



# Century Elm Farms

dba Boothby's Orchard & Farm Winery

PROFILE: Value Added Producer Grant Recipient

Livermore, ME

## Grant Amount

**\$48,299**

## Grant Period

2015-2017

## Grant Summary

This Working Capital Grant was used to brand and expand the existing unpasteurized apple cider and winemaking operations through process improvements and enhanced marketing.

## About the Grant Recipient

Boothby's Orchard & Farm Winery is a 6-7th generation farm with a lot of living history. Boothby's Orchard & Winery is nestled among rolling hills and fields cared for by the Boothby family for seven generations. They offer visitors a chance to slow down and experience the charms of rural Maine life, from pick-your-own apples, to wine tastings to special events and romantic getaways. The business is owned by two brothers who have a 60/40 stock share arrangement. The property is over 1000 acres, much of it in managed woodland, and it is in a rural zoning district.



## How is the public engaged with Boothby's?

Visitors come to pick apples at the orchard and enjoy wagon rides, storytelling, lodging on the farm, wine tasting, events and more.

Boothby's considers themselves to be in a process of reinvention and is trying to capitalize on what they have and what they can share with their audience.

"We're one of those old farms that has been blessed with lots of blessings and burdens all at once, from the landmass that we possess to the family aspects. We're reinventing ourselves after being exclusively a dairy farm until two decades ago."

— Denise Boothby

## IMPACT OF VAPG FUNDING

Boothby's needed to scale up their equipment, but wasn't in the position of taking on the risk. Their first intention was to purchase an apple crusher to pulverize the apples before pressing them. Upon receiving the grant, they ordered the crusher and it

**"I felt like the VAPG could not have been more successful for us."**

— Denise Boothby

didn't work as expected. Their Maine USDA contact was flexible with them about changing direction, and made suggestions, asked questions, and it helped them realize that what they had was currently working, and they could increase capacity instead. Another improvement they made was moving from a manual corker for wine to a mechanically driven corker. "As we age, we have a more pragmatic approach. It's injury reducing and will help us stay in the game a lot longer," Boothby says.

Boothby's also used the grant to increase their online presence, to learn how to optimize the yield of both pressed apples and grapes, and to optimize sales for those products. Their two-year grant period gave them two growing seasons to work with, and more leeway to try some things and come back and change directions if needed.

They were able to focus on the quality of their products as a result of the funding, and ended up dumping some wine that they had made prior to the grant because it wasn't high enough

quality. "As painful as that was, it gave us a clean slate," Denise said.

They were also able to upgrade their label printing mechanisms from a home printer to a professionally designed, professionally printed label, which turned out to be a significant cost savings.

The Orchard and Farm Winery had secondary gains from receiving the VAPG that they say they never could have imagined.

"We were able to hire the right people to help us. We're very seasonal, and we need people who were over 21, who would smile at customers without being told to, who could love our farm as much as we do. They had to be about the experience as well, and they had to be comfortable walking out on a 90 degree day to help an elderly person, for example. Because of the grant, we took a leap on paying someone to crush apples. Because we could pay



**"Because of the grant, we took a leap on paying someone to crush apples. Because we could pay the right people who loved it, we were able to make unpasteurized cider our "calling card". We can pay people well, and they look forward to coming back. Before the grant, we never thought we would be able to make the leap."**

— Denise Boothby

the right people who loved it, we were able to make unpasteurized cider our "calling card." We can pay people well, and they look forward to coming back. Before the grant, we never thought we would be able to make the leap. Being able to hire these people was a huge blessing that we could give back to the community."

2018 is the first season they're coming into without the grant. Their goal has never been to grow big and get rich. Rather they want to manage plants and animals, not people, and want this to be a true, family farm. "We're pursuing our dream of doing the farm the way want to do it, and until it doesn't work, we are doing this," Boothby said. "The VAPG grant was a shot in the arm to get ahead a little." At this point, their next goal is to look into increasing hay production, which would meet a need in their community. They are also considering growing grapes for other wine producers.

## WHAT DO YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN?

While Boothby's says they did a pretty good job with record keeping, their early accounting categories

"When we emerged from the grant we had this package that left us more successful than before. Our beef herd grew a little, our hay product grew a little, we are doing a few events, we have the winery and the PYO apples and cider at the farm stand. These four pieces of the businesses are in place."

—Denise Boothby

were different from what the USDA required in their reports at first. "The difference was how a government body would approach farming versus how a farmer approaches it," Boothby said. While they got on track, the record keeping consistently took a long time, and they allocated the job to someone who learned to do it accurately.

## HAS THE VAPG HELPED YOU LEVERAGE OTHER FUNDING?

Formally, Boothby's hasn't received other grants or funding, but having the VAPG funding allowed them to do is offset some other expenses.

They borrowed money from Farm Credit and were able to fix a couple of barns and structures during the grant period. They finished a house that hadn't been liveable before, and now have farm stays and weddings. We're leaving the farm better for the next generation.

According to Denise, "When we emerged from the grant we had this package that left us more successful than before. Our beef herd grew a





little, our hay product grew a little, we are doing a few events, we have the winery and the PYO apples and cider at the farm stand. These four pieces of the businesses are in place. We have emerged with a little bit of debt, but we came away with something that looks good, feels good, and we're hosting a lot of community events now because the buildings are stable."

### **WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THE VAPG PROGRAM?**

"Yes! Remember that the timing was important, too. We waited for the right time to apply so our projects weren't pipe dreams."



©2018. Funding provided by the Agriculture Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC), located at Iowa State University, [www.agmrc.org](http://www.agmrc.org). AgMRC is a national website dedicated to providing information to producers and service providers on value-added agriculture businesses. These partners collaborated to create the Value Added Producer Grant Profiles:



Oregon State University  
Extension Service



SHELburne  
FARMS

THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT  
EXTENSION