An Evaluation of the Project Seasons Outreach Program, 2007-08
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By Amy L. Powers, Elizabeth Lowe, and PEER Associates, Inc.

Introduction

Shelburne Farms and the Project Seasons Outreach Program

The Project Seasons Outreach Program is offered by Shelburne Farms, whose mission is to cultivate a conservation ethic by teaching and demonstrating the stewardship of natural and agricultural resources. The Project Seasons curriculum guide is a collection of seasonal interdisciplinary activities and teaching ideas that encourage hands-on investigation of the ecological and agricultural world.

Shelburne Farms offers Project Seasons workshops for farmers and educators to learn activities that focus on tracing the food they eat and clothes they wear back to farm origins. Workshop participants can then help students and community members make the same connections. All education programs at Shelburne Farms, including family, field trip, camp, and off-site programming are developed with the Project Seasons approach. In 2005, Shelburne Farms launched its Project Seasons Outreach program to bring the Project Seasons experience to a broader geographic region and better meet the demand for school-based programs. The Project Seasons Outreach program trains local volunteers to assist schools and educators with field and classroom based experiences that focus on utilizing the community to enhance classroom curriculum. The program also provides educators with Shelburne Farms professional development support for curriculum integration. The Outreach program’s pilot efforts were in Burlington and later in Craftsbury.

The design of the Outreach Program has also benefitted from connections with a volunteer-driven effort initiated in 1994 in South Hero by a local parent and former Shelburne Farms staff member. This initiative, called The Land, The Farms and Me, uses the Project Seasons curriculum guide as a basis for its volunteer-led lessons, and several South Hero educators have attended the Project Seasons one week institute. Although this program is not sponsored by Shelburne Farms, it shares a similar mission and strategy with the Project Seasons Outreach Program. In designing an evaluation of the evolving Outreach program, stakeholders elected to investigate outcomes and processes at work in its pilot community in Craftsbury, and to simultaneously explore features of South Hero’s version of the program. To that end, interviews with four key players in South Hero are included, while the bulk of the evaluation’s focus is on the Craftsbury Program.
Craftsbury is a small, rural community in Vermont’s northeast kingdom. The small elementary school where the program is focused serves roughly 60 children in grades K-4. Craftsbury is home to several working farms and an alternative/progressive undergraduate college called Sterling College. The elementary school was involved in several agricultural and natural history-related academic pursuits prior to the inception of Project Seasons Outreach.

**Evaluation Methods**

In the spring of 2008, Shelburne Farms hired PEER Associates, Inc., an external evaluation firm, to conduct an evaluation of the Project Seasons Outreach program. Program staff who are guiding the program beyond its pilot years were identified as the primary stakeholders in the evaluation. The evaluation sought to explore the following overarching questions:

- **Outcomes Questions:**
  1) In what ways (if any) has the presence of Project Seasons Outreach in this community changed the level and type of community based learning in each community's school?
  2) Has the level of community involvement in the school changed? If so, in what ways?
  3) What kinds of connections are being made between volunteer-led programs and field trips and educators' classroom curricula?

- **Process Questions:**
  4) What barriers exist in doing this work in the communities and schools? Which are inevitable here, and which could be addressed by the program in the future?
  5) Considering that educators often have a "crowded" curriculum, and many organizations are offering to work with schools, how can an "outside" organization like Shelburne Farms best demonstrate a program's relevance to the curriculum and be clear about the program's purpose and structure at the beginning of and throughout an initiative within the school?
  6) What elements of this program are most critical to its staying power? What are the minimum inputs needed to maintain program effects over time?

In order to answer these questions, the external evaluation team conducted phone interviews with participants in the Project Seasons Outreach program in Craftsbury and South Hero, and conducted a focus group with program staff. The interviews, and the resulting data and reporting, are more squarely focused on the Craftsbury pilot project, since South Hero had very distinct origins and evolution.

In summary, the Project Seasons Outreach program evaluation consisted of the following data sources:
Craftsbury Phone Interviews: (n=12)
  • 6 Educators
  • 4 Parent volunteers
  • 1 Community Partner/Farmer
  • 1 Administrator

South Hero Phone Interviews: (n=3)
  • 1 Community Partner
  • 1 Elementary school teacher
  • 1 Program volunteer, co-coordinator, and parent

In-person Focus Group:
  • 5 Shelburne Farms professional development program staff
  • 1 Program founder, parent, and volunteer from South Hero

Other data source:
  • Review of relevant program documents
  • Ongoing phone, email, and in-person communication with key program staff member

Detailed field notes were taken during interviews, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed. These notes and transcriptions were then analyzed for emergent themes. This report summarizes key findings from the data, which are found below in a brief summary and then a more detailed narrative. Conclusions and recommendations are found at the end of the report. The Appendix contains the interview guides, evaluation plan, and a Site Selection Rubric which was also developed as a separate but related aspect of this evaluation process.

**Brief Summary of Key Evaluation Findings**

The evaluation found that the Project Seasons Outreach program:

- is a rich model with a positive start and is ripe with potential for future success.
- increased the curricular integration of Craftsbury’s gardening and seed saving projects.
- created valuable, sustainable community connections.
- motivated students to eat fresh vegetables during field trips to local farms.

The evaluation also shed light on learning opportunities for maximizing successful program elements. In particular, these factors were found to be beneficial:
• providing an accessible program coordinator and regularly scheduled meetings
to help maintain organization and communication.
• cultivating a corps of willing, trained program volunteers.
• having ready access to local field trip opportunities.

These findings are expanded upon more fully below. Following the findings are the
conclusions and recommendations sections. The Appendix includes the complete
evaluation plan, interview guides, and a Site Selection Rating Tool.

Evaluation Findings
Project Seasons Outreach (PSO) connected with Craftsbury Elementary at a time when
the school was ripe for change. The pre-existing gardening and seed saving programs,
the involved parent volunteer group, and the school’s flexibility with curriculum
provided a solid foundation from which this change could emerge.

The key outcomes that became apparent during this evaluation were:
• PSO added breadth, depth, and a community building component to
  Craftsbury’s gardening and seed saving projects
• PSO made curriculum integration with Craftsbury’s pre-existing gardening and
  seed saving programs more deliberate
• Volunteers and educators saw great value for students in Project Seasons
  Outreach’s connection between school and community
• Field trip participation was successful due to proximity and/or availability of
  transportation and coordination assistance

While it was clear that the Craftsbury site has experienced many benefits in having
PSO, several challenges emerged across the interviews that are worthy of discussion. A
pilot program such as that in Craftsbury naturally offers program staff rich information
for program modification, and given that Folsom Elementary School in South Hero was
well on their way with the Land, the Farms and Me (LFM) at the time of the evaluation,
additional insight into program workings was available through those interviews.

