Lakes Country Service Cooperative

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**LAKES COUNTRY SERVICE COOPERATIVE RECEIVES   
BUSH FOUNDATION COMMUNITY INNOVATION GRANT**

Fergus Falls – Lakes Country Service Cooperative (LCSC) has been awarded a Bush Foundation Community Innovation Grant to start a food hub in its nine-county service region. The Fresh Connect food hub will assemble fresh produce and fruit from multiple local growers and deliver it directly to schools, healthcare, and childcare centers that provide meals for students, residents, and visitors. Food hubs are emerging around the country as an answer to the need for support to bring fresh locally grown produce from the family farm to schools and other organizations interested in providing healthier meals.

According to LCSC Dietician Dana Rieth, “Local growers will diversify their market for sales, and students and residents will benefit from eating healthy foods. Schools and healthcare will be able to say they know where their produce is coming from and teach about the lifelong benefits of healthy eating.”

“We are pleased to move forward with a pilot program that we hope will become a model for other communities. This is truly an innovative project that has grown out of a year of planning. Thanks to our many community partners who have helped us realize this vision,” says Jeremy Kovash, LCSC Executive Director.

Established in 2013, the Community Innovation Grant program is designed to inspire and support communities to use problem-solving processes that lead to more effective, equitable, and sustainable solutions. Projects receiving Community Innovation Grants can be at any stage in the problem-solving process, which includes: identifying the need, increasing collective understanding of the issue, generating ideas, and testing and implementing solutions.

“Community Innovation Grant recipients are tackling community problems in a way we believe most likely to result in real breakthrough solutions. They are engaging the community, collaborating with other organizations, and making the most of existing assets; in short, all of the things it takes to create a true community innovation,” said Molly Matheson Gruen, Bush Foundation community innovation manager.

The Bush Foundation will award nearly $5 million to 34 organizations in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography, through its Community Innovation Grant program. The full list of Community Innovation Grant recipients can be found at BushFoundation.org/2014CIGrants.