The Center for Rural Studies (CRS) at the University of Vermont has provided successful program evaluation services for social service programs for the past twenty years. Most recently, over the past ten years, CRS has provided **process and outcome** evaluation services for agencies in the areas of microenterprise development, farm-to-school and local food purchasing initiatives, education and literacy, teen leadership, restorative justice for youth, and domestic violence services. Many of these projects were designed to foster self-sufficiency in low income populations. Through this experience, CRS has extensive expertise in developing an evaluation plan and appropriate tools and conducting surveys, focus groups, interviews, and providing database development services. CRS also has extensive experience in conducting statistical and qualitative data analysis, writing reports, presenting findings at conferences, and publishing results on our website, in popular media, and peer reviewed journals. The following are descriptions of the past and present Program Evaluation projects conducted at CRS from 2001 to 2009.

### Health, Nutrition, and Farm to School Initiatives

- **The 225 Club: Fitness, Understanding and Nutrition for All**
  This project evaluates the Physical Education Program (PEP) grant, The 225 Club: Fitness, Understanding & Nutrition for All, which is a project of the Washington County Youth Service Bureau/Boys and Girls Club (YSB) in collaboration with Barre City Middle School (BCMS). By coordinating in-school curriculum changes with the expansion of the Cityscape Out-of-School Time Program, The 225 Club combines a variety of approaches to foster a culture of health and fitness for all 400 students enrolled in BCMS (5th through 8th grades). To determine the multi-faceted impact of this project on multiple stakeholders, including youth, parents and families, the school and larger Barre community, this process and outcome evaluation uses a mixed methods approach and data/informant triangulation to compare and confirm findings from multiple data sources. The evaluation of this project is underway and data has been collected from teachers, parents and other stakeholders through paper and online surveys, focus groups and in-depth interviews. This evaluation will continue to examine the impact of grant activities on student health, fitness and academic performance. 2009-2010. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky

- **LACE: Local Agricultural Community Exchange. Evaluating the Impact of a Community Revitalization Project**
  Caption: Jackson Browne, a musician who has held several benefit concerts for LACE, Ariel Zevon, LACE director, and Sen Patrick Leahy at LACE’s grand opening in June 2007.
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
  This is an evaluation of the Local Agriculture Community Exchange (LACE) project, a community and downtown revitalization effort in Barre, VT through a public-private partnership with LACE, Central Vermont Community Action Council, and the storefront enterprises of the Farm Fresh Market and Café and the Gallery at LACE. Process evaluation, documented through in-depth staff interviews, focuses on LACE development including renovation of a vacant storefront to establish the public enterprise, Farm Fresh Market and Café, and the nonprofit supported artisan Gallery and licensed, commercial grade community kitchen. Process evaluation also examines strategies to recruit and retain local vendors and quality of vendor support services provided. In documenting project development, this evaluation component helps staff identify challenges and strategies to resolve them and provides recommendations for mid-course corrections and future implementation. Outcome evaluation data, collected through vendor telephone interviews, documents changes in economic and social indicators such as increased sales, earned income and job creation as a result of access to a market and support services. A report was also published by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire as part of the
Nancy Nye Fellowship that partially supported this project. The third and final year of this evaluation will continue to examine LACE development, partner collaboration, services provided to vendors, economic and social impacts of LACE on vendors and community kitchen users, and project sustainability beyond grant funds. 2008-2010. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky. This project is also falls under the topic areas of Micro Business Development and Access to Capital.

- **The Burlington School Foods Project**
  U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Burlington School Foods Project is a citywide collaborative formed to address the integration of local foods into school meals and food insecurity among Burlington Youth. Evaluation focuses on process and outcomes measures, to determine impact of activities and the development of a replicable model. Evaluation methods include surveys and focus groups. 2003-2006. Michele Cranwell Schmidt, Jane Kolodinsky, Rashmi Narsana, Michael Moser.

- **The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship**
  U.S. Department of Agriculture/CSREES/Fund for Rural America. The Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (NECFE) is a collaborative effort of the New York State Food Venture Center at Cornell University and The Center for Food Science at the University of Vermont. The mission of the project is to provide comprehensive assistance to beginning and established food entrepreneurs thus promoting sustainable economic development of rural communities. Evaluation focuses on process and outcome measures with emphasis on impact of NECFE and how this Center can be a transferable model. Data collection methods include surveys, focus groups with staff and clients, review of organizational documents, and case studies of client experience and success. 2000-2005. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky. This project is also falls under the topic area of Micro Business Development and Access to Capital.