The key learning opportunities that emerged from this evaluation included:
• Similar initiatives in Craftsbury (Four Winds and PSO) created some confusion
  within the school and competition for volunteer time
• Keys to future success include an accessible point person, clear communication,
  and trained, organized volunteers
• Curriculum integration is necessary for sustained educator buy-in

Finally, while the South Hero data is occasionally integrated into the Craftsbury
findings to help illustrate a point, a separate section highlighting the key outcomes and
lessons learned from South Hero’s The Land, the Farms, and Me program concludes the Findings section of this report.

**Key Outcomes**

*Project Seasons Outreach added breadth, depth, and a community building component to Craftsbury’s gardening and seed saving projects*

> “The [Project Seasons] seed lessons and the gardening [lessons] fit in really well because we’re already doing that and to have more of a lesson around it makes it more than just slave labor and getting the job done for our fundraising. It makes it more educational and you’ve got the volunteer power too, so that’s great!”
>
> – Craftsbury Educator

> “The more non-traditional learning the better. Being able to learn through the senses, I think that’s a really important and critical way to learn and that’s why I appreciate [PSO] so much. It can be an experience on many levels.”
>
> – PSO Volunteer

At Craftsbury Elementary School there is a seed saving program that utilizes the school garden to provide for fundraising. Each class plays a role in the school garden, having one particular vegetable or flower to plant and maintain. Every class then follows through with the seed saving project by harvesting, packaging, and selling their seeds as a school fundraiser. The seed saving project has been a long-time, successful fundraiser for Craftsbury. In February the school sells the seeds to the community and they also hold a Memorial Day plant sale in the spring. Every interviewee mentioned this gardening and seed saving program that existed in Craftsbury prior to the inception of Project Seasons Outreach. Every interviewee also noted that PSO had enhanced these projects by providing volunteer support, which made it more manageable and by implementing an integrated curriculum, which made the projects more educational.

Regular meetings, easily integrated curriculum, and PSO volunteers and trainings were seen as key to the success and sustainability of the program. Regularly scheduled meetings (at least once a month) helped maintain PSO communication and organization. “We have meetings twice a week and we do discuss gardening and PSO during that time with [our point person] present so there were never any surprises in that sense,” one educator pointed out.

Educators found it especially beneficial when PSO material was easily integrated into existing school programs rather than an “add-on” to their curriculum. As one educator reported, “I think we’ve gotten some better ways to work with things like the composting and how we plant our seeds in the classrooms with the kids. We’re benefitting from ideas that [PSO] brought us.” It also worked well if the PSO material was readily incorporated into the curriculum. “We do a Native Americans unit, so
growing was a very important part of their life which works right into the curriculum for me,” said a Craftsbury educator.

Respondents indicated that PSO and associated volunteers added value and organization to the existing seed saving and gardening projects. “I think that probably all of us agree that the volunteer help in getting the garden planted was very valuable. It was more organized and it became a little more important because there were parent volunteers giving their time,” said one educator from Craftsbury. There was also a notable increase in the focus on integrating the school and community. As another educator pointed out, “People have taken an increasing amount of responsibility for making it a school project. It’s more and more about everyone being involved and not just [the garden coordinator].”

The PSO trainings were seen as a way to further educate and organize volunteers. A PSO volunteer who had attended the trainings reported, “[Our Shelburne Farms liaison] has come out and trained us on various parts of the Project Seasons curriculum, so we’ve been able to do several of the activities in the book with the classrooms. We as volunteers have really executed whatever has needed to be done.” Because the trainings were seen as so important, there was some concern about what will happen to the trainings once Shelburne Farms pulls out of the Craftsbury School. One of the PSO coordinators noted that, “[The volunteers are] trained to come in and implement some of the PSO activities. That’ll be the hard part when Shelburne Farms is gone because they’ve been doing the training and they’re really good at that.” The PSO trainings are addressed below with greater detail in the Key Learning section.

Project Seasons Outreach made curriculum integration with Craftsbury’s pre-existing gardening and seed saving programs more deliberate

> “It has organized us more and made [our programs] more deliberate. We did them before, but not attached to anything, so this is giving us curriculum ideas and we want to work it into our curriculum more.”
> 
> — Craftsbury Educator

> “I think there was a point [in the past] where [the classes] would all go out to the garden, but there wasn’t necessarily educational activities supporting that. So, I think that’s a nice thing that we’ve been doing is trying to give them a broader context for how seeds work or why you would want to grow locally.”
> 
> — PSO Volunteer

Shelburne Farms provided educators and volunteers with Project Seasons curriculum, activity guides, trainings, and a Shelburne Farms-based Program Coordinator. Craftsbury educators valued these resources and discovered that they were more deliberate when it came to incorporating them into their curriculum. “I think we’ve become more deliberate about including that sort of [Project Seasons] curriculum in our classrooms and in our school… we’ve become more deliberate since we got involved with PSO. It’s helped us organize ourselves,” said an educator from Craftsbury.
Many, if not all, of the grades were integrating PSO into their curriculum in one way or another. The kindergarten class has used the school garden to learn about the senses throughout the seasons as a result of PSO. One educator explained,

We’re more involved actively in the garden [since PSO has been here]. [Kindergarteners] are learning more about how things grow and [the volunteers with the help of the Shelburne Farms liaison] have a system worked out where we work in the garden in stations so the kindergarteners can be kept on task.

PSO also had an impressive effect on the first graders at Craftsbury Elementary School. They have done a seed study and incorporated “life in the 1620s” with the school’s gardening program. The students learned how to make butter and pound corn. They have learned what kind of crops would be growing and what kind of animals might be used agriculturally back in the 1620s. One Craftsbury educator was excited to point out, “We actually shake the butter in the jars and pound the corn. The [students] love our big feast at the end when they get to make applesauce and put their own butter on the corn bread.”

Many changes have taken place in the second grade classroom since PSO started. They have been hatching eggs, learning about recycling and composting, and working the school garden into their Native American unit. An educator described the impact on the second grade curriculum:

I had never hatched eggs before and we’ve hatched eggs now. I will definitely do it again. We definitely work more outside in the garden. They’ve learned about mulching and recycling and composting. Those are things that I never really talked about much, but they’ve become more important [as a result of having PSO at Craftsbury].

And, in the third grade classroom, students were studying earthworms using new activities and materials that PSO provided the class for this unit. “I’ve become more deliberate about the way I teach the earthworms unit. I’ve used some resources that I had gotten from Shelburne Farms to be a little more comprehensive,” reported a Craftsbury educator. The third grade class is also looking to embark on a composting project. An educator described the community connections that she was making in order to tackle this new project, “We’re hopefully going to begin a composting program again. Because of PSO we’ve been put in contact with a guy who’s a composter.”
Volunteers and educators saw great value for students in Project Seasons Outreach’s connection between school and community

“A lot of our kids just know the grocery store as a source of vegetables and I think it’s even more important in our global world to know that there are people locally, right here in our town, who are growing great vegetables that you can eat. That’s a powerful connection to make and I think that’s been a very valuable part of Project Seasons.”

