

Building networks that work

Iowa's Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups

Rich Pirog - Associate Director - Leopold Center



Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture

- Iowa Groundwater Protection Act - 1987
- State funded --- at ISU
- Aldo Leopold namesake
- \$1.1 million in grants

Three Initiatives

Ecology

Marketing & Food Systems

Policy



Local and Regional Food Systems

Successes

Challenges

- Farmers markets and CSA increases
- Farm to Institution
- Food Policy Council
- More organizations
- Public awareness
- Collaborative climate

- Lack of infrastructure and community investment
- Efforts not synchronized or “additive”
- Food access, health and environmental issues
- Grant dependent
- Lack of champions with money and influence

We are either in the early and most difficult stages of a long slow transition to a food system feeding large segments of the population, driven by a desire for healthful, safe, high quality foods and for connections to knowledge about source/production method of that food.

Or.... (as some skeptics claim) we are playing around with permanent small niche markets that will never grow into something significant enough to support tens of thousands of small AND medium-sized farms in the U.S.

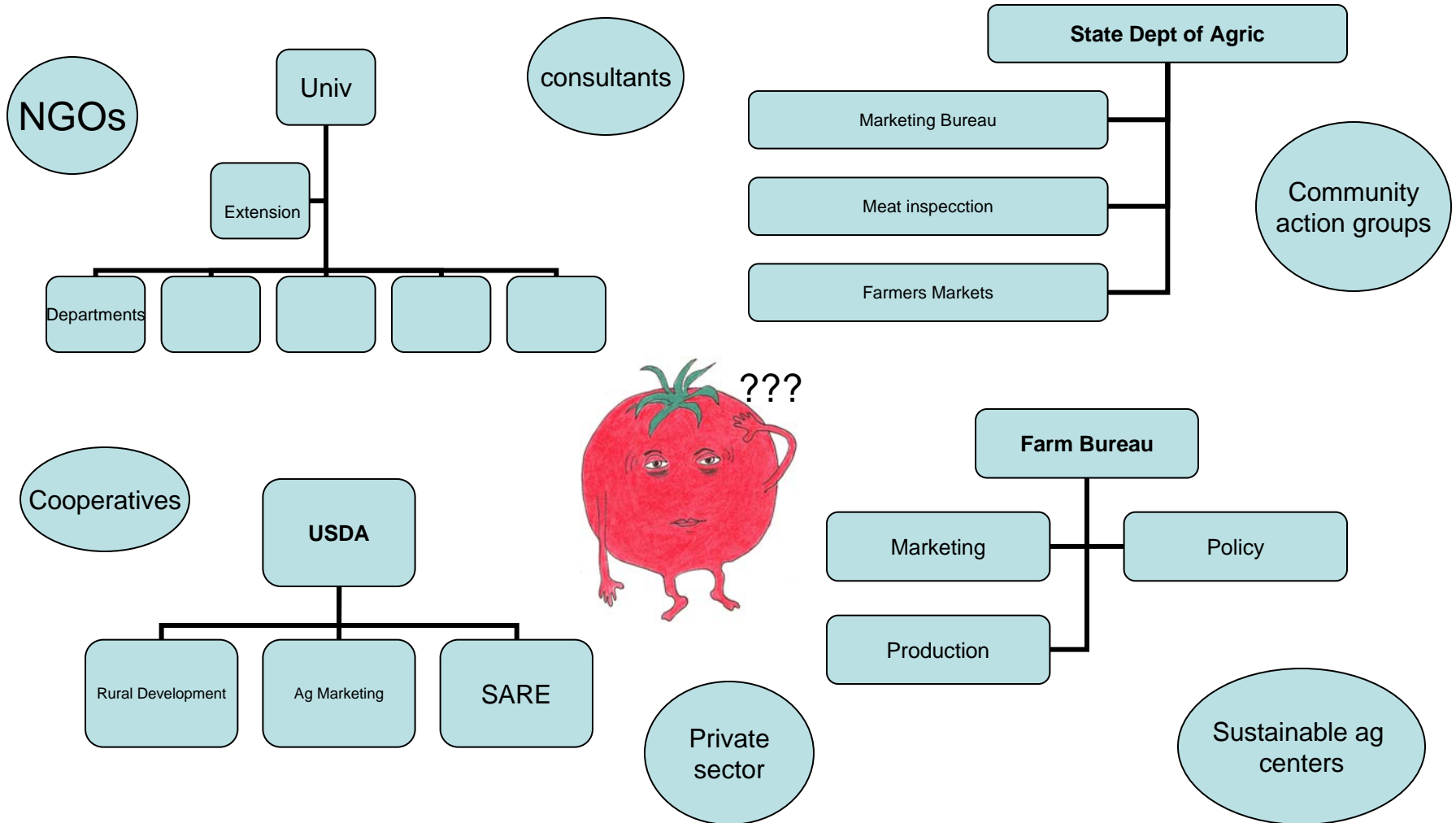
With a shrinking economy coupled with burgeoning environmental, health and social problems in a “full world”, how do we best do our research and education work to create systems change?