- **The Vermont Kitchens Project**
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Offices of Community Services. The Vermont Kitchens Project is a JOLI (Job Opportunities for Low-income Individuals) funded project, which provides training and production, technical, and marketing assistance to low income Vermonters in the Central Vermont region, interested in starting or expanding a small food service business. Both process and outcomes are addressed in the evaluation, including project impact on participants' business and social, human, and financial capital development, and lessons learned and feedback for improvement. Evaluation methods include surveys, participant and staff focus groups, and data analysis. 2000-2003. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky. This project is also falls under the topic area of Micro Business Development and Access to Capital.

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**Micro Business Development and Access to Capital**

- **Vermont Women’s Business Center Client Impact Study**
  The mission of the Vermont Women’s Business Center (VWBC) is to provide women with the training, assistance and support necessary to start and expand successful businesses, thus promoting economic independence and healthy communities. VWBC is a statewide program of the Central Vermont Community Action Council (CVCAC) and funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. VWBC offers programming tailored to the needs and experiences of aspiring and established women entrepreneurs from a central office located in Barre, Vermont and via subcontracts with Vermont’s four other Community Action Agencies. CRS conducted a survey of clients to determine the impact of programming on business development and job creation. Current and past VWBC clients who were served in some capacity from 2002 to the present were called to conduct a 15 to 20 minute survey during the month of June 2009. Clients were asked questions about whether or not they started and/or remained in business and the impact of VWBC services and business counseling on themselves and their business. 2009. Michele Cranwell Schmidt.
- **Post Start-up Training and Technical Assistance**  
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Post Start-up Training and Technical Assistance project is statewide, carried out by the regional partnerships of Vermont’s Community Action Agencies and their Micro Business Development Programs (MBDP). This project evaluates the implementation and outcomes of post start-up business training and technical assistance provided to low-income Vermont entrepreneurs by the statewide MBDP. The evaluation utilizes process and outcome strategies. The process component, collected primarily through qualitative data from staff, clients and project partners, examines project implementation to understand the effectiveness and efficiency of program activities and interventions such as client retention, training and technical assistance. The process results are used as a management tool for continuous program improvement and helps identify problems that occur, how they are addressed and recommendations for future implementation and replication by other MBDP agencies. The outcome evaluation assesses the impact of the project interventions on microenterprise owners and their businesses. Data are collected through annual follow-up surveys. The outcome evaluation informs if and to what extent MBDP interventions produced desirable changes based on grant goals. This evaluation utilized mixed methods including qualitative and quantitative measures. 2006-2009. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **Community Capital of Vermont**  
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Community Capital of Vermont Loan Fund project is statewide and regional partnership of Vermont’s Community Action Agencies and their Micro Business Development Programs. CCVLF is a Community Development Financial Institution that will provide loans to micro and small businesses to the state of Vermont. The evaluation of this project focuses on process and outcomes measures, to determine best practices, the impact of activities, and the development of a replicable model. Evaluation methods include surveys and focus groups. 2005-2008. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **LeadSafe: The Lead Paint Safety and Abatement Initiative**  
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Offices of Community Services. The Lead Abatement Initiative is a JOLI (Job Opportunities for Low-income Individuals) funded project, which provides training and technical assistance to low income Vermonters in the Central Vermont region. Both process and outcomes are addressed, including project impact on participants' business and social, human, and financial capital development, and lessons learned and feedback for improvement. Evaluation methods include surveys, participant and staff focus groups, and data analysis. 2003-2006. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **The Child Care Business Initiative**  
  U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Offices of Community Services. The Child Care Business Initiative (CCBI) is a JOLI funded statewide initiative of the Vermont Community Action Agencies’ Micro Business Development Program. This project goals are to enable TANF and low-income individuals to start and operate successful child care programs and enable child care centers to improve their business operations and provide higher wages and better benefits. Evaluation focuses on process and outcomes measures, to determine impact of training on business success and social, human, and financial capital development. Evaluation methods include surveys (intake and follow up) and participant and staff focus groups. 2002-2006. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **Statewide Micro Business Development Program Client Impact Study**  
  Vermont Office of Economic Opportunity. Agency of Human Services. The Micro Business Development Project (MBDP) impact study is a statewide telephone survey to follow up with clients that used MBDP services in 2001 and 2002. The survey instrument focused on services used, impact on business, social, human, and financial capital development, job creation, satisfaction, and feedback for improvement. This pilot study is designed to test the survey instrument and methodology to possibly implement it on a larger scale on a continuous basis for MBDPs throughout Vermont. 2003. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.
### Domestic Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiatives

- **Domestic Violence and the Workplace Study**  
The pervasiveness, severity and impact of domestic violence perpetrated through use of workplace resources and work time and the impact of these actions on a workplace is not well known in Vermont or in the US. The Vermont Council on Domestic Violence (VCDV) and Spectrum Youth and Family Services’ Violence Intervention and Prevention Program (VIPP) have subcontracted with the Center for Rural Studies (CRS) at the University of Vermont, to combine our topical and research expertise to study this phenomenon. The overall goal of this study is to help inform policy makers and employers about the way the workplace is used in and affected by domestic violence in Vermont from the perspective of domestic violence perpetrators. This information will help employers in Vermont to make decisions about policy and procedural response to employees involved in domestic violence. 2009-2010. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **Evaluating the Community Response to Domestic Violence in Chittenden County**  
U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. The Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant of Chittenden County Domestic Violence Task Force focuses on Funding from the Rural Program has provided opportunities for comprehensive data collection across several key agencies, to evaluate the success of the community response to domestic violence. 2006-2008. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Fred Schmidt.

- **Children and Domestic Violence in Chittenden County**  
U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. The Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant of Chittenden County Domestic Violence Task Force focuses on services for children who experience domestic violence in Chittenden County, specifically rural areas. The evaluation of the 2006-2008 Rural Grant will focus on batterer accountability through the criminal justice system in Chittenden County. 2004-2006. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Fred Schmidt.

- **Strengthening Community Collaboration in Domestic Violence**  
U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs. The Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Grant of Chittenden County Domestic Violence Task Force focuses on the impact of domestic violence services in Chittenden County, specifically rural areas. Evaluation focuses on community collaboration and evaluating the structure, membership, and function of the DVTF as a community collaborative. Data is collected through both an online and mail surveys. 2002-2004. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Fred Schmidt.

- **Domestic Abuse Education Project**  
U.S. Department of Justice. Spectrum: Youth and Family Services, Burlington, Vermont. The Domestic Abuse Education Project (DAEP) is designed to provide participating men with information and skills needed to change abusive and violent behavior and beliefs. Evaluation focused on examining attitudinal changes in participants through pre and post-test measures with intervention. Focus groups with female partners were held to determine change in family life. 1999-2004. Michele Cranwell Schmidt, Fred Schmidt, and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **Restorative Justice for Youth Project Evaluation**  
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The mission of the Restorative Justice for Youth Program is to reduce delinquency by providing timely and meaningful pre-charge interventions to youth who commit petty crimes in Northern Vermont. The evaluation focused on project outcomes including accountability and change in attitude and desire to provide restitution towards their actions. 1997-2000. Michele Schmidt, Frederick Schmidt, Laura Durham.
K-12 Education, Technology and Literacy

- **Vermont Millennium Arts Partnership**
  U.S. Department of Commerce’s Technology Opportunities Program. The Vermont Millennium Arts Partnership is an internet-based arts education program in Vermont public schools that, through the use of the latest technologies, is working to facilitate student learning through an online exchange among students, teachers, artists, musicians, and other professionals. Evaluation documents project process and outcomes of classroom participation in the online forum and related classroom activities. Evaluation methods include online surveys, workshop evaluation, and focus groups and interviews with project administrators and project participants. Funding is provided through a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce’s Technology Opportunities Program, with other funding coming from the Jesse B. Cox Charitable Trust, Josephine Bay and C. Michael Paul Foundation, the State of Vermont, IBM, and Verizon. 1998-2001. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Frederick Schmidt.

- **Teens Teaching Internet Skills to Senior Citizens**
  Health Care Finance Administration and CSREES. CRS provided evaluation services for the project, Teens Teaching Internet Skills (TTIS), a national initiative involving middle and high school students and adults from 4-H Technology Teams in six states: Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington. Students were trained in computer and Internet skills in their classrooms and then worked with senior citizens to teach them how to use technology to obtain health and medical information as well as social networking. This evaluation focused on project implementation and learning outcomes for both youth and senior citizens, specifically whether or not the learner acquired computer and Internet skills. Evaluation methods included focus groups, surveys and interviews. 1999-2001. Michele Cranwell Schmidt and Jane Kolodinsky.

- **South Windsor County Even Start Family Literacy Program**
  Vermont Department of Education. CRS provided evaluation services for the South Windsor County Even Start (SWCES) family literacy program that was funded by the Vermont Department of Education. SWCES worked with low-income families in southern Vermont to better prepare young parents and their children for success in school, community service, and life. The evaluation examined outputs and outcomes of program activities including adult and early childhood education, parenting education, and parent-child interaction. Evaluation methods included surveys, focus groups and interviews. 1994-2003. Michele Cranwell Schmidt, Laura Durham, Mahua Dasgupta, and Fred Schmidt.