Felt, Yarn and Blankets. An estimated 250,000 alpaca in the U.S. produce close to 2 million pounds of eco-friendly, naturally colored fiber annually and there is a strong consumer interest in natural fiber products produced in the U.S. Yellow Wood identified supply and demand for the value chain, as well as the components of the chain and the assumptions that must be met for such a chain to become profitable. Suri Paco will present the findings of the report to the 25 Maine alpaca farmers who were partners in the proposal to USDA, and has begun working with the Coastal Enterprises, Inc. to develop a business plan for the value chain outlined in the feasibility study.

Maine Wild Blueberry Processing
Blueberry East Food Ventures (BEFV), a group of wild blueberry growers in Eastern Maine, engaged Yellow Wood to conduct the first phase of a study of the feasibility of adding value to the local wild blueberry harvest by manufacturing wild blueberry juice, puree, pulp and/or concentrate. BEFV seeks to increase market share for locally processed foods, resulting in income opportunities for local growers and increased employment opportunities for Washington County residents. Yellow Wood recently completed this study, which included a grower survey, and numerous interviews with blueberry processors and businesses that sell wild blueberry products or use wild blueberries as an ingredient. We look forward to hearing about BEFV's next steps.
Value Chain Exploration with an Arts Organization

As part of the National Association of Development Organizations’ (NADO’s) engagement with the Ford Foundation on the wealth creation approach, Melissa Levy has been working with a NADO mini-grantee, the Alabama Tombigbee Regional Commission, specifically Black Belt Treasures, in Alabama. The non-profit’s mission is to help stimulate the economy in Alabama’s Black Belt region through the promotion of regional art and fine crafts, provide regional artisans a means to promote and sell their products to a larger market and provide arts education to area residents. Melissa has been coaching them through a value chain exploration using the wealth creation approach to think through potential partners and interventions for their value chain in the upcoming years.

Sharing the Wealth Creation Approach with Sustainable Communities Grantees

The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) is currently involved in convening Sustainable Communities grantees around the country in an effort to provide training and technical assistance. NADO has invited Yellow Wood, specifically Melissa Levy, to present about the Ford Foundation’s wealth creation approach.

One session was held in April in Burlington, Vermont with Wayne Fawbush of the Ford Foundation and Noah Dorius of the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Region 1. Another was held in September in Omaha, Nebraska. At these workshops, Melissa Levy gave an overview of the wealth creation approach, and worked with grantees to think about ways they can impact seven forms of wealth in a more deliberate manner.

Bringing the Wealth Creation Approach to Arizona

In late spring 2012 Melissa Levy and Barbara Wyckoff, of Dynamica Consulting, presented multi-day workshops on the wealth creation approach to a variety of nonprofits and Walton Family Foundation grantees in the Verde Valley of Arizona. Participants were engaged in mapping out their value chains and thinking about engaging partners. Nonprofits also began to think about appropriate interventions to move their value chains forward, as well as how to measure impacts on seven forms of wealth. That work has led to additional engagement in the Verde Valley, including some upcoming coaching that Melissa will be doing with one Walton Family Foundation grantee, the Verde River Valley Nature Organization.
Wealth Creation in Rural Communities

WealthWorks!

WealthWorks! Connecting Community Assets with Market Demand for Lasting Livelihoods is the new name and tag line for Wealth Creation in Rural Communities. Work highlights over the past few months include:

A trip to Alabama and Mississippi organized by Rural Support Partners to visit several wealth creation value chains in the agriculture sector gave Yellow Wood a chance to see collard greens ready to be marketed into regional wholesale markets through an emerging partnership of diverse value chain actors; meet youth engaged in learning how to grow diverse crops for market; learn about the success growers are having in connecting with demand for sweet potato greens; and strategize with diverse partners about the development of a regional grass fed beef value chain.

The 5th convening of Ford’s Central Appalachian Wealth Creation grantees was held in October at the Heartwood Center in Abingdon, Virginia. In addition to updates from each initiative, grantees discussed measurement issues, policy issues, regional connections, and plans for their work after Ford Foundation funding ends. The choice of the Heartwood Center as a meeting location was particularly meaningful because the floors and stairs of the Center were purchased from what is now the Wealth From Forests’ new brand, WoodRight Forest Products.

A Red Mantra Group workshop on Inclusive Business was delivered by Robert de Jongh and Maya Gorrez-de Jongh for Southern grantees on Partnering with the Private Sector for Wealth Creation Value Chains. The overarching goal of the workshop was to gain a common understanding of some basic principles for engaging the private sector in the various value chains, and to gather contextual information regarding grantees’ past and current experience in working with the private sector. Each group of grantees working in a given sector had the opportunity to identify private sector partners and potential partners. Then they role-played a conversation with a company’s Corporate Social Responsibility director explaining a range of values associated with their good or service.