From “Feeding Ourselves: Strategies for a New Illinois Food System”
Red Tomato (www.redtomato.org) 2004

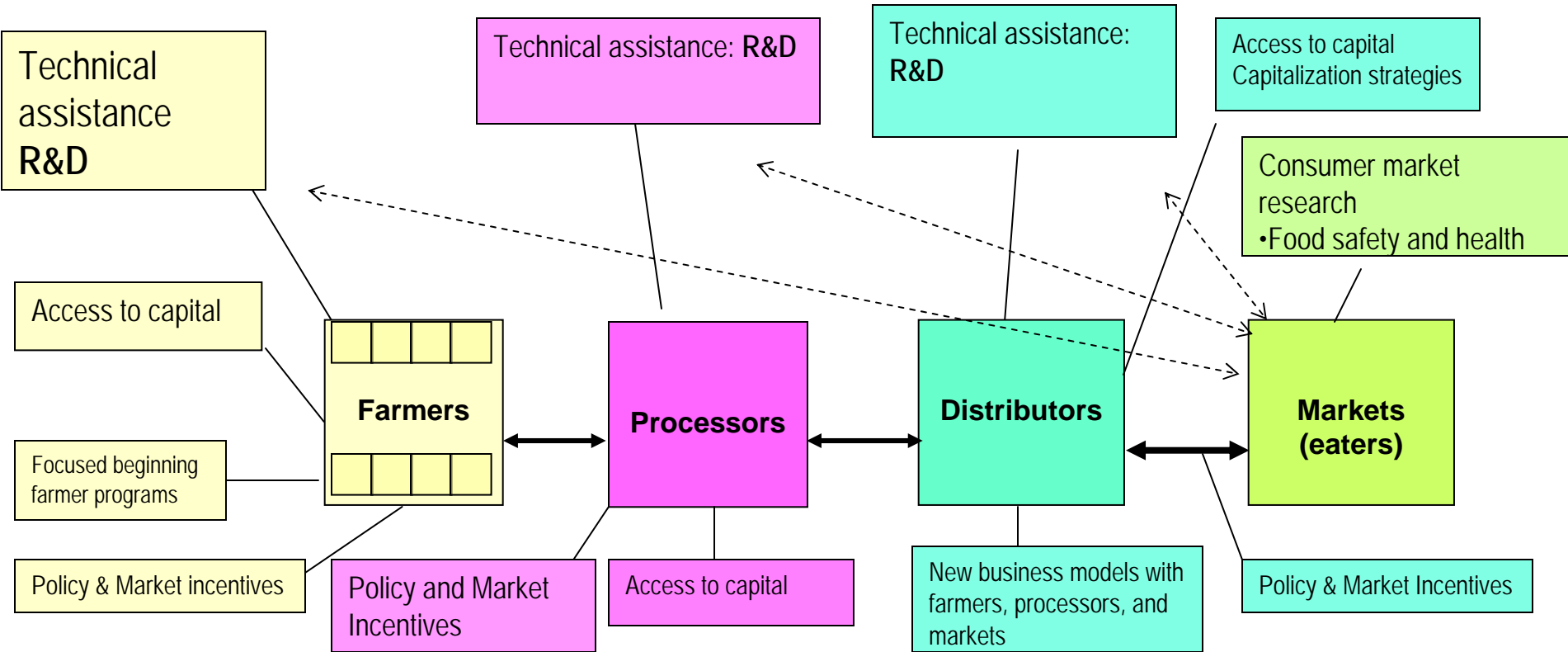
Technical & financial assistance for food businesses

Hierarchical, Centralized, "Siloed"

Difficult for businesses to negotiate



Value Chain Approach to Developing Regional Food Businesses



Farmers
(direct market and farmer networks)

Processors
(local, regional, and national)

Distributors
(existing and new infrastructures)

Markets
(food service, retail, wholesale, direct)

- What must be present
- Community and state support and incentives to start and grow businesses
 - Collaborative research and development
 - Coordination of loan opportunities and technical assistance
 - Culture of collaboration across funders, NGOs, universities, state agencies, and private sector – synchronized

How do our local food system efforts appear to investors, policy makers, and influencers?



What if our local and regional work were more “synchronized” ?
More additive? Would we see more investment from local and
state governments and the private sector?



Type of network	Level of Risk <small>(to members)</small> Systems Change Potential	How they operate
Cooperating	Low Little chance	Model best practices; test ideas and learn different approaches; convene problem-solving sessions
Coordinating	Low to Moderate Good chance	Push established organizational boundaries; engage in activities requiring greater mutual reliance
Collaborating	Moderate to High Best chance	Methods in place to resolve conflicts; pursuing long-term system creation; radical shifts from past operation