— Craftsbury Educator

“[Those community connections] get [the students] really thinking about where they live and what are the things around them so they’re not quite so egocentric and they can see their impact on the community. I think that’s vital; [the students] are better equipped to be making decision as they grow.”

— PSO Volunteer

Project Seasons Outreach was successful in connecting Craftsbury Elementary School with local businesses, such as Pete’s Greens and Sterling College. Pete’s Greens is a local, organic vegetable farm located within walking distance of the school. Sterling College, a small, liberal arts college, is also located in Craftsbury Common. “I think [Shelburne Farms] did a good job connecting us with other people in the community that we really hadn’t connected with, like Pete’s Greens,” an educator from Craftsbury Elementary School said. Educators and parent volunteers were confident that these connections were valuable and would continue to exist on some level. “The teachers seem pretty committed to having a garden and the seed saving projects, etc. I think they all would be pretty strong advocates for keeping some kind of program like this going,” noted a parent volunteer. Furthermore, one educator reported the following:

The field trips we’ve done to the local businesses, like to Sterling and to the sugaring and to Pete’s to harvest, have been great in terms of community and to know what’s going on around you and where your food comes from. So as a citizen of this community it’s important for the kids to do that.

The owner of Pete’s Greens was very supportive of and open to the PSO program and pointed out that his sales have gone up recently. While he was not able to say whether his increase in CSA participation was due to the newfound connections with the elementary school, he was impressed by the program’s organization, happy to be introduced to the students of Craftsbury, and hopeful that the connection will continue.

It is also worth noting that a number of interviewees felt that Pete’s Greens had direct impact on students: Several interviewees reported that field trips to Pete’s Greens, where tasting the harvest was encouraged, motivated students to eat fresh vegetables they never would have tried before. A Craftsbury educator reported that, “The kids have been eating more greens and more willing to try vegetables at lunch. We’ve been trying to get our hot lunch person to incorporate more salads and things
“It’s wonderful that we’re able to walk to a farm because busing is such a huge issue and so expensive.”

– PSO Volunteer

“We don’t have to provide busses. That would be a huge glitch because our money for field trips has dwindled over the last several years.”

– South Hero Educator

A fortuitous connection built into the program was that the volunteer co-coordinator throughout the PSO pilot program was a Sterling College faculty member as well as an elementary school parent. She, along with the Shelburne Farms-based Program Coordinator, helped to cultivate these connections between community businesses and the school. In an effort to deepen the connection between the college and the elementary school, college students enrolled in Sterling’s nutrition class have worked with the Craftsbury students on farm education. In the future, a class parallel to PSO will be offered at Sterling with further internship opportunities. “Next year [there will be] a course called environmental education where the students will be involved with PSO,” reported one of the PSO coordinators. This relationship has the potential to add community support and volunteer strength to the PSO program.

Field trip participation was successful due to proximity and/or availability of transportation and coordination assistance

In both South Hero and Craftsbury the students visited local resources such as farms and sugar houses. It was profoundly evident that the school field trips were dependent on free transportation such as that provided by the South Hero Land Trust in that site, or the ability to walk to the various destinations, such as Pete’s Greens in Craftsbury. “Having Pete’s Greens within a walking distance from the school is such an incredible treasure for those kids and they enjoy it so much,” said a PSO coordinator. Likewise, a volunteer for The Land, the Farms and Me reported that, “[Free busing] is a key piece of [the program success]. Sometimes it can be a hard thing to work into a school budget if there’s not an organization who can help with some of the costs. It adds up!”
Furthermore, in Craftsbury, having a liaison between the school and the community greatly enhanced the program. A parent volunteer was happy to share that, “The [Shelburne Farms liaison] was so good about making sure things were really ready [for our field trips, getting stations set up and so on].” Similarly, in South Hero, having dedicated parent volunteer co-coordinators who handled the logistics of the program, and the field trips in particular, was a key to successful field trips, which otherwise can be cumbersome for educators to arrange single handedly on top of their many other responsibilities.

**Key Learning Opportunities**

*Similar initiatives in Craftsbury (Four Winds and Project Seasons Outreach) created some confusion within the school and competition for volunteer time*

| “I don’t know if there was a clear understanding from the outset, this is what PSO is, this is what my role is, and to make it viable long-term this is what we need from you.” | PSO Volunteer |
| “There’s a pretty big overlap with the Four Winds volunteers and the PSO volunteers and I think connecting the two programs could reduce stress on the volunteers.” | Craftsbury Educator |

Four Winds, a community-based education program that strives to provide children with meaningful opportunities to explore the natural world through science inquiry, observation, and investigation, had established a presence in Craftsbury Elementary prior to the inception of PSO. Comparisons between the programs were common among the stakeholders with whom we spoke, and the overlapping content seemed to cause confusion for educators and volunteers, burden the already limited supply of volunteers, and perhaps even diminish teacher interest due to the increased program demands.

Respondents gave direct examples of how Four Winds, a sustained program in Craftsbury, was effective and useful in the School. These examples can serve as lessons learned, as appropriate, for the evolving PSO model, particularly in a school where both programs are expected to co-exist:

♦ **Prescribed activities and curriculum**: Four Winds offers a very prescribed set of activities which educators and volunteers find easy to follow and implement. “I think Four Winds is incredibly successful because of the packaging of that information. That whole book, it’s like a treasure,” said a PSO coordinator. Even the volunteers have found reassurance in the step-by-step structure of the Four Winds curriculum. A previous Four Winds volunteer and current PSO volunteer reported that,

> Project Seasons Outreach feels incredibly scattered. There are great hands-on activities, but I think it needs to be a little more structured. Four Winds works so
well [because it has] a section that’s for adults to read, then I have some knowledge about it, then I can go do the activities.

A Craftsbury educator further supported that idea by saying, “I think that’s where the Four Winds model has really worked well - there are specific units, specific trainings, and you can just plug into that and adapt it as you want.”

♦ Predictable and educational trainings: A willingness to attend trainings and other PSO professional development is pitted against the similar offerings by Four Winds. Volunteers are interested in learning above and beyond the Project Seasons activities for personal awareness and volunteering confidence. For instance, one PSO and Four Winds volunteer reported the following:

One aspect I really like about the [Four Winds] program is that every time I go I learn something new. When we’ve gotten together for our trainings for PSO there isn’t a whole lot of time to do a lot more than talk about the logistics of whatever is coming up and then [learn] the actual activity. One of the things that I really love about the [Four Winds] program is I feel like there’s real value for me when I’m there. I’m really learning something that I wouldn’t have known otherwise.

Volunteers also noted that the predictability of the Four Winds trainings – both in format and schedule, was appealing and encouraged their participation.