“Wealth creation looks at working through all the issues together. I’ve been impressed that this is really trying to look at all the problems and barriers. We’re trying to look at a system for moving people forward.” -- A Rural Support Partner

The Heartwood Center in Abingdon, VA
Red Mantra Group lessons learned:

*Be well-informed* – research the company and their current social/community programs to be able to relate your product to their own programs and goals.

*Develop the value proposition* – have a clear understanding of the total and true value of your product (why should they partner with you specifically?).

*Sell the “experience”* – action speaks louder than words. An invitation for them to experience your product firsthand will go a long way.

*Don’t focus so much on the pitch* – have a conversation. Information flow should be two-way in order for both sides to come into alignment.

Facilitating Measurement for the West Virginia Value Chain Cluster Initiative

Yellow Wood is working with the Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIF), which was awarded a three year Rural Jobs Accelerator Challenge Grant. Their accelerator will be focused on ensuring that their four regional food-related “value chain clusters” have greater business and financial capacity to extend their impact and long-term sustainability. Melissa Levy facilitated a meeting in November to think about how the interventions related to this initiative will impact the seven forms of wealth and to develop indicators and measures around those outcomes. One goal for this work is to find a way to overlay the wealth matrix on the Rural Jobs Accelerator metrics requirements (which come from the Economic Development Administration, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Community Development Initiative and the Appalachian Regional Commission). Melissa will be working with NCIF and project partners to fine-tune the measures, assist in developing ways of collecting data, provide coaching to the consultant in charge of data collection, and review measures at the end of each year.
Measurement News
In November, Shanna Ratner presented a Becoming a Measurement Guide training to a full class of new measurement guides, including three Wallace Center staff with whom we will be collaborating to use You Get What You Measure® with food hubs around the country.

Melissa Levy recently collaborated with a Measurement Guide, Ruth Feldman, to present a full day public workshop in Portland, Maine on November 30. Participants came from the Maine Association of Nonprofits, the Maine Community Foundation, the United Way of Eastern Maine, New England Environmental Finance Center, and Waldo County General Hospital.

Future collaboration with the Maine Association of Nonprofits to bring You Get What You Measure® to more Maine nonprofits may be in the works.

Upcoming BMG Training
The next BMG training is April 10-12, 2013, in St. Albans, VT. For information, contact Melissa Levy at melissa@yellowwood.org or 802-524-6141. To register, visit: http://www.yellowwood.org/BMGRegistrationFormApril2013_FillInVersion.pdf.

Measurement Update and Tool

Tool: Strengths Around Different Forms of Wealth
As we travel and share the wealth creation approach, we are beginning to use new tools and new ways of communicating the principles of the wealth creation approach. One tool that we have been using in many of our workshops is one where we engage participants in thinking about their strengths in creating different forms of wealth. Thinking about the seven forms of wealth in isolation can seem fairly theoretical. To have workshop participants incorporate it into their thinking and their practice, we bring stickers for each of the seven forms of wealth (individual, intellectual, social, built, natural, financial and political).

Steps in Using the Tool:
1) Participants review the definitions of the seven forms of wealth and choose two stickers that represent the forms of wealth they feel that they have strength in creating.
2) Participants are asked to find people who have strengths in creating forms of wealth that they may be weak in and to learn from them how they create that form of wealth.

This exercise has been invaluable to people in learning how to create wealth in areas they may be unfamiliar with.
What’s new at Yellow Wood?

Jackie LeBlanc receives M.S.
Having completed her thesis titled "Alternative Food Network Infrastructure: Food Hub Development in Vermont," Jackie LeBlanc received her Master’s of Science in Community Development and Applied Economics from the University of Vermont in a December 2012 graduation ceremony. Jackie is happy to finally have more time for non-thesis related projects.

Reading

**The Snow Child**

*by Eowyn Ivey*

This is the most absorbing, atmospheric novel I’ve read in years. It’s set in Alaska and tells the story of a childless couple seeking to start anew in an untamed place. It cuts to the heart with wonder and grace. A great winter read. Highly recommended. - Shanna Ratner

**Behind The Beautiful Forevers**

*by Katherine Boo*

This is a narrative nonfiction book about life in one slum in Mumbai. It draws out the connections between personal stories, human choices, and corrupt and corrupting systems and presents the complexities of modern poverty and aspirations. Boo took the time and care to go and truly observe lives of a kind that few of us will ever know. - Shanna Ratner

Puzzler Answer

[Image of a solved puzzle]

Jackie at her December 2012 graduation ceremony.

Jackie LeBlanc receives M.S.