

FY 2014

\$100,000 to Special Service for Groups, Los Angeles, CA, to expand its Roots CSA by recruiting and training Asian immigrant farmers and promoting the CSA through its Asian and Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance division.

Final Report

FMPP Final Performance Report

Report Number/Period: FINAL/October 1st, 2014 – September 30th, 2016

Date: 11/23/2016

Contact: Elizabeth Berger/Telephone: 213-553-1882/E-mail: eberger@ssg.org

Recipient Name: Special Service for Groups/Asian & Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance (SSG/APIOPA)

Project Title: Roots Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program

Grant Number: 14-FMPPX-CA-0018

Project Location: Los Angeles, CA and Fresno, CA

Total Awarded Budget: \$100,000

1) Program Summary: *Provide a brief summary regarding the goals and objectives, activities performed, beneficiaries, collaborators, and your most impressive (result) measurement.*

SSG/APIOPA is proud to report that we were successful in achieving our overarching goal of expanding the Roots CSA Program thereby increasing access to and consumption of locally produced fruits and vegetables among Asian and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County and Orange County in areas with lower access to healthy food options. Over the course of the 2 year grant period we were able to provide over 11.5 tons of fresh, sustainably grown, and culturally relevant produce to 350 families (approximately 1,400 individuals) across Los Angeles and Orange County as well as provide over \$25,000 in revenue to the small local Asian American farmers we worked with. In addition, we were able to increase the knowledge and capacity of 40 small local Asian American farmers in California's Central Valley by providing a series of 4 workshops focused on different aspects of business development. Lastly, we were able to leverage the \$100,000 funding from this USDA FMPP grant and secure an additional \$333,500 to ensure the continuation and long term sustainability of the work that was started thanks to the USDA's support.

2) Goals and Objectives: *Describe the general goals and objectives (scope) of the project: EXAMPLES - to increase sales of healthy foods to low income participants by 50 new customers per week; to increase farmer income by 10% through encouraging use of SNAP/EBT at the market; to increase awareness of the availability for healthy food to all demographic groups within the immediate area of the market.*

Indicate the need for the grant project prior to the implementation of grant activities.

Goal # 1: Expand the Roots CSA Program in order to increase access to and consumption of locally produced fruits and vegetables among Asian and Pacific Islanders in Los Angeles County and Orange County in areas with lower access to healthy food options.

- **Objective #1:** By February 27, 2015, the Roots CSA program will expand the number of farms in the Roots CSA distribution network from two (2) to at least six (6) farms by conducting outreach to new farmers.
- **Objective #2:** By September 30, 2015, SSG/APIOPA will enhance the capacity of at least four (4) regional farms run by Asian immigrant families by providing training on business planning and implementation.
- **Objective #3:** By August 30, 2016, SSG/APIOPA will enhance the Roots CSA distribution network by developing systems to maximize cost effectiveness and efficiency in subscription management and in purchase and delivery of agricultural products.
- **Objective #4:** By July 31, 2016, SSG/APIOPA will expand the number of Roots CSA subscribers from 80 to 120 by conducting marketing and advertising activities in targeted API communities.

Since July of 2012, SSG/APIOPA has been working with local farms to provide residents of the Los Angeles, California region with access to affordable, fresh produce and culturally and linguistically tailored health education through its Roots CSA project. SSG/APIOPA works directly with Hmong farmers located in Fresno, California, who grow organic produce that is often used by Asian & Pacific Islander (API) ethnic groups (e.g. bok choy, bittermelon). The relationship with the local farmers is integral to providing fresh produce that is reasonably priced. The CSA project began in the Historic Filipinotown neighborhood of Los Angeles, serving mostly Pilipino residents. Last year, the project expanded to serve the concentration of Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic communities living in the San Gabriel Valley region of Los Angeles County.

For the purpose of the proposed expansion of Roots CSA under the USDA FMMP funding opportunity, SSG/APIOPA would like to continue to build its subscription service among underserved Pilipinos, Chinese and Vietnamese populations in Los Angeles County, while also expanding the CSA to the same API ethnic communities in Orange County, as well as Japanese and Korean ethnic communities in Los Angeles and Orange counties in need of such services.

The five (5) primary API ethnic groups of focus for the expanded Roots CSA project—Pilipinos, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese—are among the most underserved communities in the region also account for the largest API ethnic groups by population in Los Angeles County (Census, 2010).

Data suggests that Pilipinos are significantly impacted by health conditions related to unhealthy diet. A recent study of 5th, 7th and 9th grade students in Los Angeles County states that Pilipinos had the highest prevalence of obesity out of all Asian groups, at 17.5% (Shabbir S, Kwan D, Shih M, Simon P, 2007). In Los Angeles County, 42.9% of Pilipinos answered that they have been diagnosed with diabetes, compared to 13.3% of all Asians (CHIS, 2009).

Research further shows that the Historic Filipinotown community has had limited healthy food options due to the lack of local markets that sell fresh food and the overabundance of affordable fast food restaurants. According to the California Asian and Pacific Islander Joint Legislative Caucus, 79% of 12-17 year old Pilipino children do not get the recommended

servings of fruits and vegetables a day, higher than the state average of 76% (The State of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Health in California Report, 2009), At the same time, 19.6% of Pilipinos in LA County stated that they ate fast food 3 or more times in a week (CHIS, 2007, 2009).

As previously stated, SSG/APIOPA targets APIs in the San Gabriel Valley (SGV), with a particular focus on Chinese and Vietnamese families. SGV is located northeast of the city of Los Angeles and has significant API population which resides in the area. The SGV includes thirty-one cities and five unincorporated communities. According to the LA County Department of Public Health (DPH) Key Indicator of Health Report, APIs represent over 24.3% of the total population. Moreover, data show that approximately 32.4% of residents of SGV are overweight, and 22.2% are obese. Surprisingly, nearly 21% of children in grades 5, 7 and 9th are obese in the SGV.

Korean and Japanese populations in LA County are largely concentrated in central Los Angeles where residents have access to fewer than one (1) grocery store per 10,000 residents (Los Angeles Food Policy Council, LA Food System Snapshot, 2013). This area, which encompasses traditional Korean and Japanese enclaves—Koreatown and Little Tokyo, respectively—is generally low-income with 25% of households with incomes less than 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), and almost 40% of households (39.9%) with incomes less than 300% of the FPL reported food insecurity (LA County DPH, 2013). Nearly half (48%) of children living in the region report fast food consumption during a typical week (First 5 LA, 2010). The percentage of adults who reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day in the region was only 16.9% (LA County DPH, 2013).

An updated study on the growing API childhood obesity epidemic from Shabbir et al. (2010) using survey data from Los Angeles County public schools to measure obesity rates among 5th, 7th and 9th grade students found that among desegregated data on Asian groups, the overweight prevalence was highest among Korean students (17.3%). Overall, this is a higher rate than average (14.5%) for the state of California (Kaiser Health Foundation Community Health Needs Assessment, 2013).

Among the Japanese ethnic population in Los Angeles County, heart disease, a chronic disease linked to obesity, is the leading cause of death, accounting for 32% of premature deaths (California Department of Public Health, 2010).

In Orange County, the Vietnamese ethnic group accounts for 5.3% of the total population (the largest Vietnamese population in the U.S.), while other API ethnic groups' represent 11.2% of the total population (University of California, Irvine Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment, 2013). According to a 2010 community health needs assessment conducted by Kaiser Health Foundation-Orange County, 36.1% of Vietnamese children were overweight/at risk for obesity, which is higher than the national average, and higher than the average for other API groups in Orange County (23.4%). Also, Vietnamese adults had an alarming rate of obesity with more than half of Vietnamese adults (53.3%) categorized as obese. Only 22.3% of Vietnamese children had reported excellent health compared to 58.9 of other API ethnic

groups, which was also approximately 10 points lower than health conditions reported by white residents (69.4%). The rate of poverty among Asian families in Orange County is also almost double the poverty rate of white families at 10.6% versus 5.8%, respectively (American Community Survey, 2009). Overall, there exists a gap in health and income resources among API individuals and families living in Orange County.