♦ Five year program cycle: Four Winds has established a five year program cycle which educators and volunteers view as exciting and valuable to program diversity. A Craftsbury educator explains,

Four Winds offers a lot of different units and cycles and I think to some extent you can pick and choose from those and that’s what we kind of like. We want it to fit into our garden cycle. It’s nice to say, ‘Okay this year let’s focus on composting and there’s XYX units we can do and fit in.’

One of the PSO coordinators reported that, “The [Four Winds] model has really worked well [because] there’s these units, there’s these activities, you need these materials and here comes a person once a month to train. That’s a great model that’s sustained for a lot of years.”

Respondents suggested a few ways in which PSO could distinguish itself from Four Winds. For instance, interviewees expressed a strong interest in composting and other sustainability-focused education. “I think composting is going to become a much more significant part of our everyday life. The children aren’t really familiar with how that works so I think the whole composting piece would be very valuable,” reported a PSO
Furthermore, a Craftsbury educator added, “We’ve talked things over with the Shelburne Farms people and we’ve gotten some better ways to work with composting.” Collaborating with Four Winds when topics correspond well could improve program coherence, while clearly distinguishing themes that do not correspond to Four Winds could help establish PSO as more of a unique, separate entity.

**Keys to future success include clear communication, an accessible point person, and trained, organized volunteers**

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<th>&quot;[In order for the program to be sustained over time, we need] someone who could answer some pretty clear questions about exactly what PSO is and have a plan in place on how to recruit volunteers.”</th>
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<th>“For us to do the trainings ourselves and to organize it and meet with the volunteers and everything else is just an add-on, there needs to [continue to] be a coordinator of the volunteers.”</th>
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Many interviewees reported a lack of communication about the PSO program, which resulted in some logistical dysfunction. “It took us a while to work out that [PSO] was going to be to enhance our existing program and to help us to improve it and make it work. That was definitely a confusion and a conflict at the beginning - differing expectations,” said one Craftsbury educator. The Shelburne Farms’ liaison and PSO coordinators were a crucial piece to the improved communication and maintained organization. A PSO coordinator pointed out how important it was to have a responsive coordinator on board, noting that the program was definitely improved having “…[a Shelburne Farms liaison] responding to that [need for] different activities and hearing what people were saying about which activities the kids had done.” Several respondents also reported the need for a consistent point person to organize volunteers and maintain clear communication. “You need to maintain a champion as the primary contact and that should be someone that can motivate people and organize people to get things done,” one educator stated.

Another key to success is well organized volunteers. Volunteer participation made PSO more practical and played an essential role in the follow through of PSO. One Craftsbury educator reported the following:

The volunteers have truly helped because we can go out and work in the garden and have somebody who’s doing an activity with the other half of the class. It makes it much more feasible when you have help and you don’t have twenty kids running around in the garden not knowing what they’re supposed to be doing.
“[The volunteers] have been so important. Can you imagine trying to plant tomatoes with fifteen kids all by yourself? Their help is invaluable,” agrees another educator.

Curriculum integration is necessary for sustained educator buy-in

“Well, in truth, because classroom teachers are expected to do so much more every year it doesn’t get easier it gets harder. The expectations, the general education requirements are less of a teacher’s discretion and I don’t think a classroom teacher could keep it up. I think for [Project Seasons Outreach] to be successful it has to not be an add-on for the classroom teacher.”

— Craftsbury Educator

Educator input is crucial to PSO’s sustainability in the classroom. If a program is seen as an add-on, interest and motivation is lost to the hectic schedule and already high demands placed on educators. “If it’s an add-on and it’s not incorporated into what we’re expected to teach--the standards--then it’s not as easy to carry out. It becomes an interruption as opposed to something that’s vital to the curriculum,” reported a Craftsbury educator. Even a PSO volunteer noted the time constraints teachers face, “There isn’t enough time in the day to pull away from basic learning commitments.” However, when field trips or other activities were connected to their current curriculum, educators were more enthusiastic about participating, and more likely to integrate them into their students’ studies. A Craftsbury educator who had attended Shelburne Farms’ Project Seasons summer institute said, “I re-wrote a unit that I was already doing on seeds and I incorporated a lot of [the Project Seasons] activities into my own unit. We do a lot more of the ‘Where does this food come from and how would they (the pilgrims) have made it?’ kind of stuff, which comes from Project Seasons.”

The Land, the Farms, and Me in South Hero: Findings and Lessons Learned

At the outset of this evaluation process, the Land, the Farms, and Me program was well established in South Hero’s Folsom Elementary School. Furthermore, the program had a unique genesis which is described briefly in the introduction to this report. This section of the report describes key findings particular to the South Hero variation of the Project Seasons Outreach program. The data for this section were far more limited, however, than for the Craftsbury findings.

The South Hero community was receptive to LFM and confident it would be sustained

Overall, people seemed very receptive to LFM in South Hero, where it both benefitted from and enhanced a strong pre-existing commitment to place-based education. “On the whole I think everybody has really come to embrace the LFM, which is fantastic.” reported one LFM coordinator. Another coordinator said, “Everyone has been so receptive. I’ve never gotten any negative feedback. Overall it’s been extremely
positive.” One educator spoke on behalf of her co-workers stating, “South Hero teachers [are] committed to the idea of place-based education and that’s hugely important – crucial.”

The ease with which educators were able to integrate LFM into the curriculum seems to have grown over time. “The first couple of years we were doing LFM we would be shoving this stuff down [the teachers’] throats and they would say, ‘But we don’t have time for that!’ Now they not only have time for [LFM], but they know that it will hit their standards,” reported a LFM coordinator. Supporting this assessment of the current status of the program, an educator reported, “[The LFM] does not at all feel like an add-on. We’re always happy to stop what we’re doing when it’s something that’s a worthwhile pursuit, which the LFM always is. It’s a wonderful program and I can’t say enough about it,” shared a South Hero educator.

South Hero had several valuable community connections through the LFM

The LFM program succeeded in connecting with various local farmers and the South Hero Land Trust, and extended the school’s relationship with some students’ parents. “One parent called and asked if it could be a LFM activity for the kids to come out [to their property] and pick their own pumpkins,” stated one South Hero educator. Another parent wanted to share their monarch butterfly and caterpillar-filled field with the students through the LFM. “We took a LFM trip out [to the field] and found caterpillars, caught butterflies, tagged them and released them,” a South Hero educator reported. These community ties were seen as meaningful and educational. “Better education exists outside the four walls of this school,” a South Hero educator offered, “and it’s often more meaningful because you’re getting out into the community and you’re getting into real life and the kids begin to realize that they have a role in the area they live.”