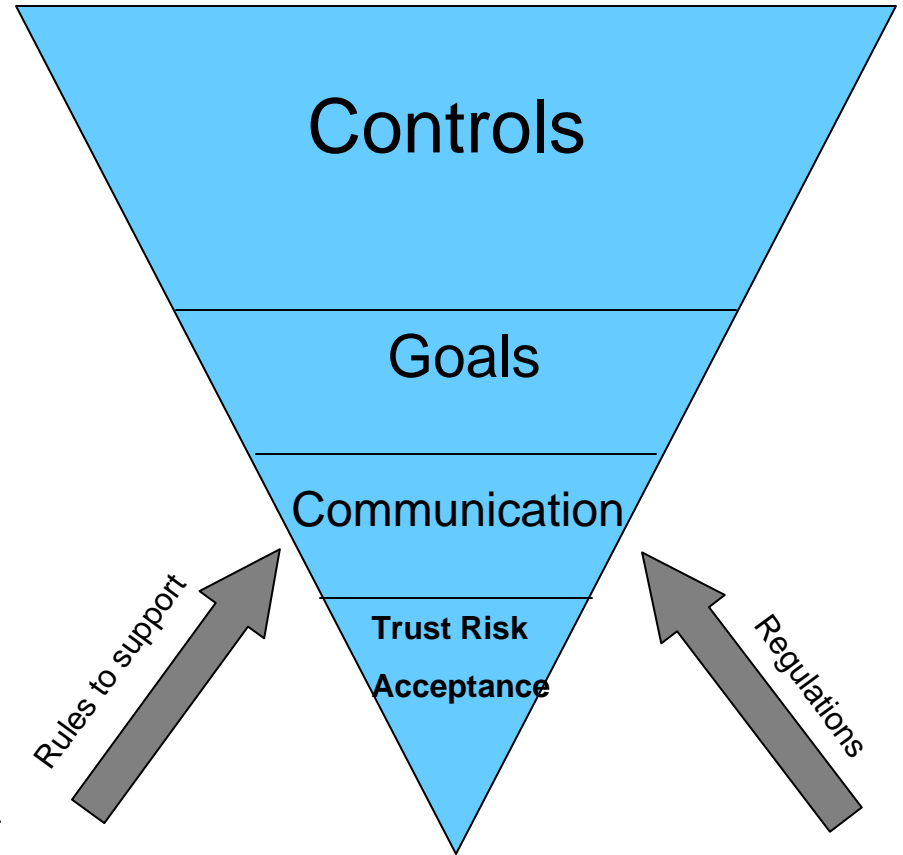
From Vandeveter, P., and M Mandell, 2007. **Networks that Work**

