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**2015JailAwardForm: Annual Award Competition**

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<b>Title</b>	Annual Award Competition
<b>CCAPCountyName</b>	Crawford
<b>CCAPCountyClass</b>	Sixth Class
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<b>Project_Title</b>	The Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project
<b>Start Date</b>	6/1/2009
<b>ChairofBoard</b>	Francis Weiderspahn
<b>Chairof County</b>	Francis Schultz
<b>CountyChief</b>	Mark Lessig

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**CCAP Committee on County Criminal Justice System Best Practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Annual Award Competition  
County Jail Best Practices Award Program for Counties**

**The Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project, launched Spring 2009**

**The Need: The escalating cost of fresh produce at the Crawford County Correctional Facility coupled with the ever-present need to give inmates a valuable skill upon reentry into society.**

When the Deputy Warden says to the Warden, “Hey Boss. I have an idea...” the Warden listens. Deputy Warden Ken Saulsbery oversees all logistics and support functions for the Crawford County Correctional Facility. He reviews the food service operations bills that come in and, simultaneously, reviews programs designed to address inmate reentry and facility enhancement decisions supporting the Crawford County Correctional Facility. The high cost of fresh produce always caught his attention. Deputy Warden Saulsbery thought to himself, “There has to be a way to reduce this single line item.” He gave it some thought. His idea was simple--the need was there--reduce the cost of fresh vegetables used in food service operations by growing your own. So, he took this idea to his boss.

Warden Tim Lewis is responsible for constructing the correctional facility’s annual budget followed by presenting and defending it to the Crawford County Commissioners. To him, the idea of reducing the cost of fresh vegetables by growing your own was a beautifully simplistic idea that covered several key areas in a single program. In 2009, there was nothing in place to help reduce the cost of the food service bill, let alone the cost of fresh produce. The Warden weighed the startup costs versus the benefits of an inmate garden. He liked the Deputy Warden’s idea and, after careful consideration, gave permission to start the “Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project”. There was, after all, “seed” money and enough land on the property to grow fresh produce that could not only reduce the cost of fresh vegetables, but most importantly, give inmates an experience that, in the future, would be valuable to their reentry into society--life outside the walls of the Crawford County Correctional Facility.



An inmate works in the Garden  
-The Meadville Tribune

**How does the Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project enhance general correctional operations programs, policies, treatment, and custody?**

The “Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project” has afforded Crawford County and its taxpayers to avoid the food service cost of fresh produce harvested from the garden project. Prior to 2009, inmates at the Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project were unable to have fresh, seasonal vegetables at each meal. Although the northwest Pennsylvania growing season is comparatively short, having increased the availability of fresh produce allows for a healthier diet. Equally compelling, since 2009 the “Garden Project” has avoided increasing food service cost each year for six straight years, resulting in cost avoidance of over \$15,000. The sole cost associated with the project is the seeds for planting. If an inmate desires to participate in the garden project, provided their behavior merits, they have a unique opportunity to learn a new and valuable skill set in an overwhelmingly agricultural county. Warden Lewis is more than willing to allow potential inmate “gardeners” to be screened by jail staff based on the charges for which the inmate is incarcerated as well as whether the inmate would physically be able to perform the work. Inmates “gardeners” that are selected by the staff then work outside in the garden under supervision of Correctional Officers.



**The “Garden Project” description, including any evidenced-based approaches to jail diversion, community involvement strategies, formation of stakeholder groups, county-wide planning strategies, etc.**

The "Garden Project" was an approach by the Crawford County Correctional Facility to, (1) fully utilize the property adjacent to the Correctional Facility while, (2) reducing fresh produce costs, and (3) creating another opportunity for inmates to develop valuable life-skills. By planting a garden and harvesting homegrown produce from the garden, the Correctional Facility would directly contribute to the never-ending quest in government to reduce or avoid cost altogether. Employing inmates, both men and women, to tend to the garden, had a direct correlation to cost avoidance and ultimately an inmate, who upon release would have acquired additional skills that could lead to being a more productive member of society with a more productive role in a community where farming is still prevalent. Since 2009, the garden project has planted and harvested sweet corn, potatoes, onions, lettuce, green beans, tomatoes, green peppers, watermelons, cabbage, radishes, cucumbers, and cantaloupes. In 2014, for the first time the garden project planted and harvested pumpkins and a wide variety of gourds that were given to the Crawford County Care Center for its residents.