Before this grant began, SSG/APIOPA recruited more than 80 local families (approximately 400 individuals) to participate in the Roots CSA project. SSG/APIOPA reached its capacity to serve underserved API communities with supply from its two (2) suppliers. The proposed project would increase the supply of produce available, and would allow the project to expand to more sites throughout LA and Orange counties to reach APIs that are low-income with many risk factors for obesity and chronic disease that live in underserved areas.

3) Activities: *Describe the activities used to achieve the goals and objectives. This should include measurement of any baseline data. Include significant contribution/roles(s) of project partners.*

Objective #1: Achieved

Activity #1: Hire regionally-based, part-time Project Coordinator.

SSG/APIOPA contracted a part-time Project Coordinator (Youa Yang) to build relationships with Hmong farmers, organize/facilitate workshops for Hmong farmers, and help expand the Roots CSA distribution network in the Central Valley, CA (primarily in Fresno County region). Youa was a perfect candidate for the job because of his extensive experience in farm business management as well as the hands on farming experience he's developed since he was young working on his family's farm. Youa has also worked for a non-profit organization as a community organizer and is a respected young Hmong community leader.

- Reference Attachment: "129 Independent Contractor_Constant Agreement_YOYA YANG"

Activity #2: Conducted research on the availability and capacity of API farmers that can supply culturally-appropriate vegetables and fruits. Report will include an analysis of each farm's financial situations, capacity to grow produce; type of produce; barriers to operations; distribution location; and eligibility for USDA program.

Our contractor based in Fresno (Youa Yang), helped conduct verbal surveys of Hmong farmers in Fresno County to assess the availability and capacity of farmers in the region growing culturally relevant Asian produce. Key assets that were identified included overwhelming number of Hmong farmers already practicing sustainable practices, as well as the importance of Hmong church and radio broadcasts to outreach directly to farmers. Many challenges and needs in the Hmong farming community were identified which helped us determine which workshop topics would be the most impactful and useful for the community. One key challenge

uncovered was that very few Hmong farmers own the land that they work on. Many of the farmers are leasing land through verbal contract, without any written agreements.

Below is a qualitative summary of the conversations/verbal surveys Youa Yang (SSG/APIOPA Contractor) conducted with Hmong farmers in Fresno County:

Name: Mai Thao

Farm Name: Thao Farms

Farm Location: Southeast Fresno, Jensen Ave. and Marks Ave.

Discussion: We talked about how they could get their Organic certification license. They have farmed for a long time but have noticed that organic sellers were given a better price while growing practices were similar to theirs. They wanted to understand why it would also cost so much to be licensed. I worked with them through some of the applications needed to get certified.

Name: Xia Chang

Farm Name: Chang Farms

Farm location: Southeast Fresno

Discussion: We talked about how he would like to expand his green bean farm but is running into financial trouble due to other expenses involving the drought. He was in the process of finding loans/grants to help with the process and wanted to help. I connected him with Fresno EOC to provide additional assistance.

Name: Tou Yang

Farm name: Yang Farms

Farm Location: Northeast Fresno, Fowler Ave. and Beyhmer Ave.

Discussion: We talked mainly about the market needs for his produce. They have been farmers for a long time but have only sold to distributors. They wanted to know more about how to get into farmers' markets and how to attain the right licenses to get involved with other direct sale markets such as farm to school stands. I talked to them about my own experience and how it takes more work when a farmer decides to do farmers' markets. Their capacity to grow is limited due to their limited number of workers being only Tou and his wife.

Name: Mai Nguyen

Farm name: Mai Farms

Farm Location: Southwest Fresno, American Ave. and Elm Ave.

Discussion: We talked about how she is dealing with the drought. She runs 40 acres but is now only using 20 due to water issues. Her main concern was how new regulations would affect small scale farmers like herself. We also talked about her business development and she is concerned none of her children will take up the farm in the future.

Name: John Yang

Farm Name: TBA

Farm Location: Southwest Fresno, North Ave. and Elm Ave.

Discussion: We talked about how he is starting up his farm but have limited access to farm tools. The financial commitment to large machinery was more than he could handle. I walked him through some of the processes that Padao Farms took and also connected him with the USDA for grant opportunities.

Activity #3: Select and execute contract agreements & MOUs with at least 4 Asian immigrant farms to receive technical assistance; and become a produce supplier for the Roots CSA program.

Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreement with Padao Farms which represents 4 small Hmong family farms to receive technical assistance and become produce suppliers for the Roots CSA program.

- Reference Attachment: “2016 MOU_SSG-APIOPA & Padao Farms”

During the course of this grant we also partnered with Her Farms (Clovis, CA), Yao Cheng Farms (Camarillo, California), The Growing Experience Urban Farm (North Long Beach, CA), and Ken’s Top Notch Produce (Reedley, CA). In total, we expanded the number of farmers in the Roots CSA distribution network from 2 to 7 during the course of this 2 year USDA FMPP grant successfully surpassing our target goal of 4 farms/farmers.

Objective #2: Achieved

Activity #1: Conduct four (4) trainings on business plan development on the following topics: 1) market analysis and pricing structure; 2) product management and logistics (CSA database software and supply-chain process); 3) product marketing and advertisement; and 4) budgeting and finance/revenue management.

Based on the recommendations and conversations our contractor (Youa Yang) had with Hmong farmers in Fresno County, we organized and conducted four Hmong farmers’ workshops:

1. February 23rd, 2015: “Organic Certification for Hmong Farmers” (This workshop included: Organic Certification 101, Organic Pest Control, Land Leasing 101, and an Organic Farm Tour)
 - a. Reference Attachment: “Hmong Farmers Workshop #1 Flyer”
2. May 11th, 2015: “Farmers Markets and Beyond” (This workshop included: 2015 Farmers Market Rules and Regulations, Brief overview of the Los Angeles Farmers Market Landscape, School Farm Stands, Roots Community Supported Agriculture, and a Land Use/Leasing conversation)
 - a. Reference Attachment: “Hmong Farmers Workshop #2 Flyer”
3. October 12th, 2015: “Marketing for Success!” (This workshop included: Marketing 101, interactive farmers market displays, Plate Fresno, and a facilitate roundtable discussion focusing on how Hmong farmers can work together to foster a more equitable marketplace)
 - a. Reference Attachment: “Hmong Farmers Workshop #3 Flyer”

4. February 23rd, 2016: “Farming Business Essentials” (This workshop included: Business planning, financial planning, and an interactive resource session)
 - a. Reference Attachment: “Hmong Farmers Workshop #4 Flyer”

Objective #3: Achieved

Activity #1: Create a budgeting system to calculate revenue and expenses for the expanded CSA program.

We successfully created, adapted, and improved the budgeting system for the Roots CSA program utilizing Google Excel sheets so everything would be stored and accessible online. We researched potentially investing in CSA software such as, “CSAware,” “Farmigo,” and “Small Farm Central,” but based on the pricing structure of these services we deemed that it did not make financial sense to invest in software unless we were dealing with over 150 subscribers per growing season. The main benefit of utilizing these services was the ability to process credit card transactions online but our parent agency (SSG) already had an online payment platform that we were able to utilize to implement online payment options for the Roots CSA program. As we continue to expand and grow our wholesale operations we will be looking into creating a fully integrated online ordering interface similar to Amazon Fresh where restaurants can easily browse seasonally fresh produce from our farmers and place their orders online.