The South Hero Land Trust played a significant role in the feasibility of these field trips through the program coordinator and bus funds they provided. One Land Trust staff member explained how the missions of the two programs overlap:

We have an overarching program here at the South Hero Land Trust called the South Hero Land Trust Farm Initiative where we create a local agriculture guide and work with education outreach. The Land, The Farms, and Me falls under that general overview… so I will include our partnership in grants that I’m writing for staff time and bus funding. … Making sure that the properties we’ve worked really hard to conserve are being used in various educational ways is really important.

South Hero respondents noted the importance of a LFM champion

The South Hero model has relied almost exclusively on one or two coordinators who run all aspects of the program, rather than on a diverse and shifting core of parent
volunteers as with the Project Seasons Outreach or Four Winds model. Having coordinators who initiated, organized and maintained the LFM program was deemed by South Hero interviewees to be a critical ingredient of the program’s success. “Our [coordinators were] the catalyst for this. Clearly without [them] we wouldn’t be anywhere,” said a South Hero educator. These volunteer coordinators were advocates of place-based education and eager to help educators along the way. “[The LFM coordinators] looked at all the grade level expectations whenever writing up an activity plan or a plan for a field trip. [They] noted all the grade level expectations that we were addressing in science and social studies…and [having that] documentation is so important,” reported a South Hero educator. Moreover, for a program like the LFM to succeed it takes “somebody for whom place-based education is a mission and they’re willing to work with teachers,” shared one educator.

Conclusions

Consideration of pilot year successes and challenges is a constructive way to nurture a program as it fledges into new sites. The key outcomes are evidence that Project Seasons Outreach is a rich program model with a positive start and ample potential for future success. Craftsbury Elementary School’s gardening and seed saving projects became deeper and more deliberate as a result of the activities and integrated curriculum Project Seasons Outreach provided. Nearly every classroom reported a curriculum change attributable to PSO. In addition, the community connections PSO created through various field trips were seen as valuable for the students, and as sustainable over time as long as proximity and/or transportation costs do not become insurmountable obstacles. These community-school connections have great potential to continue positively influencing the parties involved.

PSO may have faced extra challenges as the result of going into a school where a similar program (Four Winds) was already established. At the same time, this situation also offered PSO the opportunity to gain certain comparative insights. Clear communication was the biggest challenge PSO faced throughout its pilot year. Even stronger outcomes may be seen if PSO is to maintain organized volunteers and an accessible, local point person in the future. Likewise, prescribed activities, predictable and rewarding trainings, an alternated program cycle, and further curriculum integration could enhance the Project Seasons Outreach program and reduce some of the frustration reported by interviewees.

While South Hero’s version of Project Seasons Outreach is a rather dramatically different model, its similarities lend insight into ways that the PSO model might succeed in other towns. Key features include a talented and dedicated site coordinator, vital relationships with (and even funding from) local organizations, a teaching staff highly receptive to place-based education, and excellent and accessible agricultural resources within the community.
Recommendations
Respondents provided several suggestions for program improvement, and the evaluators’ analysis provides insight into additional opportunities for program enhancement. As with any program, financial and staff resources will and should shape prioritization of any recommendations.

The following recommendations came directly from interviews:

- **Where both programs exist in one school, consider integrating Project Seasons with Four Winds:** In a school where Four Winds already exists, PSO must be especially deliberate with their goals and intentions. Particularly in small schools, when both programs are present the possibility for competition rather than cooperation is ripe. Explicit collaboration, such as combining training meetings and intersecting content areas, could reduce stress for educators, minimize competition for volunteer time, and consolidate the volunteer workload.

- **Continue to provide a key point person:** It is crucial to maintain a designated person who will organize volunteers, field trips, and manage the overall communication for the programs. Offering a stipend may help entice and sustain this position down the road.

- **Invest explicitly in establishing and maintaining a core group of volunteers:** Respondents suggested that contacting volunteers in person was an important initial part of the volunteer recruitment effort, and that casting a wider net via these personal contacts would assist in establishing a solid initial commitment and clear understanding of the program. This may mean that, in addition to posting fliers and having the key coordinator phone potential volunteers, a core group could be established to connect with their own contacts and encourage participation (and, hopefully, longer term buy-in as well). Volunteers also suggested that they would be more motivated to sustain their volunteer role if training sessions offered adult education that helped them grow personally as well as improving their relationship with the students.

- **Match volunteers with classrooms for consistency:** As with the Four Winds program, respondents suggested that assigning particular volunteers a consistent classroom would help volunteers to establish predictable routines, connect with students over time, and strengthen their relationships with the classroom educators more readily.

- **Include program adaptations for older students:** Several educators and volunteers expressed skepticism that PSO was appropriate across all the grade levels. Being more explicit about how to target lessons, activities, and materials toward the older students could help to make the program more sustainable throughout the school.
The following recommendations come from the evaluators’ interpretation of the findings:

- **Provide more program scaffolding**: Altering curriculum from year to year could enhance the excitement, freshness, and sustainability of PSO, as exemplified by the five year cycle established by Four Winds. Such a scaffolding would offer educators flexibility, more options for building themes across sequential grade levels, and the ability to tailor PSO for their individual class curricula.

- **Continue to invest in multiple pillars to support PSO’s staying power in a community**: Students grow up and move on to new schools, and they usually take their parent volunteer with them, but organizations such as Sterling College and Pete’s Greens are fixtures in a community. In order to sustain the program’s practices and impacts over time, PSO should continue to cultivate strong relationships and communication systems between schools, community organizations, and non-traditional community members for long-term program involvement and support. When there are multiple, permanent solid program pillars in place, a naturally shifting pillar, such as a student and parent participation, can be more readily supported.

- **Assure that trainings address diverse aspects of the PSO experience**: Volunteers and educators can benefit from increased content knowledge, greater understanding of PSO activities, and improved community support. It is particularly important to place adequate emphasis on training volunteers in classroom management skills, as some volunteers articulated their own bewilderment with how to manage student behavior issues.

- **Continue to offer (and emphasize that) trainings are held as routine monthly meetings at a pre-ordained time and place**: The predictability of holding PSO training meetings at a regular time and place (such as the first Tuesday of every month, in the cafeteria, at 9 AM) was thought to be the best way to assure consistent participation.
Appendix A: Craftsbury Interview Guides

Project Seasons Outreach
Interview Guide
Craftsbury Teachers
June 2008

Introduction to interviews:

- We are outside evaluators with PEER Associates, hired by Shelburne Farms to evaluate their Project Seasons Outreach (pilot) Program.
- Main purpose is to get your perspective about this pilot program and its effects in your school and community.
- This is NOT a performance assessment.
- Your responses are confidential in that names are never used. Quotes are used. Only evaluation staff will see raw data.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time without any negative consequences.
- Data from these interviews will be analyzed and written up in a report that we'll give to Shelburne Farms by September, 2008, and they will share the report with the school and community.
- Request permission to record, take notes, transcribe.
- Questions or concerns?