#### **How is the Garden Project evaluated and what are the lessons learned?**

The "Garden Project" has had an immeasurably positive impact on the cost of fresh vegetables and, moreover, provided another opportunity for an inmate to do something more than just serve their time. Since the garden was introduced in 2009, each year the garden has expanded from approximately half an acre to the size of approximately an acre and a half. Different types of produce have been planted or attempted to be planted. The overwhelming consensus of the Correctional Facility staff is that the "garden" has been a positive impact on the inmates. Over the years the inmates that have worked the garden have taken it seriously and shown great pride in the garden that they tend. With the exception of 2014, each year the garden has for reduced the cost for fresh produce. In 2014, for the first time, the "garden" produced pumpkins and gourds. These were donated along with leftover corn stalks to the Crawford County Care Center for the residents to enjoy as autumn decorations and projects. Previously, the Care Center would purchase these items elsewhere.



#### **Who are the Garden Project stakeholders?**

The second largest industry in Crawford County is agriculture. The key stakeholder is the Crawford County taxpayer. The garden project only proclaims to avoid a relatively small amount of money from year to year. However, the Warden has directed his staff to make every effort to avoid cost where possible and the garden project is just one small, successful example of a simple idea that has real results.

#### **Will the Garden Project be continued?**

The "Garden Project" will continue as long as it has the support of the community. New produce will be planted as well as old. The garden has the potential to grow even more than it has. The garden has the potential to possibly make a positive impact on the community. A four-year-old gardening project at the Crawford County Correctional Facility aids the jail's bottom line and helps inmates as well. "It helps offset our food costs, and it's therapeutic for the inmates," Warden Lewis states of the "Garden Project," "the inmates that participate love doing it. While working in the heat of the summer, the staff ensures the inmates have enough water and snacks. Warden Lewis smiles and says, "They like it because they get a chance to be outside."



Warden Lewis in the "Garden"

Like the garden itself, the benefits of the project to the jail have grown since its inception in 2009. In 2009, the garden had only \$300 worth of produce grown, Lewis said. The value of the amount grown climbed to \$2,053.33 in 2010 and more than \$3,300 in both 2011 and this year, he said. In 2014, the garden raised \$6,210.11 worth of fresh produce. Warden Lewis briefs the Crawford County Prison Board of Inspectors on progress at the garden each month during the growing season. The Crawford County Correctional Facility had a half dozen inmates involved in 2014 garden project. Local media have covered the garden project and the Crawford County Correctional Facility staff has received many positive comments about the garden project.

**What was the cost of the Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project? How was it funded? What were the costs avoided?**

In 2009, the first year of the Garden Project, the Warden and Deputy Warden, with the approval of the Crawford County Prison Board of Inspectors and the Crawford County Commissioners, approved the purchase of less than \$100 of seeds. The first year results were approximately \$300 in cost reduction for fresh produce. Over the course of the last six years, the Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project has helped the Correctional Facility avoid approximately \$15,258.94 in the cost of fresh produce. Yearly totals are below.

Year	"Seed Money"	Cost Reduction
2009	Unknown	\$300 (est)
2010	\$1753.33	\$2053.33
2011	\$1248.79	\$3302.12
2012	\$1248.79	\$3302.13
2013	\$1785.58	\$9420.98
2014	\$1931.75	\$6210.11
Total(s)	\$7968.24	\$15258.94

Deputy Warden Saulsbery believes that the Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project can do even better than it has in the past. Last year Deputy Warden Saulsbery directed the movement of the sweet corn crop away from some of the shadier areas of the garden. "It took off like I thought it would" remarks the Deputy. "Inmates love corn on the cob. It is a huge morale booster for them."

The Crawford County Correctional Facility Garden Project is just one demonstration that recognizes that innovation and creative thought can produce a small but significant best practice for a county jail in a predominately rural Pennsylvania County.

//signed//  
Francis F. Weiderspahn, Jr.  
Chair, Crawford County Board of Commissioners

//signed//  
Francis Schultz, District Attorney  
Chair, Crawford County Prison Board of Inspectors

//signed//  
Mark F. Lessig  
County Administrator