Transitioning the Pork Niche Market Working Group to self-sufficiency

The project used a participatory process to gather input from PNMWG members for a business plan for the group. This plan is being used as a framework for a transitioning process being led by the Iowa Pork Industry Center at Iowa State University to assure that the PNMWG continues into the future.

What was done and why?

The Pork Niche Market Working Group was the first Value Chains Partnership working group formed in 2001. Its mission has been to foster the success of niche pork value chains that are profitable to all participants, incorporate farmer ownership and control and contribute to environmental stewardship and rural vitality. Members have included more than a dozen niche pork companies, several major pork commodity groups, various state and federal agencies, several nonprofit groups, an assortment of private businesses and individual farmers.

With the conclusion of the Value Chain Partnership project funding and coordination by the Leopold Center in 2011, the group needed a business plan to shape its actions for the future. The project first developed a case study that used issues related to the initiation, management and funding of a working group for use by others interested in this approach to value chains. The final step was finishing the business plan. This included collecting background information on the pork industry and relevant trends, plus PNMWG’s role in the pork industry. Another segment was the marketing plan, which included a description of the PNMWG’s products and an analysis of the markets for these products.

What did we learn?

Members of the PNMWG were actively engaged in planning for its future. They saw great value in the group and its activities and wanted it to continue its work. Their input on what the group should do and how it should be organized was critical to developing a business plan for the future of PNMWG, including the commitment of human and financial resources.

A case study and a business plan for the PNMWG were the products of this project. The significant impact was the development of commitments from key partner groups to keep the PNMWG operating after the exit of its current leader and the end of financial support from the Value Chain Partnerships project.