Activity #2: Work with our farmers to create a product distribution plan and schedule including the coordination of material handling, packaging, inventory, transportation, warehousing, and security.

From our experience most of the farmers that we’ve worked with already have a product distribution plan that works best for them. However one of the farms we work with (Padao Farms) expressed an interest in working with us to develop a more robust business plan for a social enterprise which will not only source produce to the Roots CSA program but also bring together and empower other small Hmong farmers in a cooperative type model.

- Reference Attachment: “Padao Business Plan 3.0”

Objective #4: Achieved

Activity #1. Research 20 potential CSA sites throughout LA and Orange County for the Roots CSA program. Potential CSA sites include other community based/non-profit organizations, community centers, businesses/office buildings, religious institutions, and schools/universities.

During the course of the grant we did extensive outreach to community based/non-profit organizations, community centers, businesses/office buildings, religious institutions, and schools/universities across Los Angeles and Orange Counties. Of the 20 potential CSA sites we researched, 17 were established into Roots CSA sites (please see “Activity 4” on page 8 for a full list of the 17 newly established Roots CSA sites). Our main priorities were to identify areas with high concentrations of API community members, places that displayed or expressed a need for fresh and culturally relevant produce, and had someone who would be willing to volunteer to take on the role of a CSA site coordinator. One of the biggest determining factors in the success

of sustaining a CSA site is having a volunteer CSA site coordinator who is dedicated to the program. We've been extremely fortunate in having a committed group of CSA site coordinators who believe in the program and have been huge advocates in encourage people to participate.

Activity #2: Conduct educational outreach at local schools, community based organizations, faith-based institutions, and community gatherings regarding the Roots CSA program. Disseminate CSA Roots informational flyer via APIOPA's electronic newsletter to a vast network of health and human service providers. Additionally, advertise Roots CSA program on social media sites including: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.

We have conducted Roots CSA workshops at several locations throughout Los Angeles County and Orange County, including one at Magnolia High School in Anaheim, one at a Japanese Cultural Institute in Gardena, and several for college students from Azusa Pacific University, USC, UCLA, and Cal State Los Angeles. We have also increased our e-newsletter CSA outreach to local diabetes clinics, including Asian Pacific Health Care Venture, Buddhist Tzu Chi Clinic, and Herald Christina Health Clinic. We have expanded and grown our social media outreach efforts by creating a standalone "Roots Community Supported Agriculture" facebook page (separate from our main APIOPA facebook page – 906 likes) which was created in January 2014 and has grown from 0 to 135 likes which is reflective of the growth in our CSA subscriber base as well as other supporters of the program. We've also built up our followings on Instagram and Twitter with 356 and 715 followers respectively. In addition, we've been interviewed and featured on various news/media outlets in regards to not only the Roots CSA program but the larger food access/justice work we are doing in Los Angeles County:

- The White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI): "Empowering AAPIs Through Community-Supported Agriculture" ([Click Here](#))
- The Los Angeles Times: "Turning the food desert of Filipinotown into an oasis of healthful eating" ([Click Here](#))
- YOMYOMF (Popular Asian American culture blog): "I'm on a Farm" ([Click Here](#))
- Asian Americana ("A podcast about slices of distinctly Asian American culture and history"): "002 – Roots CSA" ([Click Here](#) – TOT: 28:05)

We also created a Roots CSA website (www.rootscsa.org) which not only enables us to more easily share and disseminate information about the program but has helped streamline our CSA subscription ordering process. We also are able to share/link healthy and culturally relevant recipes that people can easily reference. We have categorized the recipes by produce that are included in the CSA subscriptions so the people can easily look up a produce item(s) in their bi-weekly shares and find a list of recipes that utilize that specific produce item.

Lastly, we have started to experiment with new technology such as SideChef, an online interactive recipe application, and Periscope, an online live videocasting application, to reach and engage larger audiences around healthy cooking/recipes.

- Reference Attachment: Roots CSA E-Newsletter: [Click Here](#) (This is an example of the Roots CSA e-newsletters that we distribute to all of our subscribers)

Activity #3 Create a diabetes-friendly bag to attract CSA subscribers who are living with the chronic disease by meeting their unique needs.

We have successfully completed this activity by creating CSA subscription bags that are diabetes-friendly by ensuring each bag contains culturally relevant produce that is low in sugar content. In fact, many of the specialty Asian produce items that we source from our farmers have been used in traditional Asian medicines and are known to have medicinal qualities. For example, bitter melon, which is popular in many Asian stir fries, has been known to help lower blood sugar levels in people who suffer from both type I and type II diabetes. In addition, we have partnered with the American Heart/Stroke Associations to co-brand our CSA bags as being heart healthy as part of their “Check, Change, Control” initiative. We have also created half sheet CSA newsletters which we print and distribute to all of our subscribers. These newsletters contain the list of produce items people are receiving for that week, a short message from their farmer(s), and a quick, simple, and healthy recipe on the back.

- Reference Attachment: “CSA Bag Handout 5-7-16” (This is an example of the CSA bag flyers we distribute to our subscribers for each CSA pick up day)

Activity #4: APIOPA will begin operation of five (5) new CSA sites throughout LA and Orange County with a minimum of 8 subscribers at each location.

Based on the research we conducted to identify 20 potential CSA sites, we took our findings and successfully established 17 new CSA sites (surpassing our grant goal by 12 new sites):

- Koreatown (2): Center for the Pacific Asian Family & the Los Angeles Department of Public Health
- Westlake (3): Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles, APAIT, & Asian Pacific Health Care Venture
- Downtown L.A. (5): Special Service for Groups, Little Tokyo Service Center, Far East Lounge, Chinatown Business Development District – Senior Housing Complex, & Project 180
- Highland Park (1): Roots CSA Site Coordinator’s house
- San Gabriel Valley (2): First Baptist Church of Alhambra & Kuang Ming Saint Tao Temple
- San Fernando Valley (1): San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center
- South Bay (1): Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute
- Long Beach (1): Filipino Migrant Center (Hudson Park)
- Orange County (2): Orange County Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance & Pacific Islander Health Partnership

These partners and locations were selected because we wanted to reach our target population of Asian and Pacific Islander (API) families. Of the 17 sites that were established during the 2 year grant period, 11 are still operational. The sites that closed were not able to hit the

minimum subscriber requirement (at least 10 subscribers) for it to make financial sense for us to drop off to them. We are going to be refocusing our efforts from expanding to new sites to instead solidifying the 11 solid sites we have established and continue to bolster our outreach efforts for those sites. We have discovered that it is much more cost effective to build up a larger subscriber base at a location rather than have many locations with fewer subscribers.

Activity #5: APIOPA will continually monitor progress of this grant and create a sustainability report, which will include how to sustain our sites, our farmers, and our overall model.

During the course of the grant period we worked on developing a business plan which was aimed at taking the knowledge/lessons learned and creating a business plan which would expand the Roots CSA operation and (1) transition it to a more robust “Food Hub” model which will expand/increase income streams and distribution options and (2) explore the option of transitioning the program to a social enterprise (LLC, B-corp, etc.) to ensure the long term sustainability of the work so that it is no longer reliant on grant funding to operate.

- Reference Attachment: “2017-2019 Roots Food Hub Business Plan”

4) Accomplishments: *Describe what was accomplished during the entire project using measurable results. Provide baseline data and actual completed project data, i.e., “before and after” measurements. Include a summary of the required metrics (before and after) (FMPP Guidelines/Announcement). Be comprehensive, descriptive and detailed in regard to each accomplishment. These may include unfavorable or unusual developments, as well. If developed with grant funds, provide website addresses and links to any materials made available via the Internet.*

Roots CSA Program

Over the course of this grant we were able to significantly grow and expand the operation and impact of the Roots CSA program.

