**Technical Assistance Subcommittee Meeting Minutes – 1/13/2021**

Attendance: James Wolff, Joelle Neff, Tim Bomba, Jessica Merkling, and Scott Thompson

Went over NOA Technical assistance Milestones.

How should the SWCD go about reaching small and urban farmers?

* Scott said putting out flyers in the community worked really well for his grant. He also suggested connecting with suppliers that farmers get their products from.
* Tim suggested using resources like Mike and Scott to make direct farmer contacts to both rural and urban farms.
* James said a lot of Purdue Extension’s success connecting with farmers comes from doing programs and sending out surveys afterwards. He also said Facebook, NILFN, and the Local Food Counsel are a good way to connect with farmers.

Would having a presence at the Farmers’ Market be a good use of time?

* The group thought it wouldn’t be the best use of times. Because having a booth wouldn’t allow much interaction with producers and sometimes the market is to busy to make contacts while walking around the market.

What are non-agronomic practices?

* High tunnels
* Could that be business management?

Possible organizations to work with

* Gateway Woods in Leo Cedarville area. They work with high risk youth to provide produce for food banks.
* Church on Union Chapel Rd that sends produce from their garden to the food bank – Scott to reach out.

Mentor Program

* This would go under direct technical assistance. The idea is that experienced famers would volunteer their time to answer questions for new, struggling, or inexperienced farmers.
* James suggested creating a list of farms/farmers that would be willing to be these mentors. The list would involve a bio of each farm and contact information. This list could go on a website or be available as a handout.
* Possible mentors: Mark Rinkenberg (Tim to reach out) and Richard Barns
* Including an advertisement about needing farmer mentors would be a good way to get volunteers.

Questions asked:

* Are other counties already doing farm visits that can be counted for this grant’s numbers?
* Are we making full blown nutrient management plans or just nutrient management recommendations?
  + The group would prefer just doing nutrient management recommendations.
  + James said they’re thinking about doing an educational program that would teach farmers to make their own nutrient management plans. Farmers who get free soil sampling programs would be excellent candidates for this possible program.

Jessica is going to reach out to others in her agency that work more frequently with agriculture.