Gibb Triangle

Local/regional and Collaborating networks

National/global and cooperating networks

High versus low trust scenarios



Jack Gibb – Trust Level Theory
<http://www.geocities.com/toritrust/trust.htm>

Tacit Knowledge

**Knowledge that needs to be
“thought about” to be shared**

**Tacit knowledge requires interaction
– is always recreated in the present
moment**

Richard McDermott - 2000

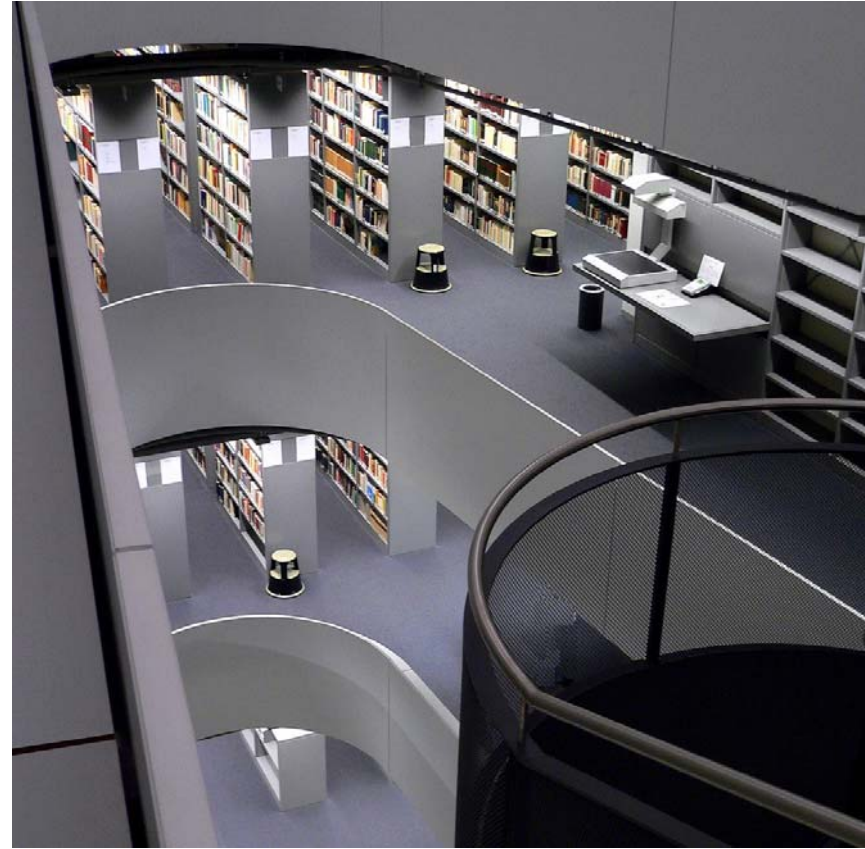


Information Junkyards



Potentially good info that is too difficult
To sort through

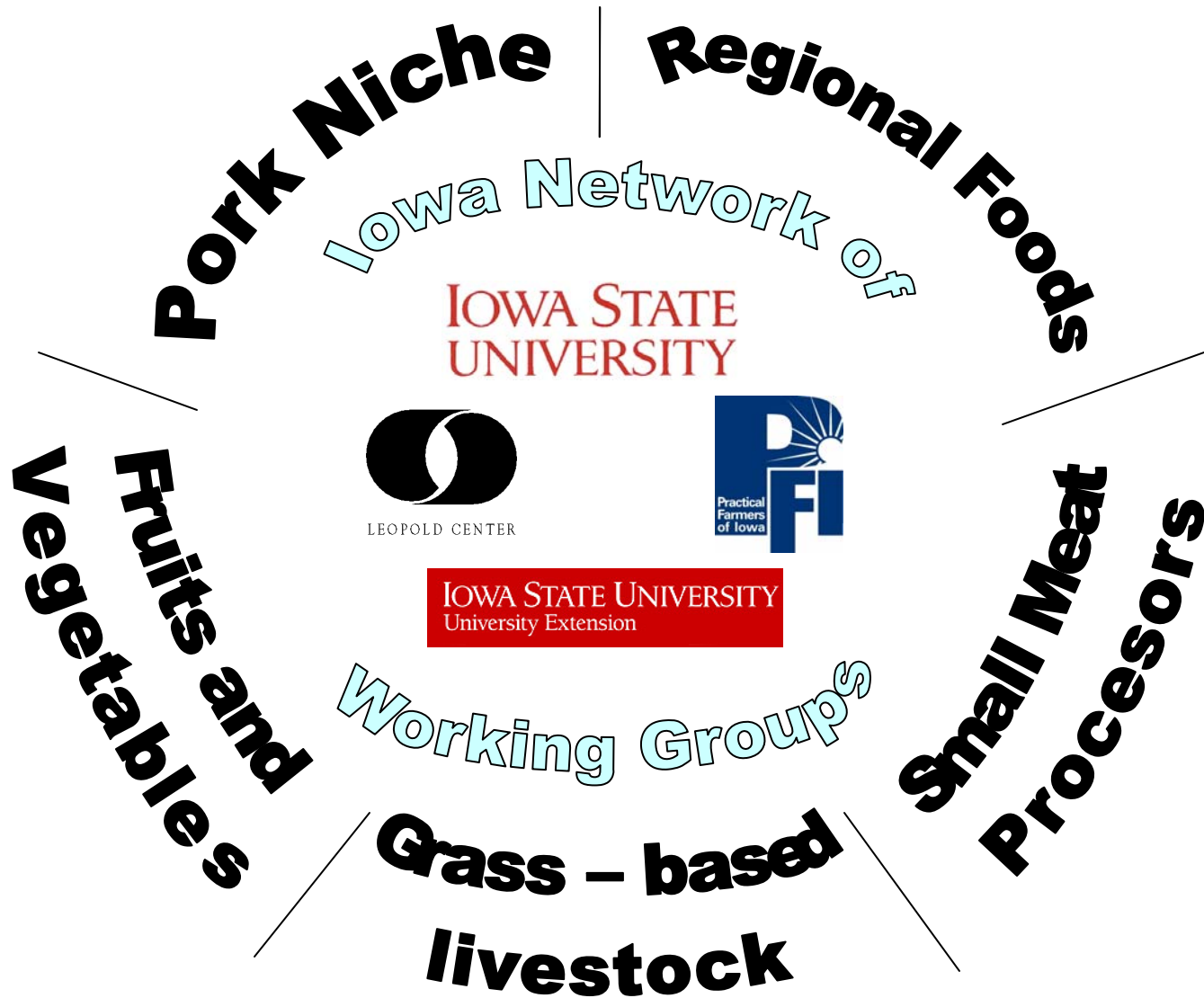
Empty Libraries



Procedures and best practices –
Often too general to be useful

Value Chain Partnerships

Foster value chains that increase the viability of Iowa food and agriculture businesses that produce and market products which result in positive social, environmental, and economic benefits



Funded in part by the Wallace Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the Leopold Center

Value Chain Partnerships -Functions

- **Information hubs** which create, capture, document, leverage, and deploy knowledge as technical assistance to create solutions for value chain partners
- **Catalysts for cooperation** of diverse interests that create solutions for food and fiber producers and businesses
- **Magnets** that attract funding and leverage, channel, and distribute funding for research and development of differentiated products
- **Scouts** that identify emerging value chain opportunities with high potential to deliver economic benefits to sustainable agriculture stakeholders

Why is Value Chain Partnerships (VCP) different?