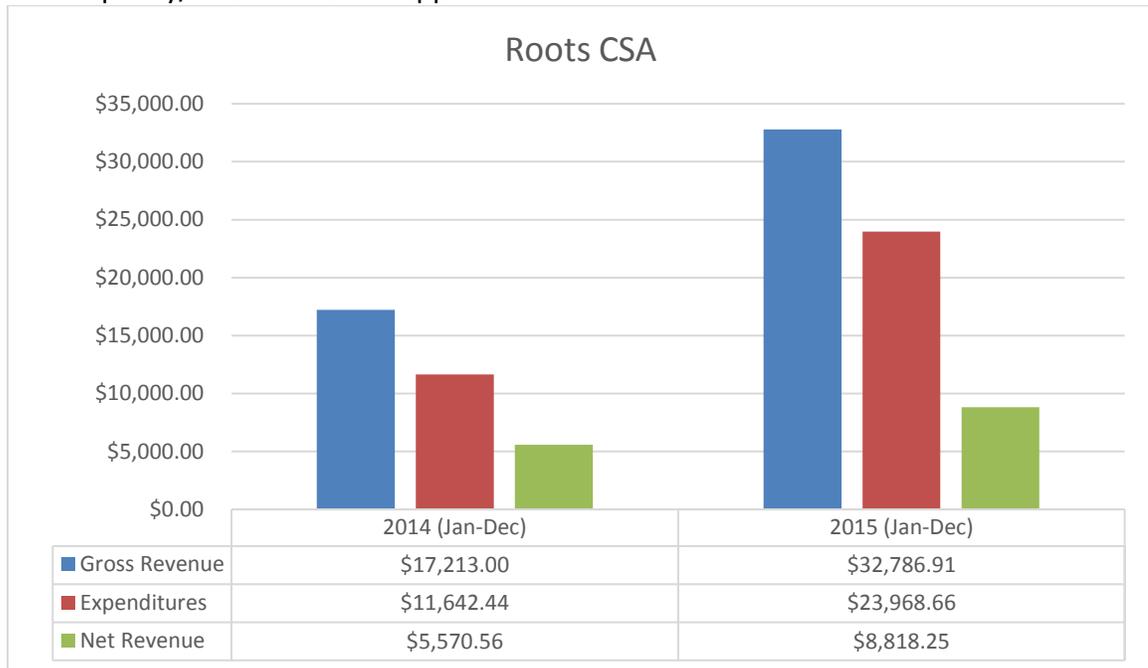
1. Over the course of the 2 year grant we were able to provide a total of **\$25,905.75** in revenue to the small local Asian American farmers we are working with.

Revenue Breakdown by Farm and Year:

Farm Name	2014 (Oct-Dec)	2015 (Jan-Dec)	2016 (Jan-Sep)
Her Farms	\$2,470.00	\$11,688.00	-
Yao Cheng Farms	-	\$1,722.00	\$2,434.75.00
The Growing Experience	-	\$1,345.50	-
Padao Farms	-	-	\$5,750.50
Ken’s Top Notch Produce	-	-	\$495.00

2. The Roots CSA program has experienced major growth and development thanks to the USDA FMPP grant funding we received in October of 2014. Between January 2014 and December 2015, Roots CSA experienced **90% growth** in gross revenue and a **58%**

growth in net revenue which can be attributed to the expansion of our distribution network, the expansion of our small farmer/supplier network, and the ability to build staff capacity/hire additional support.



Hmong Farmers Workshops

One of the primary objectives and goals of this grant was to help Roots CSA expand our network of small local Asian American farmers and help build up the capacity of those farmers.

1. A full day workshop covering Organic Certification 101, Organic Pest Control, Land Leasing 101, and an Organic Farm Tour was held on February 23rd, 2015. There were 24 participants that attended the workshop. Partner organizations included: California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), UC Cooperative Extension, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, California Farmlink, Padoa Farms, and Harvest Fields Organic Farm.
2. A half day workshop covering Farmers’ Market Rules & Regulations, Los Angeles’ Farmers’ Market Landscape, School Farm Stands, and Community Supported Agriculture was held on May 11th, 2015. There were 11 participants that attended the workshop. Partner organizations included: Padoa Farms, the Social Justice Learning Institute, Cultiva La Salud, Roots Community Supported Agriculture, and the UC Cooperative Extension.
3. A half day workshop covering Marketing 101, Interactive Farmers’ Market Displays, Plate Fresno Program, and a facilitated roundtable discussion about how Hmong farmers can better work together was held on October 12th, 2015. There were 15 participants that attended the workshop. Partner organizations included: Padoa Farms, Hmong TV Network, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, and the UC Cooperative Extension.

4. A half day workshop covering Business Planning, Financial Planning, and helpful resources for small farmers was held on February 23rd, 2016. There were 18 participants that attended the workshop. Partner organizations included: Padoo Farms, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA's Farm Service Agency, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, and the Fresno Community Development Financial Institution.
 - Reference Attachment: "Hmong Farmers Workshop Sign in Sheets"
 - Pre/Post Data: Please reference the "Hmong Farmer Workshops" section on pages 13-15

Healthy Asian American Cook Book

A portion of the USDA funding was allocated to creating healthy Asian American focused cook books. We were able to partner with a local L.A. based chef named Jessica Wang to create 15 summer recipes that feature common Asian produce items from the Roots CSA program. One of the key points we wanted to make clear is that you do not have to sacrifice flavor to eat healthy. We were very excited to be partner with Jessica Wang on this cookbook project because of her strong belief in staying true to the tastes and flavors of traditional Asian foods while creating innovative and healthier alternatives. Chef Wang was also included tips for efficient summer cooking (water use, preservation/fermentation, and wok cooking).

- Reference Attachment: "Nurturing Our Roots - An Asian American Guide to Summer Cooking"

Leveraging Funding

Another major accomplishment is that we were successfully able to leverage the funding we received from the 2014-2016 USDA FMPP grant to acquire addition funding and resources which also significantly contributed to the success of this project.

1. In 2014 we received a \$27,000 grant from the California Fresh Works Fund to purchase a commercial cargo van to increase our ability and capacity to pick up and deliver more fresh produce to Asian & Pacific Islander (API) families around Los Angeles and Orange County. Prior to purchasing this van, APIOPA staff would have to use their personal vehicles (small Toyota Corolla and a Honda Civic coupe) to pick up the produce from the farmers and distribute to various CSA pick up/drop off sites. The size of staff's vehicles limited the maximum amount of subscribers we could have during a growing season to only 40 due to the space limitation of the vehicle. The van enabled us to triple the amount of subscribers we were able to support with plenty of additional room to spare for future growth and larger wholesale purchases.
2. In 2015 and 2016, we applied for and received \$4,500 and \$2,000 grants (respectively) from the Circle of Change which is a local L.A. based giving circle in support of the Roots CSA program. We were able to use this money to rent cold storage space and hire a part time driver to assist with produce deliveries.
3. In 2016, we received a 2 year \$300,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation to build upon the Roots CSA program and establish one of the first Asian & Pacific Islander focused food hubs in the region. This grant, which runs from 2016-2018, will enable us to ensure

the long term sustainability of this project and allow us to continue to do the great work that the USDA FMPP grant funded these past 2 years.

