



Farmers Market Promotion Program

Final Performance Report

Groundwork Hudson Valley is pleased to submit the final report for the USDA's Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) for our Get Fresh Farmers Market in New York. Below please find a description of each goal and objectives as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by FMPP staff, followed by a description of progress made and impacts for each. We conclude this report with a description of the overall impact of the project, an analysis of the increased customer base and partners included to generate greater exposure, and a discussion of lessons learned through this generous grant. A budget summary is also included in this report.

GOAL #1. Increase participation of the general public through a new marketing campaign.

Though only a few blocks from our downtown, many local residents do not know about the farmers market. Working strategically with the Downtown Business Improvement District and the City of Yonkers, we will carry out a range of direct marketing efforts to draw attention to the weekly market on Fridays. We will hang banners and signage at the local train stations, neighboring apartment buildings, and supportive local businesses in the downtown district. The BID will have a table at our market to cross-promote local businesses. Additional resources will also allow us to conduct informational meetings in a wide range of community settings and promote the market on various web sites and local television stations. In Newburgh, we will carry out many of these same core strategies.

Progress Made: With the awarded funds, we were able to create a unified marketing campaign utilizing banners, posters, and flyers that showcased the fresh produce as well as many offerings our market provides. New banners were prominently displayed at three main intersections as well as the YMCA and our urban farm, both located in high foot traffic areas. Flyers were distributed at the following locations: Yonkers Public Schools, in the elevators and entrance ways of apartment buildings adjacent to the market, businesses, and local organizations. Special events at the farmers market were featured in the Downtown BID newsletter, increasing attendance at these markets. Additionally, Groundwork advertised the market on the Yonkers Tribune's website, and spoke about it on a popular radio show, *Yonkers on the Level*. Staff made monthly presentations to residents at five municipal housing sites during the market season. At monthly meetings, staff further showcased market offerings through special prizes and raffles sourced from various market vendors. Free market shuttles were also made available to assist seniors and physically-challenged community members in attending the market. Similar efforts were replicated at our Newburgh office, where staff increased awareness of local food opportunities including their CSA program and county farmers market managed by the Groundwork team. Staff made special presentations at community centers and distributed flyers widely around the target area. Additionally,



Figure 1 New Flyer and Banner Campaign

staff created two banners that were displayed in strategic locations.

Impact Made: After assessing milestones to determine success of each activity, Groundwork is pleased to report that all milestones were achieved. Groundwork, in conjunction with community partners, produced 5 new banners and 20 signs; generated 110,000 flyers which were distributed in schools, apartments, businesses, and organizations; met monthly with 5 municipal housing sites to present and educate community around market offerings; provided market shuttle services to 2,000 municipal housing residents; and made 45,120 pounds of produce available during the market season. Additional special discounts and promotions offered throughout municipal housing also had an impact in attracting lower income individuals to the market. After reviewing market attendee numbers and customer surveys, we found there was a 40% (6,600 participants) increase in market attendance over the market season. Of this group, 36% were found to have had a household income of less than \$35,000 per year.

GOAL #2. Increase SNAP participation through targeted outreach

The Get Fresh Yonkers Coop is designed specifically to address food security needs in Southwest Yonkers, with many low-income families participating in our Citizen Farm program and our Youth Team. Nevertheless, many low-income residents do not know about the weekly market and have not been approached to become Citizen Farmers. Some have heard about the market (such as seniors in public housing), but are not sure when and where the market is open and may have no means of getting to it. We will work closely with Yonkers Public Schools, the Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority and the Yonkers YMCA, to increase participation among this core target group, especially in census tract 4.02 which is designated as a low-income, low-access community. Promotion activities will include the monthly distribution of flyers to local schools; free, creative workshops for kids and families when they come to the market; transportation to the market from municipal housing sites; and information sessions at municipal housing and other community locations about participation in the Citizen Farmer program and getting to the farmers' market.