1. Introductions, including interviewee’s role, and how long s/he has been in the position.

2. What got you (or the school) started with the Project Seasons Craftsbury program? What would you say keeps it going? What do you see as future prospects for continuation?

Outcomes Questions:

3. In what ways (if any) has the presence of Craftsbury Project Seasons in this community affected the way you do things in your classroom? How about in the school as a whole? Has it influence school culture on the whole?

4. Since the introduction of this program, has the level and type of community based learning in your classroom or school has changed (for instance, your use of the local community as teaching resources, your use of nature in or outside your classroom, etc.)? How so?

5. Has the level of community involvement in your school changed? If so, in what ways? Are there more or different types of people involved with the design and delivery of your curriculum? In special events?

6. In an ideal world, programs like Craftsbury Project Seasons would lead to increased connections between volunteer-led programs and field trips and teachers' classroom curricula. Would you say that this program in your school has changed the level or diversity of ways educators and volunteers connect? Can you offer me any examples of such connections being made?

7. In what ways, if at all, has Craftsbury Project Seasons influenced educator practice at your school? Has it influenced the types of activities that are taught? Has the level of community involvement in your school changed? Do you notice any change in how much educators utilize the community as a way to meet standards and teach traditional content areas? Has it influenced the school culture?

Process Questions:

8. What have you noticed to be the biggest challenges (for yourself or for others) in connecting the community and school? Which of these challenges or barriers are just “the way it is” here in your school, and which do you believe could be addressed by the Project Seasons program in the future?
9. In what ways could Shelburne Farms introduce the program to teachers and communities in order to reduce frustration or improve clarity about the program's purpose and structure? What would have helped you or others get involved more easily?

10. Do you think that the connections forged between the school and community (such as changes in the way you or other teachers teach; your or others' involvement as a community member in the school) will be lasting? Why or why not? What will be the most lasting or enduring effects?

11. Are there particular parts (e.g., Professional Development workshops, volunteer coordination, identification of community partners, materials for activities) of the Craftsbury Project Seasons program in particular that you view as essential to helping the program "stick" and live on in the school/community in years to come?

12. Shelburne Farms recognizes that a program can’t expect to have staying power over time without some sort of ongoing contact or support. What would you say are the most basic types of input or support that your school/community would need to maintain the program effects over the next few years?

13. If you worked for Shelburne Farms and your task was to select schools or communities that you were pretty sure would successfully participate in a Project Seasons Outreach program, what would you look for in a potential school? What kind of administration? What site characteristics do you think would improve the chances that they might sustain the program throughout the year? (Additional background: By "site characteristics" we mean any aspects of the school or community that are pre-existing to your intervention, and are not likely be changed by your program. So, examples might include: the community has to have had prior exposure to the concept, has to have a solar panel atop the school, needs to have a mayor who is on board with your program, etc.)

14. Do you have anything else to add?

Thanks for your time.
Introduction to interviews:

- We are outside evaluators with PEER Associates, hired by Shelburne Farms to evaluate the Project Seasons Outreach (pilot) Program.
- Main purpose is to get your perspective about the program and its effects in your school and community.
- This is NOT a performance assessment.
- Your responses are confidential in that names are never used. Quotes are used. Only evaluation staff will see raw data.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time without any negative consequences.
- Data from these interviews will be analyzed and written up in a report that we’ll give to Shelburne Farms by September, 2008, and they will share the reports with the school and community.
- Request permission to record, take notes, transcribe.
- Questions or concerns?

1. Introductions, including interviewee’s role, and how long s/he has been in the position.

2. What got you (or the school) started with the Project Seasons Craftsbury program? What would you say keeps it going? What do you see as future prospects for continuation?

Outcomes Questions:

3. In what ways (if any) has the presence of PS Outreach in this community affected the way you interact with your child’s classroom? How about in the school as a whole? Has it influenced school culture on the whole?

4. In what ways, if at all, has PSOutreach influenced educator practice at your school? Has it influenced the types of activities that they teach? Do you notice any change in how much educators utilize the community as a way to meet standards and teach traditional content areas?

5. Would you say that since the introduction of this program, has the level and type of community based learning in your child’s classroom or school has changed (for instance, as a volunteer are you using the local community and outside environment as teaching resources, etc.)? How so?

6. Has the level of community involvement in your school changed? If so, in what ways? Are there more or different types of people involved with classroom activities? Or, is it the same group of volunteers who usually help with the school?

7. In an ideal world, programs like PSOutreach would lead to increased connections between volunteer-led programs and field trips and teachers’ classroom curricula. Would you say that this program in your child’s school has changed the level or diversity of ways educators and volunteers connect? Can you offer me any examples of such connections being made?

Process Questions:

8. What have you noticed to be the biggest challenges (for yourself or for others) in connecting the community and school? Which of these challenges or barriers are just “the way it is” in Craftsbury, and which do you believe could be addressed by the Project Seasons program in the future?
9. In what ways could Shelburne Farms introduce the program to teachers and volunteers in order to reduce frustration or improve clarity about the program's purpose and structure? What would have helped you or others get involved more easily?

Staying Power and Longevity:

10. Do you think that the connections forged between the school and community (such as your or others' involvement as a community member in the school) will be lasting? Why or why not? What will be the most lasting or enduring effects?

11. Are there particular parts (e.g. volunteer trainings, volunteer coordination, identification of community partners) of the PSOutreach program in particular that you view as essential to helping the program "stick" and live on in the school/community in years to come?

12. Shelburne Farms recognizes that a program can't expect to have staying power over time without some sort of ongoing contact or support. What would you say are the most basic types of input or support that your school/community would need to maintain the program effects over the next few years?

13. If you worked for Shelburne Farms and your task was to select schools or communities that you were pretty sure would successfully participate in a Project Seasons Outreach program, what would you look for in a potential school? What kind of administration? What kind of farms? What site characteristics do you think would improve the chances that they might sustain the program throughout the year? (Additional background: By "site characteristics" we mean any aspects of the school or community that are pre-existing to your intervention, and can not likely be changed by your program. So, examples might include: the community has to have had prior exposure to the concept, has to have a solar panel atop the school, needs to have a mayor who is on board with your program, etc.)

14. Anything else to add?

    Thanks for your time.
Appendix B: South Hero Interview Guide

Project Seasons Outreach
Interview Guide

Educators and Community Partners for The Land, The Farms and Me (South Hero)
June 2008

Introduction to interviews:

- We are outside evaluators with PEER Associates, hired by Shelburne Farms to evaluate Project Seasons Outreach Program.
- Main purpose is to get your perspective about the program and its effects in your school and community.
- This is NOT a performance assessment.
- Your participation is voluntary, and you can stop at any time without any negative consequences.
- Data from these interviews will be analyzed and written up in a report that we’ll give to Shelburne Farms by September, 2008, and they will share the reports with the school and community.
- We will not use names associated with your ideas or quotes when reporting.
- Request permission to record, take notes, transcribe.
- Questions or concerns?

