

San Juan Del Centro Garden Project

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Fall 1995 - Spring 1996

Advisor:

Mission: "Contribute to the development of global sustainability on a local level by encouraging and facilitating an organic project in the San Juan Del Centro community by providing the materials and opportunity for families of diverse backgrounds to come together and grow a portion of their own food. "

Evaluation of Change Project: San Juan Del Centro Garden Project

Christine Ahn, Juliet Biagi, Heather Foster, Chaley Fuchs, Molly Harlow, Chris Hudak, Orvest Law

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Garden Group is to contribute to the development of global sustainability on a local level by encouraging and facilitating an organic gardening project in the San Juan Del Centro community by providing the materials and opportunity for families of diverse backgrounds to come together and grow a portion of their own food.

Goals:

1. Sustainability
2. Fulfill a community need
3. Create usable and productive garden plots
4. Establish community ownership
5. Spread the word-pass on knowledge of the benefits of organic gardening
6. Begin a collaboration process with and between community residents

Purpose of Evaluation:

- To analyze both the outcome of the change project and also the group process during the change project.
- It is also beneficial to transfer insight derived from the change project process to the following class, in order to prevent similar mistakes from recurring.
- To discern what worked, what didn't, and how we could have changed the process and outcome.
- To have complete closure after the project has been completed.

Design of Evaluation:

The final reflection for the evaluation process was a two-part process which was initially facilitated by the Assistant Director Seana Lowe, and a week later solely with the garden group. This was important to have two separate sessions because the first set the wheels in motion and encouraged members to evaluate their experience for the concluding evaluation. In the second meeting, we reiterated our mission and goals we set forth at the beginning of the change project last fall. We then measured how successful we were with realizing our mission statement by going through each goal and clarifying how we fulfilled those goals. We then incorporated into our evaluation what could have been changed to make our nine month experience more in line with our vision and passions. Finally, we discussed the group process by opening discourse in the form of "go-around" and having each member speak about their personal experience within the group and how certain conditions could have changed to make the whole change project experience better.

How We Fulfilled Goals:

1. Sustainability:

We feel as though we successfully facilitated the sustainability of the organic garden because the gardens will be sustainable without INVST, especially with the long-term partnership between the families and Community Food Share. Not only have Community Food Share implemented the garden plots, their commitment to the sustainability of these garden plots extend beyond the first year. The second year they provide manure and compost to fertilize the soil, a selection of

seed packets and transplants, and also commit to making available a garden mentor. Community Food Share's involvement in the third year is lessened than the second year because they encourage families to become less dependent on Community Food Share and more self-sustaining. Although CFS provides a garden mentor, manure and compost, and some seeds in the third year, these are provided only when requested. Also, the enthusiasm by the INVST students seems to have ignited a personal commitment from Alex Mitchell at the San Juan Family Learning Center to maintain the garden project. Both the long term partnership and personal commitment appear to guarantee the sustainability of these garden plots. Finally, due to the fact that the garden plots were designed for individual families, the ownership that results from individual family plots guarantees sustainability of the plots.

2. Fulfilling A Community Need:

Last year we were informed by the San Juan Family Learning Center that families growing plants and vegetables in front of their housing units would no longer be able to continue gardening due to the strain it was placing on the community's plumbing system. Also, many families at San Juan travel far distances to have a plot of land to supplement their lifestyles and incomes. For these reasons, there was a clear community need that was fulfilled in the construction of the garden plots for individual families at San Juan.

3. Creating Usable and Productive Garden Plots:

We succeeded in building seven 4x8 garden plots that will be used by seven families.

4. Establishing Community Ownership:

To begin with, by having individual family plots, families have ownership of their individual plots for as long as they can maintain their plots. At several stages during construction, children and parents of a few families actively participated in building their plots, thereby fostering a sense of ownership throughout the entire process.