Progress Made: Groundwork increased SNAP/EBT participation by over a third at the market. This is due to strengthened partnerships with Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority, and the YMCA. Groundwork distributed flyers detailing market offerings and special events throughout the Yonkers Public School system. High School students were incorporated into monthly market events through an open mic/entertainment platform. Monthly visits and presentations, complete with prizes, introduced municipal housing residents unfamiliar with the market to its offerings. In addition, shuttle services offered to municipal housing residents reduced transport barriers that had existed. One of our partners, the YMCA, helped to publicize the offerings and resources available at the market to its members. Furthermore, youth staff at the YMCA helped to put on regular children oriented events for the community. Groundwork also invited local Hudson River Healthcare (HRH Care) to be present at the market to offer their resources and free blood pressure testing. The local Shoprite nutritionist supported the market and offered monthly educational programs about diet and nutrition. Groundwork's own resident artist, Haifa Bint-Kadi, offered monthly "Art in the Park" workshops to teach free art work classes to children and families.

Impact Made: Using new promotional tactics, including special presentations with market prizes, municipal housing shuttle buses, and leveraging SNAP dollars through the New York State Fresh Connect Check program, we saw a 39% increase in SNAP customers at the market. Each month Groundwork staff visited and made special presentations among five of the local municipal housing sites. Visiting staff offered farmers market prizes, such as dried locally grown black beans, to residents at monthly meetings to offer them a small taste of the market offerings and entice them to shop at the market. From our surveys, participants admitted to never hearing about the market or knowing its exact location, but believed our visits and presentations made them "more likely" to attend the market. We arranged a new

shuttle service to allow better access for seniors and disabled community members from municipal housing sites. When surveyed, those who took the shuttle "strongly believed that the shuttles allowed them better access to the market." Through our participation in the New York State Fresh Connect Program, Groundwork was able to leverage customers' SNAP dollars by offering an additional two dollars for every five SNAP dollars spent at the market. This helped to reduce cost barriers that typically would deter SNAP users from shopping at the market. Furthermore, our special events such as our "art in the park" workshops and open mic programs brought a regular crowd of market attendees, many of whom had dependents and qualify for SNAP benefits.

GOAL #3. Increase the appeal of the market through participation of additional regional farms, cooking demonstrations, and innovative marketing material that highlight healthy eating.

One of the main recommendations for the market identified in the evaluation conducted as a part of our USDA Community Food grant was the demand for regular cooking classes and demonstrations focusing on how to prepare and cook the fresh produce being sold. Through this grant, we will make a specific effort to respond to these requests. We will provide cooking demonstrations each week and promote these events across the city. Youth from our Farm Team, and senior volunteers, will organize these demonstrations, which will include the produce being sold that week from the market. We will schedule "guest" cooks once a month from local eateries, including some well-known local restaurateurs. These events will be supplemented by music and public art activities for youth with nutrition themes. Posters and art will be displayed that highlight major nutrition themes and facts about health locally and in the United States, and we will emphasize the nutrition content and origin of food being sold.



Figure 2 Solar Punch playing and cooking off rays from the sun

Progress Made: Each week during our market we featured simple, accessible cooking demonstrations that effectively taught varied techniques in preparing and cooking produce sourced at the market. Cooking demonstrations frequently showcased raw recipes to show cooking doesn't need to be complicated to be highly nutritious. We also featured a colorful board of recipes for community members to explore weekly. This board of recipes featured a diversity of ethnic recipes reflecting the diversity of the Yonkers community and the different cultural cuisines. Through partnerships with Eat Smart NY and HRHCare, community members had the opportunity to learn how much sugar our favorite foods and drinks contain, and were guided to more healthy alternatives. We featured weekly market performances from local groups including *Soulbox Entertainment*, a local youth spoken word collective - to a solar powered alternative rock group called *Solar Punch*. We also hosted an open mic, encouraging visitors to engage in spontaneous performances. Groundwork's Haifa Bint-Kadi hosted her "art in the park" series, a monthly free art class available to Yonkers community members. Through the series, participants learned how to bind a journal, create natural dyes, and use vegetables to create unique watercolor designs.