1. Introductions, including interviewee’s role, and how long s/he has been in the position.

2. What got you (or the school) started with The Land, The Farms and Me program? What would you say keeps it going? What do you see as future prospects for continuation? What has your own involvement been like?

Outcomes Questions:

3. In what ways, if at all, has The Land, The Farms and Me influenced the way you do things in your classroom? (for volunteers, administrators, less involved teachers; educator practice at your school?) Has it influenced the types of activities that are taught? Do you notice any change in how much educators utilize the community as a way to meet standards and teach traditional content areas? Has it influenced the school culture?

4. Would you say that since the introduction of this program, has the level and type of community based learning in your classroom or school has changed (for instance, your use of the local community as teaching resources, your use of nature in or outside your classroom, etc.)? How so?

5. Has the level of community involvement in your school changed? If so, in what ways? Are there more or different types of people involved with the design and delivery of your curriculum? In special events?

Process Questions:

6. What have you noticed to be the biggest challenges (for yourself or for others) in connecting the community and school? Which of these challenges or barriers are just “the way it is” here in your school, and which do you believe could be addressed by the The Land, The Farms and Me program in the future?

7. In what ways could a program like this best be introduced to teachers and communities in order to improve clarity about the program’s purpose and structure? What would have helped you or others get involved more easily?

8. Last year, Shelburne Farms offered South Hero teachers and volunteers the opportunity to participate in their Project Seasons workshop. As you probably know, The Land, The Farms and Me has been around for longer than Shelburne Farms’ more recent involvement. What would you say
has changed about the **program structure** or the way things are done, if anything, since Shelburne Farms became more involved?

**Staying Power Questions:**

9. Do you think that the connections forged between the school and community will be **lasting**? Why or why not? What will be the most lasting or enduring effects?

10. Are there particular parts of The Land, The Farms and Me program that you view as essential to helping the program "stick" and live on in the school/community in years to come?

11. Shelburne Farms recognizes that a program like this can’t expect to have staying power over time without some sort of ongoing contact or support. What would you say are the most **basic types of input or support** that your school/community would need to maintain the program effects over the next few years?

12. If you worked for Shelburne Farms and your task was to select schools or communities that you were pretty sure would successfully participate in a program like The Land, The Farms and Me, **what would you look for in a potential school**? What kind of administration? What kind of farms? What site characteristics do you think would improve the chances that they might sustain the program **throughout the year**? (Additional background: By “site characteristics” we mean any aspects of the school or community that are pre-existing to your intervention, and can not likely be changed by your program. So, examples might include: the community has to have had prior exposure to the concept, has to have a solar panel atop the school, needs to have a mayor who is on board with your program, etc.)

13. Anything else to add?

    Thanks for your time.
Appendix C: Program Staff Focus Group Guide

Project Seasons Outreach Focus Group Guide
With Shelburne Farms Staff
April 17, 2008, 1-2:30

Introduction to interviews/focus group:

- We are outside evaluators with PEER Associates, hired by Shelburne Farms to evaluate Project Seasons Outreach in Craftsbury and South Hero.
- Main purpose of this piece of the process is to generate a discussion about the role of site selection in beginning your work with a town. We’ll also ask for your reflections on the outcomes and process in Craftsbury and South Hero.
- Overarching questions are:
  - What kind of pre-screening information about a school/community will allow staff to choose sites well, and target the work most effectively?
  - What elements of this program and existing site conditions are most critical to its lasting power? What are the minimum inputs and site conditions needed to maintain program effects over time?
- The focus group should take about one hour.
- Main guidelines for a focus group are: there are no right or wrong answers, and we try to hear everyone’s voice as much as possible.
- Part of the purpose of doing this as a group rather than individually is so that you collectively benefit from the discussion beyond (and before) what we provide you in a report or Screening Guide.
- Data from this group interview will be used in conjunction with data from individual interviews with teachers and community partner. In the fall we’ll provide you with a report and a tool to use for pre-screening your communities.
- Questions or concerns?

Focus Group Questions:

Reflections on Craftsbury and South Hero

The following questions are questions that we will also ask of some volunteers and community partners in the two communities. Your input will help provide an additional perspective on their responses.

1. In what ways, if at all, has PSOutreach influenced educator practice in these two schools? Has it influenced the types of activities that they teach? Do you notice any change in how much educators utilize the community as a way to meet standards and teach traditional content areas? Has it influenced the school culture?

2. Has the level of community involvement in these schools changed? If so, in what ways? Are there more or different types of people involved with the design and delivery of the teachers’ curriculum? In special events? Are there new or different types of connections between teachers and community volunteers? What kinds of examples can you offer?

Learning from Challenges

3. What have you noticed to be the biggest challenges (for yourself or for others) in connecting the community and school in these two locations? Which of these challenges or barriers are just “the way it is” here in your school, and which do you believe could be addressed by the Project Seasons program in the future?

4. In what ways could Shelburne Farms introduce the program to teachers and communities in order to reduce frustration or improve clarity about the program’s purpose and structure? What would help teachers and volunteers to get involved more easily?
Staying Power

5. Do you think that the connections forged between the school and community (such as changes in the way teachers teach; community members’ involvement in the school) will be lasting? Why or why not? What will be the most lasting or enduring effects?

6. This group recognizes that a program isn’t likely to have staying power over time without some sort of ongoing contact or support. What would you say are the most basic types of input or support that these schools/communities would need to maintain the program effects over the next few years?

Choosing Project Sites

When we use the term “site characteristics” we mean any aspects of the school or community that are pre-existing to your intervention, and can not likely be changed by your program. So, examples might include: the community has to be rural, has to have had prior exposure to the concept, has to have a solar panel atop the school, needs to have a mayor who is on board with your program, etc. (Perhaps reference conversation with David Sobel, His Hierarchy of School Needs.)

7. In your experiences with a variety of place-based education programs, what site characteristics have you found to work well in the whole school, place-based education initiatives? Also consider whether the characteristics that come to mind apply to Project Seasons Outreach.

   - What existing EE, service learning, or place-based education type initiatives have they undertaken prior to this?
   - Is it important to have a “project champion” (e.g. lead teacher or lead volunteer) within the site?
   - How much weight would you give the role of the administrator in shaping the success of an initiative? What characteristics does the ideal administrator possess?
   - In the most successful schools, how does the staff operate...independently? As a team?
   - Are there certain kinds of community partners that are critical to have present in the community?
   - What role do parent volunteers need to play?
   - What physical resources do they need? What natural features? Specific community resources? Are there differences in what are needed in a more rural or urban setting?