5. Spreading the Word on the Benefits of Organic Gardening:

We weren't too successful in this goal because we neglected to extensively educate ourselves during the nine month change project. It was tremendously difficult for us to balance the outcome and the process because we felt extremely accountable to the San Juan community, in particular to the families. However, we managed to learn how to build compost bins, raised beds, and plant vegetables according to the square foot method. Although we were unable to spread the word on organic gardening to the families, Community Food Share's commitment to organic gardening should guarantee the exchange of information on organic gardening. Individually we will continue to learn more and fill in the voids of our learning experience and continue to spread the word on community organic gardening as a means of local sustainability, especially the square foot method!

6. Begin Collaboration Process with Families:

A major challenge this goal was, especially with such a diverse group of families interested in the project. Of the families owning plots, there were four Hmong families (in which only one family head spoke English), one Mexican-American family, one Thai family, and one Ethiopian family. The dependency on translators made the collaboration process difficult. On May 1, 1996 the families did convene and were given their plots and seeds. In addition, during the construction of the garden, family members showed up to assist in the building.

What We Could Have Done Differently:

INVST Foundation—Final Presentation
May 10,1996

The INVST Foundation identified INVST as the community to be served. Focusing on sustainability as the primary concern, our mission was as follows:

To sustain INVST, primarily through grant proposal writing, thus allowing membership in INVST to be less contingent on economic factors, and to share our fundraising skills with other students, thereby involving ourselves in a simultaneous learning and teaching experience.

We adopted a dual approach to address short-term and long-term financial needs of INVST. Michael Garcia and Mikki Rhoades managed the short term issues by identifying foundations and supervising the writing of grant proposals. Five pairs of Transwalants worked on proposals on behalf of INVST under the supervision of Mikki and Michael. For the long term, Helen Javid and Kevin King did extensive research on opinions and options for restructuring the program. They are presenting their findings and recommendations in the form of a resource development proposal at the May Director's Committee. The INVST Foundation also designed and implemented a proposal-writing workshop to train the first year class.

In order to develop our change project in line with our mission, we developed four minimum commitments, or goals. Those goals were as follows:

1. Supervise the writing of three grant proposals.
2. Present a workshop on the grant proposal writing process.
3. Develop a formalized resource development proposal.
4. Have a healthy group process.

We chose to evaluate our progress on these goals so we could know how successful our project was and how attainable our objectives were. We evaluated our goals using process assessments. Goal number one was assessed based on whether or not the three grants were submitted. Three grants proposals were written but not submitted because of time and commitment restraints. Goal number two was assessed based on participant and instructor feedback, both of which were positive. Goal number three was assessed based on the presentation of a completed resource development proposal to the April Director's Committee, which is taking place today (May 10, 1996). Goal number four was assessed based on member reports at the final meeting, all of which were positive.

The INVST Foundation benefited throughout the semester from the guidance and feedback of our Associated Faculty Advisor, Professor Dennis Mileti of Sociology. Dr. Mileti met with us regularly to offer advice from his extensive experience writing proposals and receiving grants.

- Utilized resources better: i.e., our community assessment list from the fall had Community Food Share as a major resource, yet we waited until spring of 1996 to collaborate with CFS. Just imagine what we could have accomplished were we to pursue CFS sooner!
- We should have clarified our goals earlier and hashed out some major questions, in particular the dilemma over ownership. Although we wanted to provide the bulk of materials families need to sustain their gardens, the questions about ownership and dependency arose and we were plagued by these theoretical dilemmas. At the onset, were we to have dealt with these critical issues, we wouldn't have wasted so much time on how to fundraise or purchase tools for the families.
- We should have stressed more energy on education on organic gardening or farming.
- We should have researched early on the resources the community had, such as the extensive farming experience the Hmong families have.
- Also in line with utilizing resources more effectively, we should not have constrained ourselves by the guidelines proposed by INVST. We should have sought several mentors that could have assisted us in the many different realms we were trying to balance, such as community organizing, working with diverse communities, and fundraising in addition to the expertise we received from our change project advisor, Professor Tom Lemieux.