- 5) **Beneficiaries:** *Describe and provide the actual numbers for both the direct and indirect beneficiaries of grant activities. As appropriate, include demographic composition of market vendors, customers and the surrounding market area (income level, ethnicity, age, etc.). Describe how specific groups benefitted from the grant, including any potential economic impact. Provide data supporting these conclusions. Ideally, this should include feedback from vendors and consumers, as well as any available quantitative data.*

Roots CSA Program

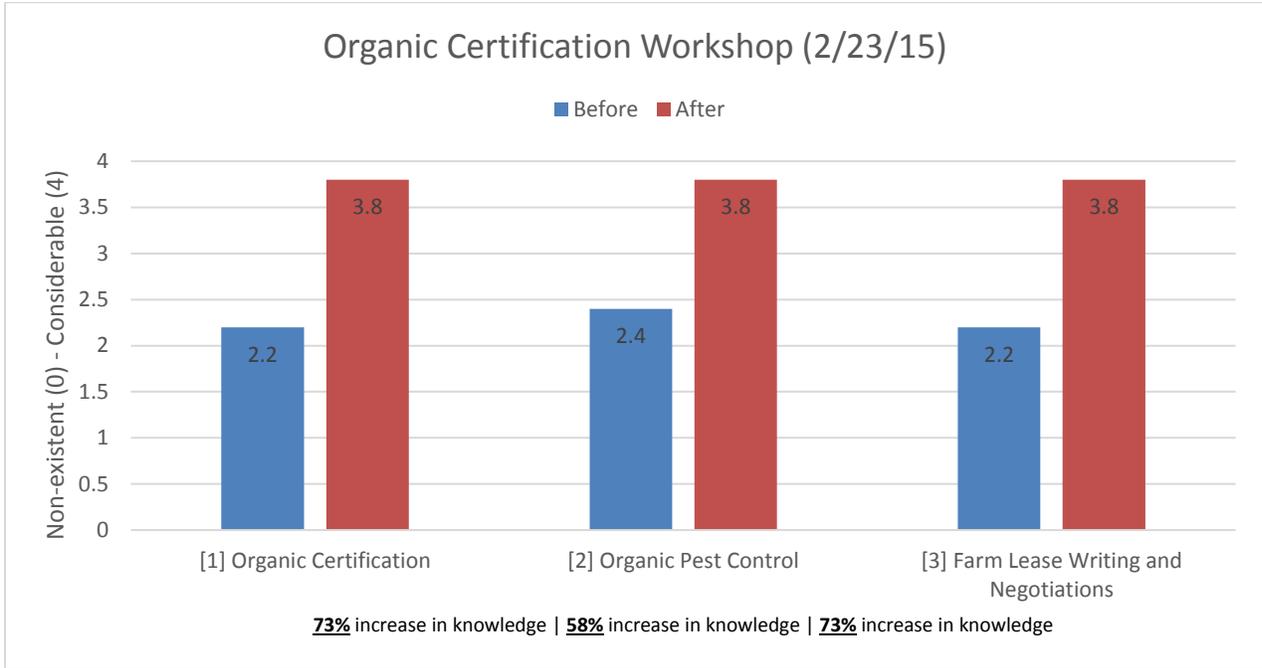
1. The number of families directly impacted by the Roots CSA program has **increased 438%** from 80 families (approximately 320 individuals) at the beginning of the grant on October 1st, 2014 to 350 families (approximately 1,400 individuals) by the end of the grant on September 30th, 2016.
 - a. Of the 350 families served, 16 have participated in 7 growing seasons (21 months), 11 have participated in 6 growing seasons (18 months), 12 have participated in 5 growing seasons (15 months), 6 have participated in 4 growing seasons (12 months), 19 have participated in 3 growing seasons (9 months), 51 have participated in 2 growing seasons (6 months), and 235 have participated in 1 growing season (3 months).
2. We created 2 annual CSA reports based on surveys that were collected from current and former Roots CSA subscribers. Overall findings indicate that the Roots CSA program has been extremely successful in increasing access to and consumption of fresh, locally grown, and culturally relevant Asian fruits and vegetables (**86.8%**^[1] and **93%**^[2] of survey respondents agreeing-strongly agreeing). In addition, people who participated in the Roots CSA program noticed a general overall improvement in their health (**68.4%**^[1] and **91%**^[2] of survey respondents agreeing-strongly agreeing), were more conscious of the food they were purchasing/eating (**76.4%**^[1] & **95%**^[2] of survey respondents agreeing-strongly agreeing), and were more likely to encourage their friends, family, and acquaintances to eat more fruits and veggies (**76.4%**^[1] & **91%**^[2] of survey respondents agreeing-strongly agreeing).
 - a. [1] Reference Attachment: “2014 Roots CSA Subscriber Survey Results”
 - b. [2] Reference Attachment: “2015 Roots CSA Subscriber Survey Results”

Hmong Farmer Workshops

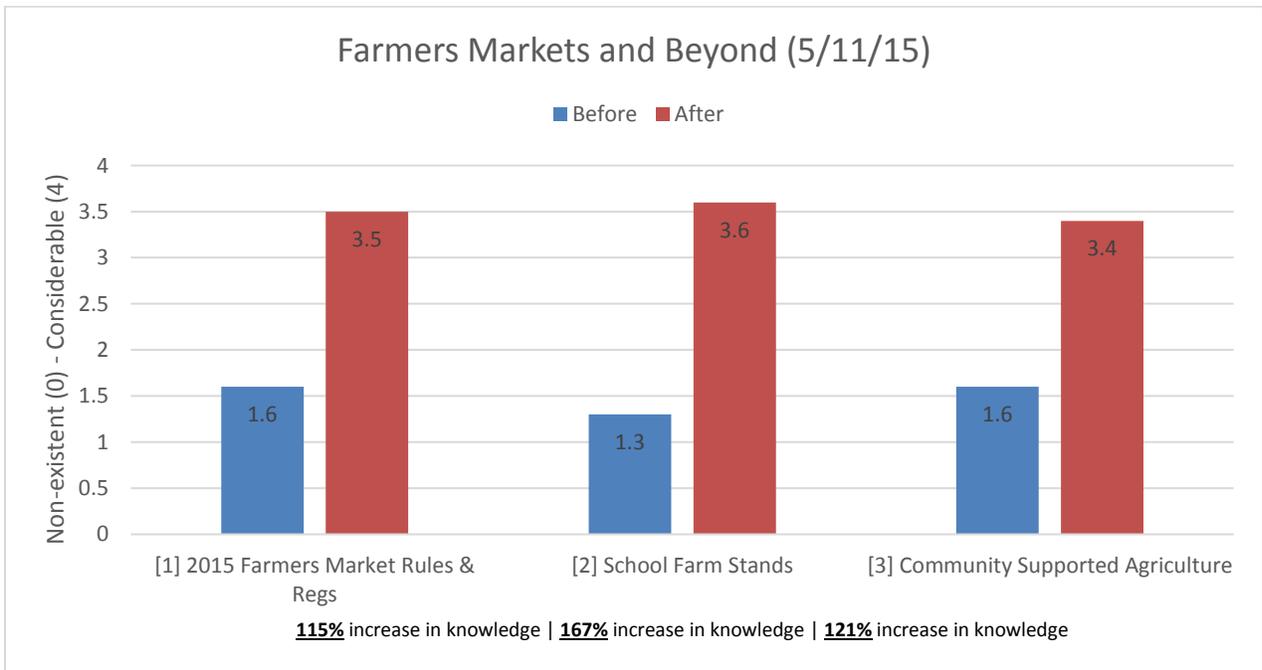
1. We conducted 4 workshops for small Hmong farmers based in California’s Central Valley region and engaged a total of **68 participants**. Of the 37 fully completed evaluation surveys we collected:
 - a. Race/Ethnicity: **92%** identified as “Asian/Asian American” and **82%** identified as “Hmong”
 - b. Farmers: A little over half (**54%**) reported they are “Currently farming” and **59%** reported they, “Are currently a farm worker.” There was an average of **8.5 years**

of farming experience amongst the respondents who reported they are “currently farming” or “...are farm workers.”