A network orientation (*Forces for Good*; L.R. Crutchfield and H.M. Grant 2008)

	<i>Organization Orientation</i>	<i>Network Orientation</i>
Mind-set	Competition	Collaboration “Coopetition”
Strategy for Impact	Grow the organization	Grow the network field
Typical Behaviors	Compete for resources Protect knowledge Hoard leadership/staff	Grow funding pie Share knowledge Disperse leadership
Structure	Centralized	Decentralized

Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG)

PNMWG Projects (Nov. 2002–Sept. 2008)

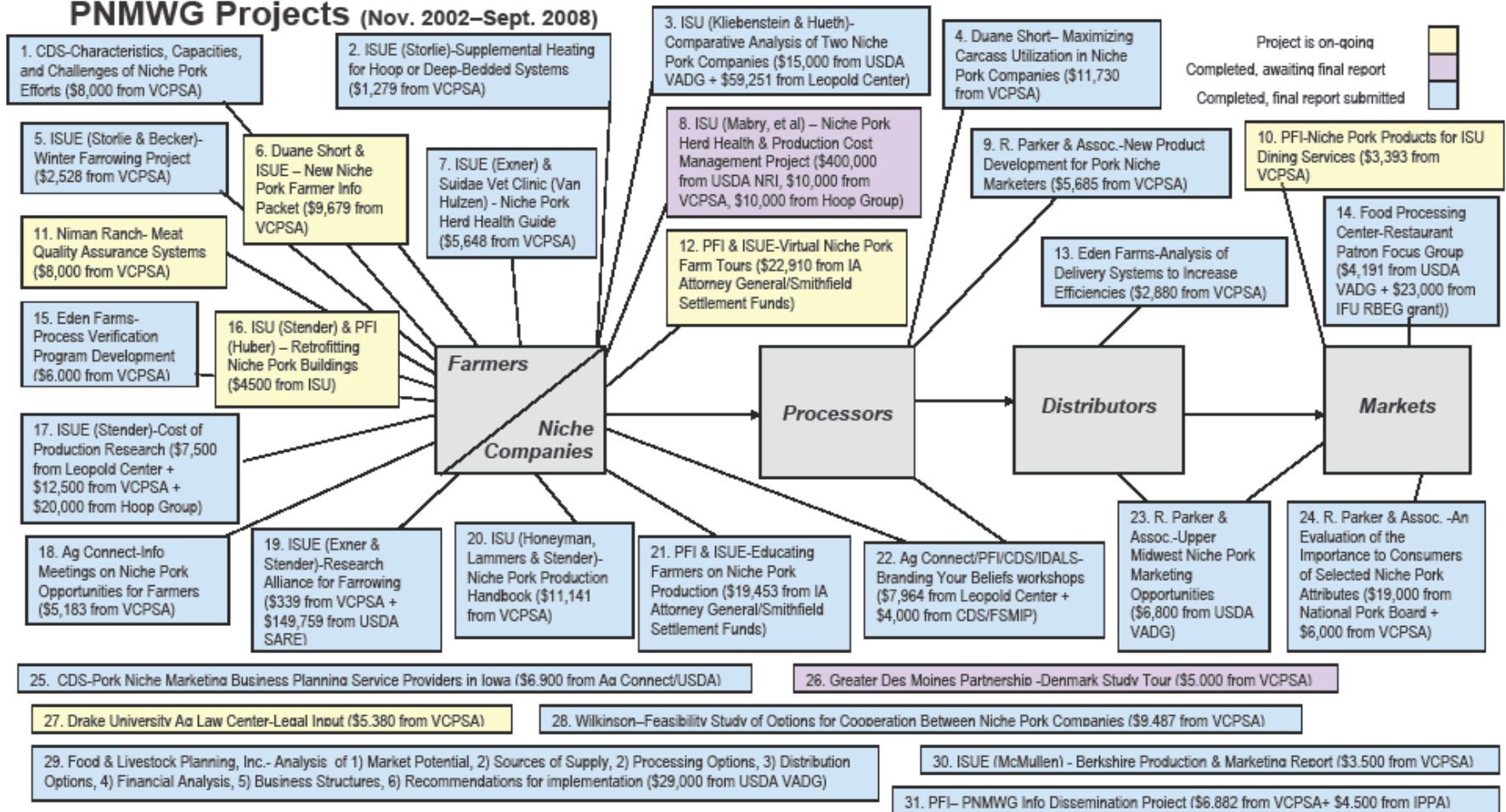
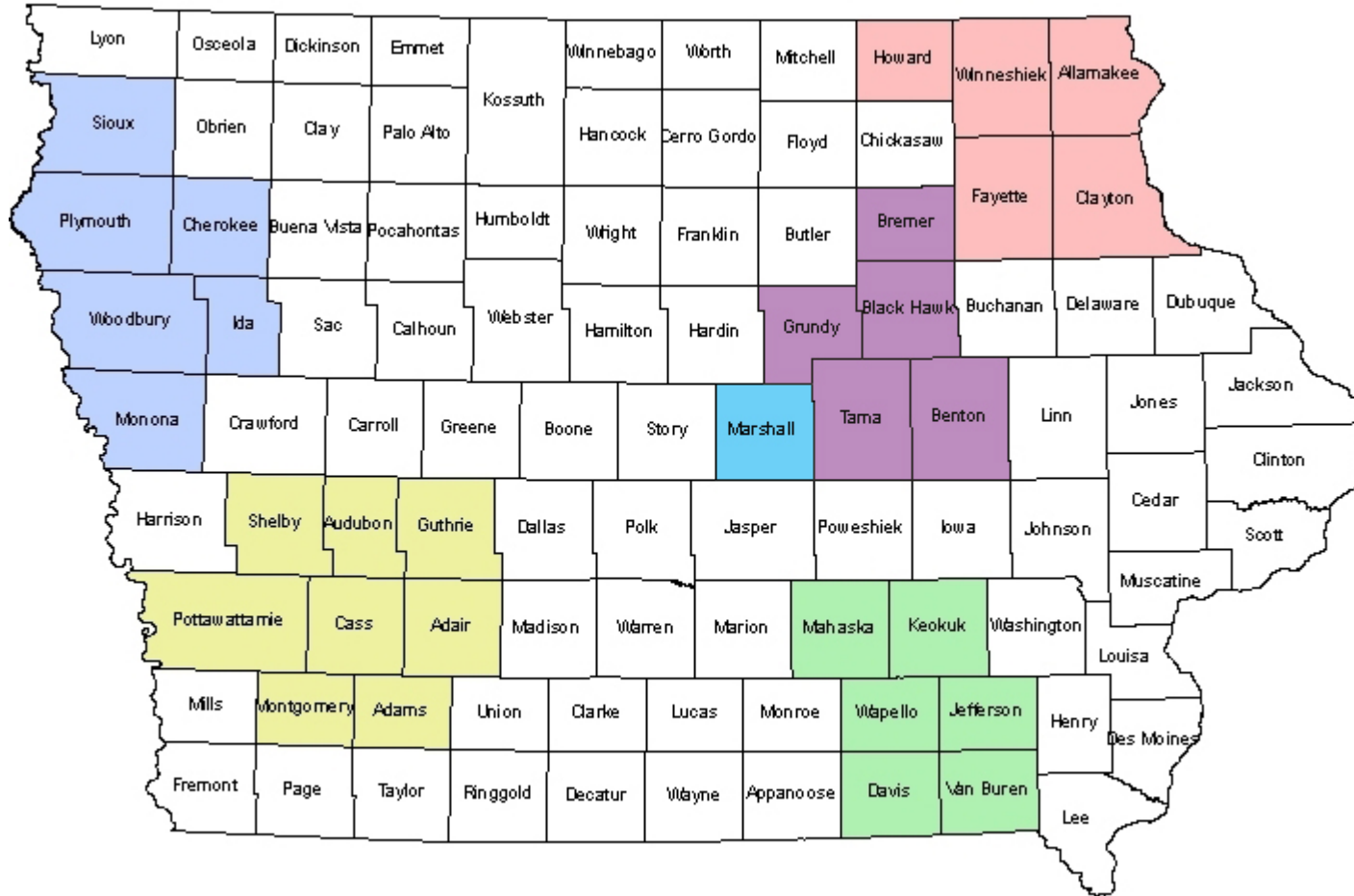