8. Speaking for PS Outreach in particular, are you aware of particular features in Craftsbury, Burlington or South Hero that have been essential to getting the process going? Any features or site characteristics that have been clear hindrances to the process?

9. What would “the ideal” school/community look like for the next PS Outreach look like? What features or site characteristics would it have? What would not be present?

   Pass around the CO-SEED and Greening Screening Guides. Maybe the Greening Application, too. Describe their context briefly. We will also distribute these guides in advance of the meeting for staff review.

10. Let’s critique these. What stands out to you, for better or for worse? Which of these items make sense for PS Outreach? Which ones definitely do not translate? Are there other formats that would be more useful to you?

11. How do you see effectively making use of such a tool for FSO in the future? Would you visit sites and interview individuals to see where they “fit” with such criteria? Would you have communities first self-assess by completing a written version of this, or have them fill out an application that would fit directly into this (such as the example from Greening)?

   Thanks for your time.
Appendix D: Project Seasons Outreach Site Selection Rating Tool

Project Seasons Outreach Program New Site Selection Rating Tool

Site: _________________________________________________________

Staff Member Rating the Site: ________________________________________

Directions: Use this sheet when considering new towns/communities for participation in the Project Seasons Outreach Program. After reviewing the community’s application and/or interview, consider each of the following criteria and rate it based on how well the community/school fits the criteria. A rating of 1 means the community is weak in this area. A rating of 4 means the community is strong in that area. Communities with the highest ratings should be the best “fit” for participation this program – in other words, they will be more likely to participate actively in the program, attain the program’s stated outcomes, and sustain program effects over time. It is suggested that, if more than one staff member is making the judgment, each member completes this form separately and then they together compare impressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness Criteria</th>
<th>Rating: 1=weak, 4=strong</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Demonstrated readiness for and commitment to receiving this program in the school on the part of the faculty, including an <strong>active cohort of teachers ready and willing to start</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Evidence of <strong>strong administrative support</strong> for this initiative (e.g. enthusiasm, time/money set aside for curriculum planning and PD).</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Demonstrated <strong>readiness for change</strong>, willingness to remove obstacles, and <strong>enthusiasm</strong> for this initiative, generally.</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) Commitment to including Project Seasons Outreach/Shelburne Farms in <strong>faculty professional development</strong> opportunities ( <strong>OR</strong> teachers are clearly willing to commit their time to this outside of school time).</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) <strong>Need</strong> for our assistance in the school and community – inability to pull off a transition to place-based education without us.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Site is <strong>currently</strong> interested in strengthening <strong>school-community relationships</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g) Evidence of interest in and ability to help secure funds for a community/school program coordinator.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readiness Criteria</td>
<td>Rating: 1=weak, 4=strong</td>
<td>Comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>h) Site has a very committed “champion” internal to the school (i.e. a parent with a young child in the school) who will play an active role in assisting with or coordinating the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) Community acknowledges that the program supports existing school goals or initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>j) Funding for buses is accessible or there are many opportunities within walking distance.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>k) Evidence that implementation of Project Seasons Outreach will be integrated into the curriculum (not just an add-on), and have tangible and demonstrable positive impacts on the school’s curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>l) Some place-based education projects currently underway in the school or community to build upon (e.g. experience with EE, agricultural education, or community-based education). Caution: be wary of competing initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>m) Potential for high impact in terms of numbers of students, teachers, community members reached directly or indirectly through outreach.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>n) Potential for PBE approach to become self-sustaining in this school and community, as evidenced by a broad, diverse, and deep constituency and the rich web of relationships necessary to sustain the program over time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o) Community has easy access to related public resources (i.e. so that teachers and volunteers can take students there, and so that students can later take their families to experience the town’s resources).</td>
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<tr>
<td>p) School has access to school gardens or other space for growing food.</td>
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<tr>
<td>q) Site has a very committed “champion” external to the school (i.e. an organization in the community) who will play an active role in assisting with or coordinating the program.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total (which serves as a starting point for discussion, not an ending point)</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix E: Project Seasons Outreach Evaluation Plan

### Project Seasons Outreach Overview 2007-08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Evaluation Questions and/or Descriptions</th>
<th>Evaluation Strategy/Activity</th>
<th>Personnel Accountable</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Approx.% of eval. plan</th>
<th>Est. # Sr. days</th>
<th>Est. # Assoc. days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Evaluation of Project Seasons Outreach in Coventry and South Hero</td>
<td><strong>Outcomes Questions:</strong> 1) In what ways (if any) has the presence of Project Seasons Outreach changed the local and type of community based learning in each community’s school? 2) Has the level of community involvement in the school changed? If so, in what ways? 3) What kinds of connections are being made between volunteer-led programs and field trips and teachers’ classroom curricula?</td>
<td>a) Clearly articulate evaluation questions, develop interview guide(s) (vary the basic guide for relevance in these communities, and for types of participants—educators, volunteers, coordinators, community partners).</td>
<td>ALP, Program Staff</td>
<td>Apr. 08</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Process Questions:</strong> 4) What barriers exist in doing this work in the communities and schools? Which are inevitable here, and which could be addressed by the program in the future? 5) Considering that teachers often have a “crowded” curriculum, and many organizations are offering to work with schools, how can we “outside” organizations like Stellwagen Farms best demonstrate a program’s relevance to the curriculum and be clear about the program’s purpose and structure at the beginning of and throughout an evaluation within the school? 6) What elements of this program are most critical to its staying power? What are the minimum inputs needed to maintain program effects over time?</td>
<td>b) Program staff schedule interviews. Conduct interviews with ~4 participants in Coventry, ~4 participants in South Hero. Interviews will be by phone. (Informal notes while interviewing; not transcribed.)</td>
<td>ALP, Program Staff</td>
<td>May-June 2008</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c) Analyze data and write informal evaluation summary report.</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Fall 08</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Development of Site Selecting Tool (Scoring Tool)</td>
<td><strong>Outcomes Questions:</strong> 1) What pre-screening information about a school/community will allow staff to choose sites well, and target the work most effectively? 2) What elements of the program and existing site conditions are most critical to its staying power? What are the minimum inputs and site conditions needed to maintain program effects over time?</td>
<td>d) Develop focus group guide and facilitate a 1-1.5 hour conversation with Stellwagen Farms staff (Jan, Megan, Bruce, Amy, Ranu).</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Apr. 08</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a) Conduct data from focus group interviews, and past tools PEER has utilized to create a Site Scoring Tool.</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Fall 08</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Program Staff Support</td>
<td>*What are realistic expectations and plans for generating useful evaluation results within existing resource constraints?</td>
<td>b) Provide current &amp; develop future evaluation overview.</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Meetings, small, conversations with staff to maximize value from evaluation activities.</td>
<td>g) General, on-going support for utilization of evaluation results and program documentation.</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Integrating plans with budgets, accounting.</td>
<td>b) Administrative and financial management support.</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>