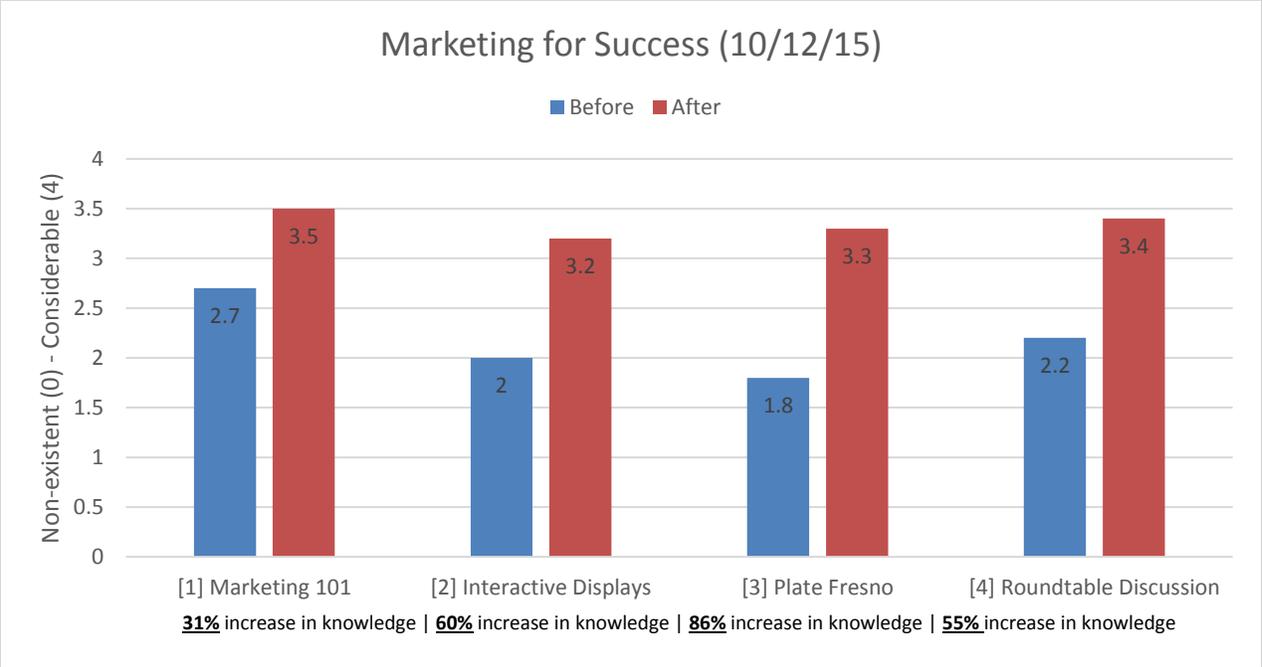
2. Knowledge before and after each workshop: See pages 14 & 15



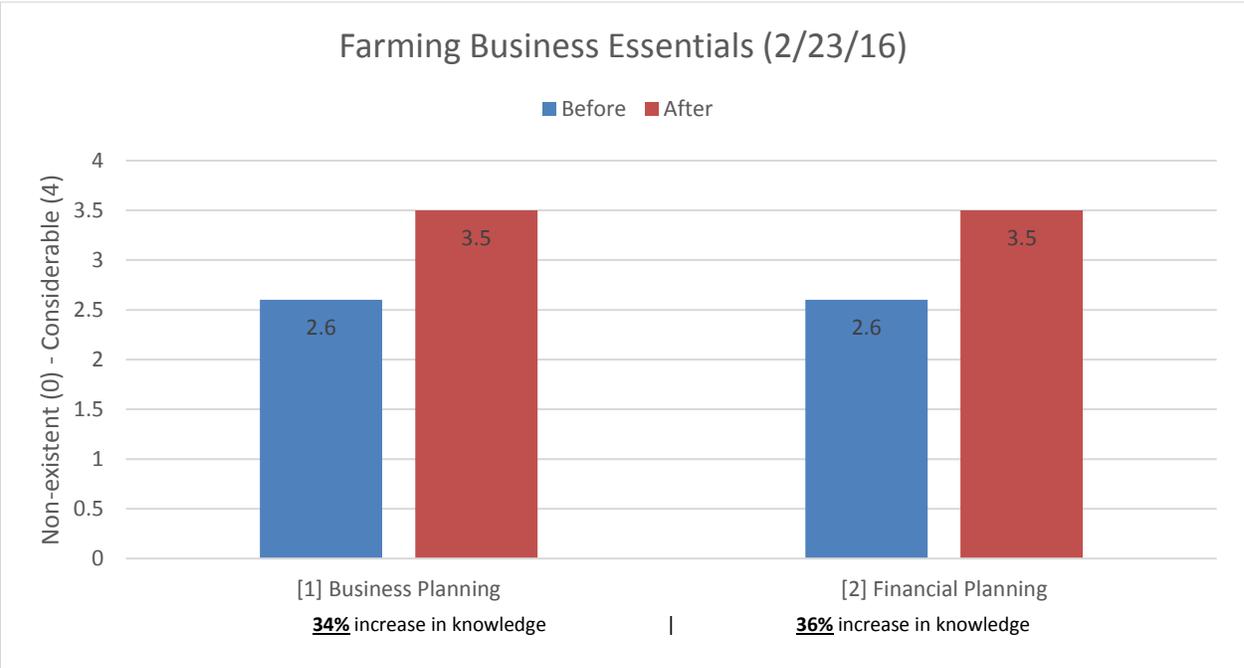
- Reference Attachment: “Hmong_Organic_Certification_Analyzed_11.18.16”



- Reference Attachment: “Farmers_Markets_and_Beyond_Analyzed_11.18.16”



- Reference Attachment: "Marketing_for_Success_Analyzed_11.18.16"



- Reference Attachment: "Farming_Business_Essentials_Analyzed_11.18.16"

Healthy Cooking/Nutrition Workshops

These workshops were not a requirement of our USDA grant however, Roots CSA is committed to give back to the community by using a portion of the profits generated to host healthy cooking/nutrition workshops aimed at teaching local community members how to cook simple, healthy, and delicious meals using the produce from their local CSA farmers.

1. Between October 2014 and September 2016 we hosted a total of 6 healthy cooking (2 in Gardena, 2 in Long Beach, 1 in Monterey Park, and 1 in Rosemead) and 3 nutrition/healthy portions 101 workshops (1 in Little Tokyo, 1 in Gardena, and 1 Historic Filipinotown) and engaged a total of 265 participants.
 - Reference Attachments: “Workshop Handout 1-25-15, Workshop Handout 4-25-16, Workshop Handout, Celebration Event Flyer 6-20-15, Workshops Handout 6-20-15, Workshop Handout 7-19-15, Workshop Handout 11-8-15, Workshop Handout 8-30-16”

We also created a culturally relevant nutrition workshop tailored to the API community by adapting the, “Choose My Plate,” program developed by the USDA. Many Asian families don’t eat on a plate but rather in a smaller bowl (often of rice) with the main dishes being communally shared family style in the middle of the table. This makes determining portion sizes a little bit more difficult. This is why we wanted to create a short culturally relevant healthy portions 101 section geared towards Asian cuisine and eating habits based on the guidelines set out by the USDA.