Table 1. PNMWG Funding by Use (7 years)		
Coordination	\$231,047	\$33,008/yr
Other (mtgs, newsletter, etc.)	\$66,060	\$9,437/yr
Operations Total	\$297,107	\$42,444/yr
R&D Projects Total	\$1,021,317	\$145,902/yr
Total	\$1,318,924	\$188,411/yr

Table 2. Who Got \$	
ISU	\$608,077
PFI	\$488,975
Consultants	\$162,443
Niche Pork Companies	\$50,480
Others	\$7,600

Table 3. Funding Sources	
USDA	\$726,203
Kellogg Foundation/Wallace-Winrock	\$377,671
Leopold Center	\$109,251
IA Attorney General's Office	\$42,363
National Pork Board	\$19,000
Iowa Pork Producers Association	\$16,500
SYSCO	\$9,487
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives	\$5,000
ISU	\$4,500

County-Based Regions – RFSWG 2008



Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition

South West Iowa Farm and Food Initiative

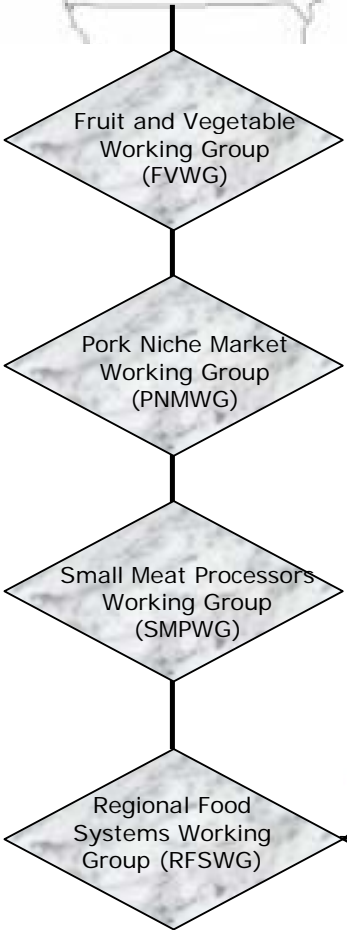
Hometown Harvest of SE Iowa

Northwest Iowa Regional Local Foods System

Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership

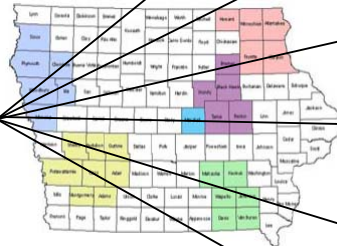
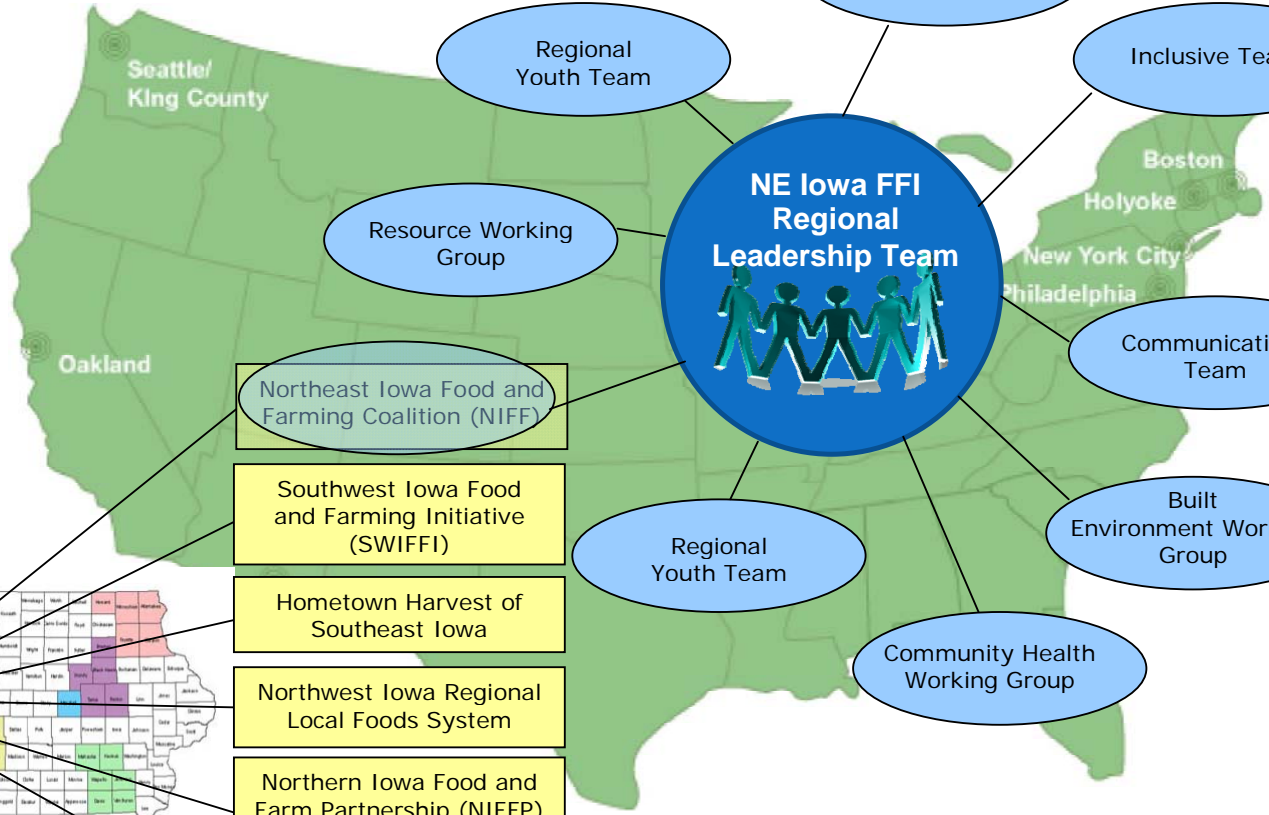
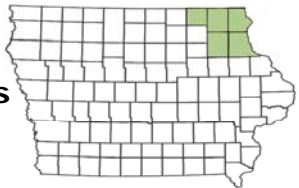
Marshall County

Value Chain Partnerships (VCP) Project



Converging Connections in Iowa: The NIFF Coalition and Food and Fitness and Regional Food Systems Working Group and Value Chain Partnerships!

Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative (FFI)



The other working groups

Small Meat Processors Working Group (initiated 2006)

This working group is comprised of small meat processors, state agencies, and producer groups. Its aim is to improve the vitality of small-scale meat processing plants in Iowa.

Fruit and Vegetable Working Group (initiated 2007)

This working group is comprised of fruit and vegetable growers and buyers and their assistance providers. Its aim is to build the production, handling, and marketing capacity of Iowa's fruit and vegetable industries.

Grass Based Livestock Working Group (initiated 2008)

This working group is comprised of people from grass-based farm and food businesses and the outreach professionals who support them. Its aim is to promote viable and diverse grass-based livestock production, niche marketing, and environmental services in Iowa.

Value Chain Partnerships has had some working group failures.....