Impact Made: This objective was to create a community space *within* our farmers market. We created a local platform of regular intergenerational entertainment by weaving together community talents from the high schools and neighborhoods. From surveys we found that market attendees learned new techniques and information about preparing and cooking healthy food. Repeat customers stated that they enjoyed coming to the market every week to "grow their recipe collections" and to sample the new cooking demonstrations. This was a testament to the belief that offering cooking demonstrations and new, simple recipes are important elements to have at a farmers market. Eat Smart NY provided educational programs demonstrating the true amount of sugar in popular foods. Many wrote on their

surveys that they were alarmed by the amount of sugar we take in daily through commonly consumed foods and drinks including juice and cereal. HRH Care, a local healthcare provider, noticed an impact on their business and commented on having new patients sign in after receiving referrals from representatives at the market.

GOAL #4. Replicate and adapt promotional ideas from other successful markets in the region.

The New York City area is filled with incredibly strong and successful farmers' markets, yet the staff and participants of the Get Fresh Yonkers Coop rarely have the opportunity to visit these other sites, meet with their organizers, or attend regional conferences on managing markets. On the few occasions that we have, our staff and volunteers are filled with energy and ideas. Under this project, we will make an intentional effort to visit 4-6 farmers markets in the region, to meet with marketing staff and observe how other markets advertise and promote themselves. We will also seek out markets that serve low-income residents and involve youth. We will use this research to incorporate the best marketing ideas into our program.

Progress Made: Groundwork staff and program participants made several trips to youth and community based farmers markets. We traveled to the New Rochelle Friday's Farmers Market, Union Square Farmers Market, East New York Farms Market, and the Gunn Hill Farmers Market near Van Cortlandt Park. We received some great advice on how to organize our tables at the market to allow for better flow and better designs to accommodate for non-English speakers. We also learned from our market managers about funding sources and how to leverage SNAP participant's dollars through the NY State Fresh Connect Checks program.

Impact Made: From the tours we learned different methods for more effective produce display at the market. Originally, the tables were set up in the shape of a capital E, but through tours we learned that shaping the tables into a C with a centered table in the middle of the two sides would allow for a better customer flow while allowing spotlighted produce to be featured. This method eliminated issues with customer flow, allowing for extra space for the slower more methodical shoppers to shop while allowing faster shoppers to make their way quickly around the market. We also redesigned our price signs to include more details including translations. Through our experiences talking with other market managers we learned about the New York State Fresh Connect Checks program, which allowed us to better leverage the SNAP benefits of eligible customers.

Overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2015).

1. Number of direct jobs created: 17
2. Number of jobs retained: 1
3. Number of indirect jobs created: N/A
4. Number of markets expanded: 1
5. Number of new markets established: 0
6. Market sales increased by \$1,397.36 and increased by 6.49%.
7. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 3
8. 3 new vendors joining for 2017 market season

We were specifically able to expand our customer base to include a larger population of SNAP eligible community members through targeted promotion and publicity. These efforts included presentations that allowed us to build a rapport with municipal housing residents in turn encouraging them to participate in the market and become involved. These meetings and relationships have continued through the market off-season. Some of the lower-income community members expressed their

concerns that produce prices were “too expensive” and a deterrent for them to shop at the market. By registering with New York State’s Fresh Connect Check program, Groundwork was able to leverage any SNAP customer’s dollar, reducing the overall cost of their produce purchase. This encouraged SNAP participants to shop at the market and engage in the local food movement, rather than heading to the local grocery store to purchase their produce.

Community Partners

Our community partners include Yonkers Wellness Center, HRH Care, Shoprite , Eat Smart NY, YMCA youth program, Soulbox Entertainment, and Yonkers Riverfront Library.

Each partner was able to contribute to the overall market by attracting different communities and offering services and or resources to residents. For example, the Yonkers Wellness Center offered facts and tips on everyday wellness, the health benefits of different vegetables, and strategies for managing mental health. HRH Care offered visitors free blood pressure testing and information on how to access healthcare and health resources locally. Shoprite’s nutritionist regularly educated market attendees on nutrition, portion control, and recipe ideas. The nutritionist also offered healthy, culturally sensitive food alternatives to improve family diet. Youth from the Yonkers YMCA offered fun exercise activities and games for kids exploring the market with their parents. Soulbox Entertainment hosted our weekly open mic series and offered space for community members to perform. They also provided entertainment for market attendees as they shopped, playing an intergenerational playlist of music. Lastly the Riverfront Library hosted a pop-up library at the market, sharing free books to children and families. These partners helped to shape the feel and culture of the market, changing it from a marketplace to a community space.