Group Process

- There was clearly an unequal distribution of work, in which those individuals who had the responsibility as liaisons to community entities had larger workloads. This led to active members who had information, versus those who were not actively involved due to the imbalance of roles. This clearly led to a divisive dynamic within the group, leaving those to seize control, and those who didn't take as much control. It was a troubling process that was connected to the size of the group. As the garden group's role shifted to becoming the facilitators versus the primary provider of materials and expertise, there was less work to be done. For these reasons, the workload remained inequitable, except on occasions when the entire group participated in building the gardens.
- The size of the group contributed to several problems. One was the inequitable distribution of work, another the difficulty in finding meeting times among all the members, and finally the largesse caused deterioration of communication and lack of focus during meeting times.
- At the onset, some members of the group were unfocused and had personal crisis that prevented them from actively partaking in the planning process and in the development of roles within the group.
- Burn out was an overwhelming problem garden group members felt as the last semester in INVST was coming to a close.
- Drastic change in group dynamics as new members transferred from the INVST foundation. It pushed those who were less active to be further sidelined and left with less responsibilities. It affected the way certain members were able to work in such a large environment, versus a smaller and more cohesive working group.
- Our training in becoming effective change agents also led us to assume a particular way of organizing, although we did conclude that one way is not the only way. We divided into several sub-groups to manage the lack of meeting times, which led to lack of accountability and lack of cohesion.

Chaley, Alicia, Juliet
Christine, Heather and Molly

The Garden Group

Mission Statement:

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Objectives:

Of Sustainability:

1. Establish a community committee
2. Fundraising
 - canvassing
 - grant writing
 - booth at farmer's market
 - booth outside Wild Oats & Alfalfas

Of Creating Usable and Productive Garden Plots:

1. Tilling the soil
2. Obtaining good quality soil
3. Setting up composts
4. Building wooden plot frames (raised beds)
5. Obtaining appropriate seeds & tools

Of Establishing Community Ownership:

1. Involving community kids and teenagers
2. Establishing committees
3. Working with community board and parents
4. Creating ample space for community made decisions, ideas and feedback

Of Passing on Knowledge/Benefits of Organic Gardening:

1. Speakers
2. Open dialogue/discussion
3. Experimental learning—hands on

Of Beginning Collaboration Process:

1. Writing flyers and giving information in all languages
2. Inclusion

October 6, 1995

The organic garden change project group consists of Molly Harlow, Christine Ahn, Chaley Fuchs, Heather Foster, Juliet Biagi, and Alicia James. Our proposed timeline for the budget and other financial responsibilities is as follows:

October

- 1) Research--how much money needed to create a start-up budget, education of ourselves on the issue of organic gardening.
- 2) Creation of a start-up budget.
- 3) Creation and submission of a proposal for money from the Environmental Center and UCSU.
- 4) Informational meeting at San Juan del Centro with members of the community as well as our INVST change project group on October 16 at 8pm.
- 5) Do a grant search.

November

- 1) Call Wild Oats and Alfalfa's about getting a discount day-- first week of November.
- 2) Call various hardware stores about donations in the way of tools and wood for building the garden.
- 3) Have formed a committee by the end of November consisting of San Juan community members as well as INVST students to keep communication open. After this year, when our group may no longer be in Boulder, this committee will remain in order to sustain involvement in the garden.
- 4) Begin writing grants.

December

- 1) Send out as many grants that can be written before winter break.

January

- 1) Complete three grant proposals and send them out by the end of January.
- 2) Continue fundraising by canvassing.

February

- 1) Evaluate budget.
- 2) Work with San Juan community members to create a new budget for sustaining the garden.

March

- 1) Teach interested children, teenagers, and adults how to canvass as a means of raising money for maintaining the garden.

April

- 1) Continue fundraising.

May

Education Timeline-- Chaley and Juliet

November 1995-- Composting

- Building
- Maintenance

December 1995-- Seeds

- Pesticides
- Best for Colorado
- Which go together
- Planting

January 1996-- Soil

- Pesticides
- Soil Composition
- Fertilizer and enriching soil organically
- Maintenance

February 1996-- Planting

- Pesticides
- How to #1
- How to #2
- Maintenance and sustainability