Funny-looking sandwich working group



Giant rabbit working group



CoP Functions	Key Benefits for Producers and Businesses	Key Benefits for Organizations
<p>Information hubs which create, capture, document, leverage, and deploy knowledge to create solutions for value chain partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Greater awareness - wide range of services •Access to larger "portfolio of expertise" and "tacit knowledge"-- information unavailable anywhere else •Improved business skills/competencies •Opportunities to participate in research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Better grasp of real world challenges facing producers/businesses •Greater awareness of complementary technical assistance offered by other organizations •More effective organizations and employees •Participating organizations are better able to manage "local politics"
<p>Catalysts for cooperation of diverse interests that create solutions for food and fiber producers and businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Greater sense of teamwork •Opportunities for "high-level" cooperation •Access to support network •Private sector access to no or low-cost public sector support and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •More coordinated use of existing organizational and state resources •Participating organizations work more with other groups •Deconstruction of organizational boundaries •Better relationships between unlikely partners
<p>Magnets that attract funding and leverage, channel, and distribute funding for R&D of differentiated products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Private sector links with research agendas and consultants •Participating organizations invest more resources such as money and staff time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Projects with unlikely partners more likely to be funded •Increased credibility •Increased ability to leverage resources
<p>Scouts that identify emerging value chain opportunities with potential to deliver economic benefits to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increased access to new markets •Increased production and sales •Improved financial stability •More efficient operations •Greater viability - better decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Participants engage elected officials and government agency staff in conversations emphasizing need for policy to support the work, producers, businesses, and communities

Branding Value Chain Partnerships

Tag line:

Value Chain Partnerships is an Iowa-based network for food and agriculture working groups

Positioning (short elevator speech):

Putting finishing touches on this one



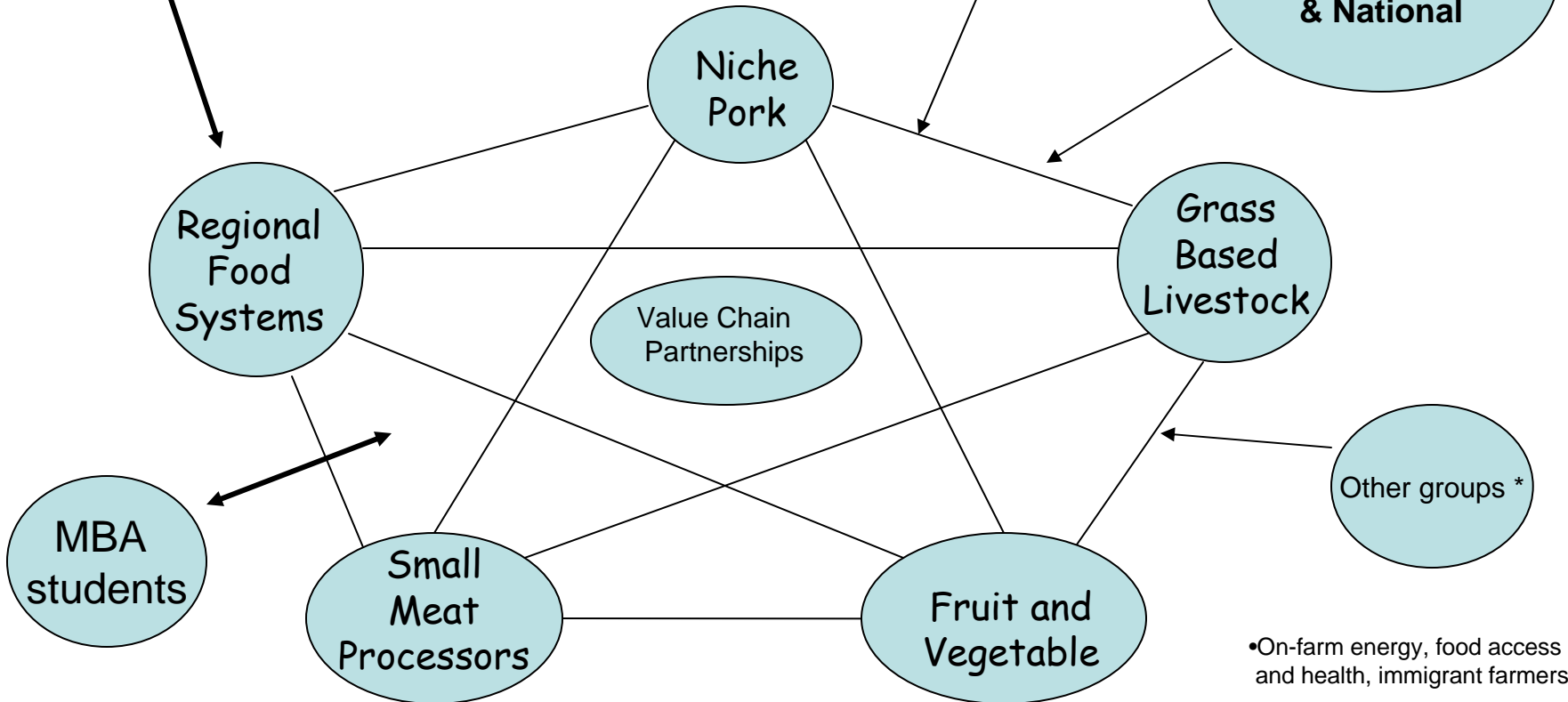
Value Chain Partnerships

Iowa Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups

Kellogg Food and Fitness Initiative



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- Northwest Iowa Regional Local Foods System
- Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership
- Marshall County - COMIDA



•On-farm energy, food access and health, immigrant farmers

Turning the Flywheel: Implications for building more resilient local and regional food systems

