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Borrower Profile: Crop Circle Kitchen Enterprise Incubator

When a culinary business incubator in Boston was slated to close in 2009, a few daring individuals stepped in with a plan to take over the incubator, founding a new non-profit corporation. Crop Circle Kitchen (CCK) was formed in August 2009 and worked with the Neighborhood Development Corporation in Jamaica Plain, MA to realign the mission of the incubator and give the space a much-needed overhaul. “What was so important about the transition, was that no one was ever put out of business and the doors never closed,” explains Darnell Adams, Operations Manager.

The mission of CCK is to help low income individuals develop viable food-related businesses that will create sustainable employment in Boston. Currently, there are twenty eight member businesses that use the kitchen to create food products from pasta to caramel, using a variety of business models such as retail, wholesale, and catering.

Crop Circle Kitchen encourages the use of local food products to help reinvent the food economy in New England. As Adams explains, “We have the feeling that we’re part of a solution, and we want to support other small businesses that are involved in local food

distribution and production. It’s a small piece of a much larger issue.”

When first starting out, the priority for CCK was running the kitchen with a conservative approach to expenses. “The big push was to make operations as efficient as possible in order to ensure that the doors remained open to members. We looked at all the

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operational pieces, including automation, to lower overhead,” says Adams.

With the hard work of streamlining operations in place, Adams now looks to new projects. “We’re expanding our technical assistance

to help members grow their businesses,” which will include education about loans, business capital, and financial planning.

Adams also hopes to expand education programs

beyond members into the community, and is optimistic that similar incubators will be formed as a result. “Programs like this are badly needed. There’s so much more demand than there are kitchens, and there is definitely room for more incubators. We’re happy to be a resource, and to see more incubator kitchens like us emerge.”

-Profile by Kalista Aird