Figure 3 Soulbox Open Mic reciting spoken word poetry

These partners are excited to partner again in the 2017 market season and plan to participate in the planning stages of the market. Since these partners are all Yonkers based and each reach different demographics, interested partners will help contribute their ideas when designing the flyers and marketing campaigns to attract the different community groups. These returning partners will also help to publicize in their professional circles to have a larger collective impact.

While we have not publicized any of our results as of yet, we have collected feedback from our community and additional stakeholders about our work via surveys and a post- season meeting. The majority of comments commended the growth of the market from the previous year including a wider produce offering and more events and activities for market attendees to participate in. Some market attendees suggested organizing volunteers and putting them to better use when available. Other comments suggested more cultural crops including Jamaican callaloo and herbs like culantro that are used in popular Latino dishes such as sofrito.

Budget Summary *attached seperately

Groundwork Hudson Valley generated an income of \$21, 505.67. This income directly goes to support the following season’s market, helping to cover staff time and materials related to the events and operation of the market.

Lessons Learned

We found that by including our volunteers in special field trips and offering other perks, such as free workshops and merchandise, we had a stronger team during market days. Next year we are interested in designating a trained volunteer to organize the other volunteers and to organize the rewards and field trip opportunities on behalf of the market manager. We believe this can help to increase the capacity of the market team and will also help to make sure the needs of the volunteers are being met and their strengths are being matched with their respective duties.

Developing a responsive market is unique and can be appreciated by the community. We found that by recognizing local and national events or happenings at the market is one way to do this. One successful example of this was the June market, directly after the Orlando shooting. For that Friday market we made a small memorial for those lives lost, as it affected both local Yonkers families directly, as well as the entire nation. Community members responded positively in large numbers by leaving thoughtful messages of love and strength. This served to provide some community solace and solidarity during a hard time for many in our community.

Organizing multiple partners and community members can be a challenge. Groundwork established a group calendar to keep on track. We also improved processes by delegating tasks to key partners and staff members early on and established check-in dates to ensure other partners are on schedule. This is a challenge for even the best of organizations and remains a running mantra for Groundwork and our team.

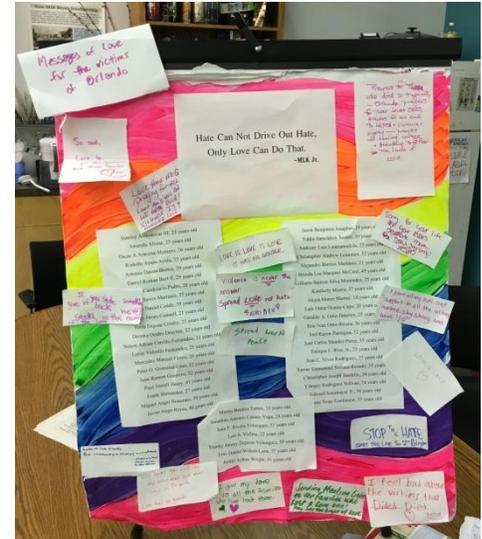


Figure 4 Message Board of Love for the Victims of Orlando Night Club Shooting

Future Work

With the success of this grant we will continue to grow and develop our Friday farmers market. Since completion of the grant we have continued attending regular municipal housing meetings and established a market team composed of community members, vendors, and staff. This team will work cooperatively to plan and develop the market in 2017. We have used this group to leverage our skills and to work collectively on continuing the same objectives outlined in this proposal. Since the completion of our 2016 market season, we have attracted three new vendors who will be joining us in 2017. They consist of a meat/dairy/eggs vendor, a Caribbean baked goods vendor, and an independent vegetable farmer. The growth that we have seen is a direct result of the work done under this grant and a significant milestone to Groundwork's Get Fresh Yonkers Farmers Market. After 5 years of developing and innovating to sustain the market, we are at a point where we will be large enough to draw a sustained crowd. We hope to further support current vendors and continue to build on the lessons learned through this grant period to attract additional new vendors to our market.