

## FLRPnet's Food-Processing Business Incubation Program

Overview: The Finger Lakes Regional Prosperity Network (FLRPnet) is germinating a food sector development project as part of its rural wealth creation initiative. The purpose is to grow the Food-Processing Sector and related industries, with objectives of creating good quality jobs, business investment and, ultimately, local wealth that sticks. The target customers are start-up and existing food-processing companies that want to expand from small-scale production and niche markets into medium scale production and regional wholesale markets. This initiative builds on FLRPnet's 2016 feasibility study (for the study report go to [www.FLRPnet.org](http://www.FLRPnet.org)).

In February 2017, FLRPnet engaged consultant Peter Fairweather to develop the business plan for its Food-Processing Business Incubation Program. The plan will describe the program's first three years of operations, identifying program objectives, staffing needs and other operating expenses. The business plan builds on the results of the 2016 feasibility study, which identified the following business incubation needs:

- (1) Provide general information and resources - about product trends, market research, business planning, capital access, regulatory and permitting requirements, legal matters, nutritional analysis and labeling issues, QA and food safety, etc.  
Recommended program elements to develop:
  - a. Community – network of food entrepreneurs connected with peers in the sector
  - b. Portal – web-based, one-stop shop for information on operating a food business
  - c. Navigator – a facilitator, connecting resources and information to entrepreneurs
  
- (2) Provide specific business guidance and customized mentoring: a few key topics: product and process development, market access and sales generation, and access to capital, and technology. Recommended program elements to develop:
  - a. Industry-specific Business Assistance – one-time or short interval support or advice
  - b. Mentoring – long-term, often over several stages of the business' lifecycle
  - c. Subject Matter Experts – short-term, specific business or technical issue
  - d. Workshops – topics such as marketing, sales and distribution, and food safety
  - e. Regional Branding – to generate heightened interest by consumers

The envisioned program would provide food entrepreneurs, whether farm or factory based, with connections to resources and technical assistance, and connection to a larger entrepreneurial community. The program would serve an approximate 50-mile radius, primarily targeting 12 counties: Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Chemung, Cortland, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, and Tompkins, Yates.

We aim to have the program funded and staffed by year-end of 2017.

FLRPnet's Vision: *Economic prosperity for the region.*  
Mission: *Working to improve the economic condition of the region particularly of underserved and economically isolated people.*