

Project Title: From 4:H Project to the Marketplace

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Geographic location: Somerset County in rural Maine

*Topic:* Maine youth lack knowledge of local career opportunities and financial resources. This project provides youth with an opportunity to learn about the challenges that face entrepreneurs by obtaining and recording first hand stories of local business persons' experiences. Businesses selected represent diverse occupations in terms of type, structure, business models, and exemplify good business practices with respect to sustainable development. This information will be used by youth to develop a "road map" for their goals, and be shared as a possible model for other communities to encourage entrepreneurship.

*Key research question or program:* The literature documents a need to provide youth both basic business information (for example how to develop a business plan), and to increase their awareness of the opportunities and resources in their communities. This research project will pilot using personal interviews with successful business persons as a strategy to assist youth in identifying local need for a product or service, availability of community resources, and essential knowledge, social and technical skills that will help insure their entrepreneurial success. This research project will help Somerset County youth gain a better understanding of the local business community, and to identify possible career opportunities and resources available to them.

*Methodology:* Youth participate in four interviews of community business persons in areas where they have expressed interest (retail, technical services, service oriented, etc). The goal of the interviews is to learn the combination of personal/ business/technical/financial skills that helped them become successful. Questions addressed include:

- What are the essential components of a strong business in Somerset County?
- How they identified a market/an opportunity?
- Resources needed to develop/grow their business
- How do they define personal success?

*Results expected:* Increasing the aspirations of Maine students is a primary goal of many of Maine's educational policymaking groups. Career preparation needs to serve students by teaching them basic skills, and increasing their awareness of their talents and interests. It is also important to increase their awareness of the opportunities and resources available in their communities. This project will assist youth in both of these areas.