



Impact Statement

Project Title:

Become a financially sustainable organization with strong ties to supporting organizations

Issue:

The Strawberry Center at Cal Poly State University in San Luis Obispo began in 2014 as a partnership between the California Strawberry Commission (CSC) and Cal Poly. The initial investment by the CSC was \$1 million over a three-year period. Cal Poly's contribution was a faculty member who devoted 50% time to research on strawberries, a shared lab, farm land for conducting field research and office space for Strawberry Center staff. The Strawberry Center is now in its 4th year with an annual operating budget of \$450,000. Funding was secured from the CSC for a 4th year through the CSC's annual budgeting process. The initial success of the Center has led to a need to hire additional staff as well as additional office, lab and field space to accommodate the future activities of the Center. Hiring and retaining highly qualified staff is difficult with a budget horizon of one year. This is a precarious position for the Center, creating uncertainty and making all Center-funded positions less desirable. In order for the Center to remain viable, it needs a more secure financial foundation.

What has been done:

Strategic planning sessions with the Center's Industry Advisory Council addressed the issue, identified growth targets and a pathway to reach those targets. The targets were: add entomologist, farm manager and research technician to Center's staff. Secure a 5-year contract of \$5 million to support the Center, its staff and operating budget.

Impacts/New Partnerships:

The Industry Advisory Council of the Strawberry Center lobbied with the CSC's Board of Directors to support the Strawberry Center through a renewed partnership with Cal Poly. An annual Field Day started in 2017 with over 200 attendees and sponsorships from over 20 organizations.

Outcome of Project (societal impact/ measure of increased quality of life)

The CSC's Board of Directors voted in favor of increased support and a 5-year contract with Cal Poly to support the Center with \$5 million. This will add 3 new staff to the Center and new office and lab space at Cal Poly's Technology Park. The Center's research and educational efforts are addressing issues facing the California Strawberry Industry and delivering impactful results. The added staff and space are increasing the volume of impactful projects. The new 5-year contract gives stability to the Center and its programs.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

FSLI had aided this project by first helping me understand my strengths and weaknesses as a leader, by facilitating relationships with mentors who have provided much guidance along the way. Readings and one-on-one consultations have also informed the guided the process.

Contact information:

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