- Reference Attachment: “Healthy Portions 101”

6) Lessons Learned: *Discuss the lessons that were learned from completing the project. Lessons learned may have influenced the direction of the project, helped improve the process, and/or optimized the results. Sharing these experiences may be quite helpful to those seeking to learn from your experiences and to achieve similar results.*

CSA Subscriber Retention

Throughout the duration of the grant retaining subscribers beyond 1 growing season (3 months) has been a challenge for the Roots CSA program. This is an issue that many CSA programs run into as APIOPA’s Program Director, Scott Chan, discovered after attending a food hub conference in 2015 hosted by the Kellogg Foundation. Scott was able to talk to many food hub operators from around the country and the common theme was in order for them to become financially sound they had to diversify their revenue streams beyond their CSA operations. They shared that generally speaking their CSA’s were operating, at best, breakeven and, at worst, in the red. However, they still viewed the CSA as being a vital part of the food hub model because it still caters to a very niche market that they would not be able to engage if they completely cut out their CSA operations.

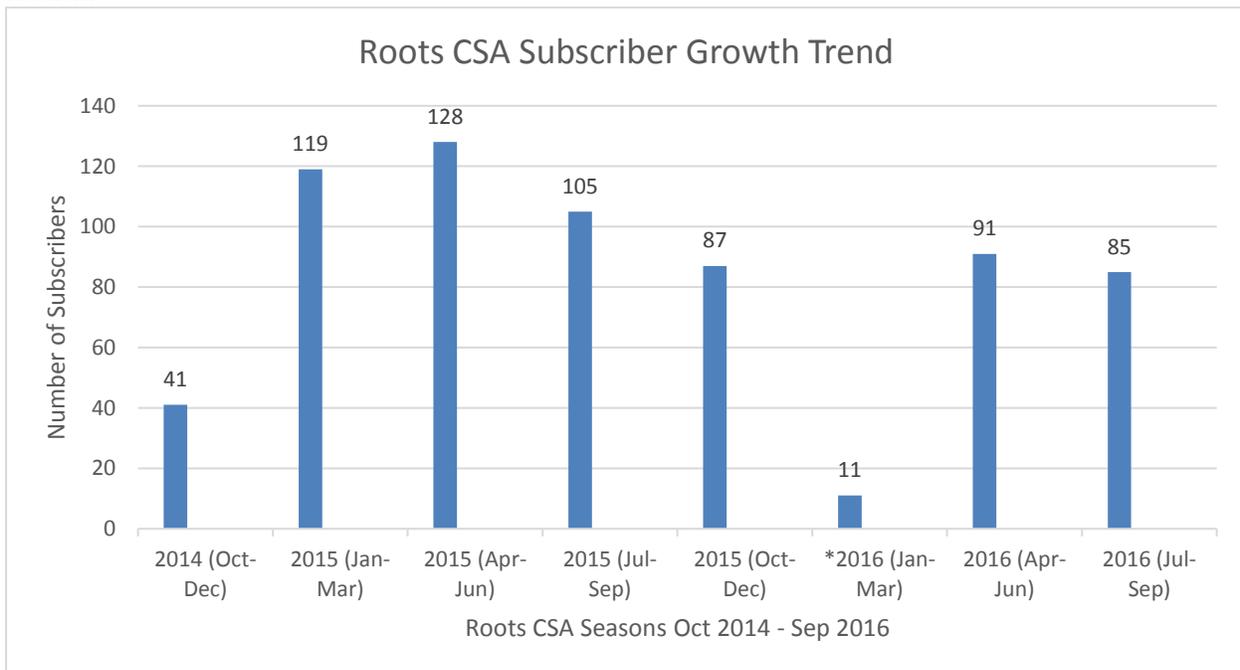
In addition, qualitative data from the 2014 and 2015 Roots CSA surveys gave us some interesting insight into some of the key factors that may have contributed to people discontinuing their subscriptions:

1. About 37%^[1] and 75%^[2] of respondents reported only eating 3/4^{ths} or less of their bi-weekly CSA shares. Only about 63%^[1] and 25%^[2] of respondents reported eating 100% of their bi-weekly CSA shares. The discrepancies in the numbers between 2014 and 2015 can be attributed to the sample sizes of the surveys collected. In 2014 there were a total of 38 respondents most of whom were avid CSA subscribers whereas in 2015 there were

57 respondents consisting of a mix of long time subscribers and subscribers who had only participated in 1-2 growing seasons which skewed the results.

2. When asked about the primary reason people wasted their produce 27%^[2] reported that they were not sure how to use/cook certain produce items and 29%^[2] reported that they did not have time to cook the produce.
 3. Qualitative data also suggested that some people didn't fully realize how the program would work. People shared that they went in with preconceived notions of what it meant to be a CSA subscriber and when they realized that it does require some investment/work (making sure they pick up their produce, making sure to use/cook all of their produce, learning about new produce items and how to cook it, etc.) it ended up discouraging them. On the flip side, we also discovered that for some people the CSA turned out to be a primary source of encouragement for them to eat more vegetables, become more conscious of what they are eating and how their food was grown, learn about new produce items/recipes, and for some, start their own vegetable/herb gardens.
- [1] Reference Attachment: "2014 Roots CSA Subscriber Survey"
 - [2] Reference Attachment: "2015 Roots CSA Subscriber Survey"

Synthesizing all of this data, one of the key takeaways for us has been that the CSA caters to a very niche market of people who: (1) care about how their food was grown (pesticide free, sustainably, non-gmo seeds, etc.), (2) want to support small local farmers, (3) enjoy receiving a variety mix of produce they may not be completely familiar with, (4) enjoy learning new recipes and figuring out what to do with their produce, and (5) want to make an investment in their health.



**We decided it would be best for the CSA to go on a short hiatus in the winter of 2016 in order to take a step back and reevaluate the program. The winter seasons have usually been a bit*

difficult for Roots CSA due to the colder weather, the farmers are limited in what they are able to grow which means the CSA has much less variety/more leafy greens compared to the spring, summer, and fall growing seasons.

We saw a **190%** increase in subscribers between the 2014 fall season and the 2015 winter season. This increase, in part, was thanks to the USDA FMPP grant which enabled us to significantly increase our CSA outreach, marketing, and overall staff capacity to run the program. We had a steady decline in subscribers due to subscriber attrition for many of the reasons mentioned before (people feeling guilty for not using/eating all of their produce and not fully understanding the involvement required in being a CSA subscriber).

We took the findings from both survey years and implemented new strategies to help increase our retention of subscribers from season to season including: (1) expanding our healthy recipe catalog on the www.rootscsa.org website, (2) including recipes on both the e-newsletters and CSA bag handouts, (3) improving the variety of produce items included in each bi-weekly bag (this includes the addition of fruit which was a highly requested item), (4) continuing our free healthy cooking workshops around L.A. and Orange county, and (5) including more proper produce storage tips to help reduce produce waste. As a result of these efforts, we were able to solidify our existing CSA sites and improve subscriber retention across the board. We are now averaging about 87 subscribers per growing season. In our experience maintaining a subscriber base between 80-100 people seems to be the most ideal in terms of coordination and overall management. This also enables us to dedicate more time to diversifying and expanding our operations to wholesale opportunities which can generate more revenue that can in turn be funneled back into our free community programming such as free healthy cooking/nutrition workshops and subsidizing fresh produce for low-income API families.

Working with Urban Farms

We are constantly looking for ways to help support small local farmers especially urban farms in the communities we serve. Since the start of the Root CSA program in 2012 we've partnered with 3 urban farms and have learned a lot along the way. For example, we partnered with a local 7-acre urban farm in North Long Beach called, "The Growing Experience," (TGE) for about half a year in 2015. We were very excited to work with TGE because of the great work they were doing such as providing fresh produce to the local community (CSA, mobile farm stand, etc.), providing volunteer opportunities for low-income at risk youth to work on the farm, offering healthy cooking classes, and advocating for ecofriendly farm practices. They actually received funding from the USDA to install a state of the art aquaponics system and were experimenting with new/different types of crops. We approached Jimmy Ng (the farm manager of TGE at the time) with the idea of growing more culturally relevant Asian crops so we could source it for the CSA sites we were establishing in the area. Jimmy was completely on board and supportive of a partnership with Roots CSA. Overall, it was a great experience for us to partner with TGE however there were some challenges that we encountered along the way.

A couple of the major challenges we discovered in working with smaller urban farms is:

1. Supply and Demand: Since they are much smaller operations in terms of resources, acreage (most were between 2-7 acres), and labor they couldn't always meet the demand of the sheer quantity of produce we needed.
2. Lack of variety: There was always an issue with the variety of produce items they could provide for the CSA. We typically provide each subscriber with roughly 5 lbs of produce twice a month. A typical Roots CSA share will consist of 2 leafy greens, a root vegetable, a seeded vegetable/fruit, and an herb. Produce from the urban farms was often times very repetitive so subscribers would get bored/tired of receiving the same items every time they picked up their share.
3. Quality control/assurance: Subscribers would occasionally receive produce that was not thoroughly washed/cleaned so insects (especially ants) always seemed to be an issue.

These issues made it extremely difficult for us to retain existing subscribers and sign new people up for the program. In fact, one of our CSA sites in Gardena saw a nearly a 50% drop in subscribers (14 in our 2015 summer season to 7 in our 2015 fall season). Since we switched farmers for the Gardena site in the winter of 2016 we were able to build the site back up to 14 subscribers by the end of September 2016.

However, with all of this being said, there were also many positive results that occurred as a result of partnering with TGE. For one thing we were able to learn more about how we can best support local urban farms in the future. One way is by partnering with an urban farm on grant applications to help build the capacity of the farm which in turn will enable the farm to better meet the needs of community based programs like Roots CSA. Back in 2015, we submitted a grant application to the Aetna Foundation with TGE which unfortunately did not get funded but we are consistently on the lookout for additional opportunities to apply for funding together. We were also able to organize 2 farms tours with TGE where we brought local API community members to the farm so they could learn more about the programs TGE offers, what it takes to run/operate an urban farm, and why supporting the local food movement is so vital to building stronger and healthier communities.

- Reference Attachment: YOMYOMF (Popular Asian American culture blog): "I'm on a Farm" ([Click Here](#))

Hmong Farmer Workshops

The first major challenge we ran into was trying to figure out the best timing (time of year, day of the week, and time of day) that would be the most convenient for the farmers. After talking with our farmers and other community organizations that have worked with the Hmong farming community, we realized that getting farmers to come out to a workshop during the Spring-Summer months (April-September) would be nearly impossible given the fact that many of these farmers are extremely busy planting, harvesting, and going out to multiple farmers' markets on a weekly basis. The Fall growing season is also a difficult time because many of the farmers we talked to are still very busy with their various farmers' markets, prepping their farms for winter, and preparing for the holidays. One of the biggest celebrations in the Hmong community is Hmong New Year's which takes place the week after Christmas but preparations can begin as early as the beginning of December.

Based on this feedback and advice, we emailed our FMPP program officer, Karl Hacker, on January 12th, 2015 we were advised, “You may certainly move the workshops to the off-season, when farmers are more likely to attend. In the end, it is important that the schedule/location of the workshops will make it easy for the attendees, and that the information being provided (during the workshop) is as complete as it would have been otherwise (under the previous plan). Discuss the topics/feedback, etc. in the progress report that would be due subsequent to the workshops.” We then determined the most ideal season to host workshops and get a good turnout would be during the winter season (Jan - Mar). This is when many of the small farmers' take a break and either stop going to their farmers' markets because they are not in operation during those months or significantly reduce the number of markets they attend. Throughout the grant we worked closely with our consultant Youa Yang and experimented with different days of the week and times of the day to see what would work best for the farmers. We discovered that generally Mondays and Tuesdays seemed to work better for the farmers since things are a little bit slower at the farm in the beginning of the week. As you move later into Wednesdays and Thursdays things start to get very busy for the farmers as they are preparing for their weekend farmers' markets. Weekends are prime time for farmers' markets in both Los Angeles and the Bay area so many farmers are selling at those markets. We also discovered that mornings (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM) or lunchtime (12:00 PM – 3:00 PM) seem to be the best times to host a workshop. Generally speaking many of the small farmers we work with and spoke to start their days very early in the morning (sometimes as early as 3:00 or 4:00 AM) to beat the heat of the day (temperatures can easily rise into the triple digits in Fresno County, especially during the summer months). The farmers will typically take a break in the late morning or afternoon when it is the hottest outside. We learned from our first workshop that farmers could not dedicate an entire day to stay at the workshop since they had to get back to their farms to work so we shortened the workshops to a much more manageable 3 hour window. The funding from the USDA allowed us to provide these workshops free of charge for the farmers and provide food which is always an invaluable incentive to encourage people to come out.

The second major challenge we faced was with outreach and making sure we could get the word out about these workshops/resources to as many of the small Hmong farmers in the Fresno County region as possible. We went with a multipronged outreach strategy which included having our contractor go on local Hmong radio shows to make announcements in Hmong about the workshops, sending out PDF fliers (in both English and Hmong) to many local organizations in the Fresno County area to share with the farmers they work with, printing physical fliers (in both English and Hmong) and posting them in Hmong community gathering places (i.e. churches, supermarkets, community centers, etc.), and having our contractor drive out to local farms in the area and invite farmers to attend the workshops. This multipronged culturally sensitive outreach strategy was very effective in spreading the word about the workshops to the local Hmong farming community. It was also extremely important for us to engage and partner with local community based organizations that were already working with Hmong farmers in the area since they are on the ground in the community, know the best ways to reach the Hmong farmers, and have a better understanding of the issues that are impacting

the Hmong farming community. The relationships we've been able to build with these community based organizations and local Hmong leaders has been invaluable in making this workshop series more impactful and successful. Having the support of the USDA also added another level of credibility to the workshops especially since the USDA is an organization that many of these small farmers are very familiar with.

The third major challenge was ensuring that all the workshops were culturally sensitive and tailored to the Hmong farming community. We made a decision early on that in order for these workshops to be successful making them culturally relevant and accessible must be a top priority. This is why we made a very intentional and concerted effort to hire a contractor that was Hmong, familiar with the Hmong farming community, and had experience with community organizing. We were very lucky to find Youa Yang (SSG/APIOPA contractor) who is a young Hmong farmer born and raised in Fresno and is very passionate about working to empower the local Hmong farmers in the community. Thanks to Youa we were able to ensure our marketing/outreach materials and each workshop was fully translated in Hmong. By building relationships with other local government and non-government organizations we were also able invite other Hmong speakers out who were able to deliver their presentations in language as well. During workshop #3 (Marketing for Success) there was a portion of the workshop that was a facilitated roundtable discussion focusing on how Hmong farmers can work together to foster a more equitable marketplace. We have heard from many Hmong farmers that there are times where there are multiple Hmong farmers at the same farmers' market and because they are competing for business they often end up undercutting each other to get an edge in the market. This practice of undercutting ultimately ends up hurting all the farmers involved because it can get to a point where they aren't making any profit on their produce. This discussion was facilitated by Youa Yang (SSG/APIOPA contractor) and Michael Vang (UC Cooperative Extension) and was conducted entirely in Hmong. It was important that the farmers were able to take the lead on the conversation and do it in a language that is comfortable for them. The roundtable discussion was well received and it turned out to be a very productive conversation.