

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to your assigned grant specialist to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2015 to September 29, 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Alexander J. Moore
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Recipient Organization Name:	DC Central Kitchen
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	From Farms to Food-Deserts: Creating a Value-Added Chain Linking Local Growers and Small Urban Retailers
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	15-LFPP-DC-0094
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Washington, DC
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,997

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

- Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).
- Different individual: Name: Theresa Meyers; Email: tmeyers@dcentralkitchen.org; Phone: 202-847-0219

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

Program Overview: Over the course of two years, DC Central Kitchen’s LFPP project focused on creating new opportunities to link local growers with urban consumers, particularly those in low-income communities with little access to healthy, local options. DCKK is uniquely poised to perform this work, as a purchaser and aggregator of more than 300,000 pounds of local product each year for our Healthy School Foods program and CACFP meal distribution program. Launched in 2011, our Healthy Corners program, which delivers fresh produce and healthy snacks to 63 corner stores in DC’s food deserts, offers a prime opportunity to introduce healthy, local, and tasty products to underserved communities where low-income individuals can leverage their purchasing power as consumers to choose local food for themselves and their families. In doing so, we sought to enhance the healthy food infrastructure available in low-income communities, create market opportunities for local growers, and create jobs for at-risk adults. Our LFPP funds were used to improve our community kitchen with appliances and processing equipment; LFPP funds were not used to purchase or donate produce/local food to any individual or organizations.

- i. **Goal/Objective 1: To facilitate increased revenue for local growers through market opportunities**

- a. Progress Made: We sourced product from 39 local farms, up from 20 local farms when this grant began. Our largest farm partner remained the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, a cooperative of more than 100 small farmers. Our top-selling local item in the corner stores this summer was watermelon sourced from the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction. Our next largest partners were two food hubs - Local Food Hub and Common Market – both of which we began working with under this grant. By working with these food hubs, we have established contract growing partnerships with several local farms to provide a stable stream of vegetables for our corner stores and a stable source of income for farmers. We have also established hyper-local farm partnerships with urban farms in the District of Columbia including Dreaming Out Loud from which we buy herbs and DC Urban Greens from which we buy lettuce. This spring, after sourcing local produce on behalf of small business Misfit Juicery, the company became large enough to begin local sourcing on their own. Their positive exit indicates that DCKK plays an important role in making local sourcing a viable option for small, growing businesses. We continued to source local produce on behalf of nonprofit CentroNia.

- b. Impact on Community: Thanks to a successful USDA-AMS Local Food Promotion Program investment, 1 in 4 of our fruit and vegetable offerings are now sourced from local and regional farmers. A select few items such as lettuce and herbs are even sourced within the District of Columbia from urban farms, offering a unique pipeline that connects both rural and urban agriculture producers with low-income urban consumers. In the past six months (4/1/17 to 9/29/17), Healthy Corners invested \$2,109 in locally-sourced ingredients. This indicated a tenfold increase in local sourcing from our baseline in 2015. We transformed these local items into value-added products now sold at 52 corner stores in DC, up from 37 one year ago, creating a new market for local products in DC’s food

deserts and underserved communities. Across our entire organization, we invested \$206,565 in 39 local growers since April.

ii. **Goal/Objective 2: To enhance the infrastructure available to process and distribute local food**

a. Progress Made: Last winter, Healthy Corners purchased a vacuum sealer and robot coupe to enhance our ability to transform local produce into value-added products. In addition to enhancing our own infrastructure, we invested private funds to create and distribute new marketing materials to our entire network of stores and after conducting a retail audit, are providing new and larger refrigeration units to our top performing stores. These larger units, coupled with a targeted marketing campaign, increased sales by 96% and 63% at two targeted stores when comparing monthly sales to the year prior. We are in the final stages of equipping two corner stores with new Point of Sale (POS) systems to enhance their ability to track healthy food purchases. These investments will continue to help drive sales of Healthy Corners products, including locally sourced products. Thanks to our new partnership with Common Market, which owns jersey processor, we now freeze local green beans and corn to serve year-round.

b. Impact on Community: Healthy Corners now offers 16 different varieties of local whole, fresh-cut, and value-added produce sourced within 250 miles of Washington, DC at our network of corner stores. Our two most popular value-added items with consumers are fresh sliced local apples and fresh cut local watermelon.

iii. **Goal/Objective 3: To increase the amount of local product available in urban food deserts**

a. Progress Made: After sourcing, slicing, packaging, and distributing locally-sourced items to 63 corner stores, our team played an additional role ensuring that this fresh food made was made affordable and convenient for consumers in urban food deserts. We trained store owners on the meaning and importance of local food, and empowered more than 75% of our stores to stock at least one local item. Each of our local items was labeled as such so that consumers could make the choice between local or non-local. Additionally, this summer DCKK partnered with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and local service agencies to host summer street festivals in low-income communities. These outreach events, Beat the Streets, shut down city blocks for one afternoon twice per month. Healthy Corners contributed three key activities: provided free grocery bags of seasonal produce items, conducted consumer awareness surveys, and offered fun games teaching USDA MyPlate guidelines to children. Grocery bags were purchased with private funds, no LFPP funds were used for this activity. These events allowed us to engage to a wide range of clients of all age groups and backgrounds, reaching an average of 400 unique individuals at each of these bi-monthly events.

b. Impact on Community: As of September 2017, approximately 1 in 7 corner stores in the District of Columbia is a Healthy Corners store. An independent year-long evaluation conducted by American University found that 63% of customers visit a Healthy Corners store in their neighborhood “nearly daily”, and of those, over half say that the availability of fruits and vegetables at the corner store thanks to Healthy Corners has “definitely” helped them to eat

healthfully. Additionally, 58% of surveyed customers already purchase some, most, or all their fruits and vegetables from a Healthy Corners store. This year, Healthy Corners was named a best practice by The Food Trust and the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation for taking a market-based approach to increasing access to fresh, local food in urban food deserts.

iv. Goal/Objective 4: To create jobs for at-risk adults in the food industry

- a. Progress Made: We created two new jobs since March – a Healthy Corners Program Assistant and a Procurement Coordinator, both of whom are staffed by graduates of DCCK’s Culinary Job Training program for at-risk adults. We continued to employ an additional 3 graduates of our Culinary Job Training program for at-risk adults hired last summer. DCCK is a USDA SNAP Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) provider. We also began offering the opportunity for our CJT graduates on staff to lead the cooking demonstrations and outreach events we conduct in target communities – providing professional development opportunities for graduates and a more peer-to-peer connection for our customers.
- b. Impact on Community: At present DCCK employs 80 graduates of our Culinary Job Training program for disadvantaged adults, many of whom live in the communities where Healthy Corners operates. These graduates are earning living wages while preparing healthy, dignified food options for their communities. This project employs 5 culinary graduates and creates meaningful opportunities for community members to serve as grassroots outreach and nutrition ambassadors.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2015). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 5
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 5
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 3
- iv. Number of markets expanded: 36
- v. Number of new markets established: 19
- vi. Market sales increased by \$3,129 and increased by 1,483%.
- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 39
 - a. Percent Increase: 95%

3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

- i. Yes, 100% of the locally-sourced products for this project were sold in low-income and low-access communities which did not previously have access to local ingredients. We increased the number of partner corner that stock and sell local produce from 37 to 53 over the past two years. We conducted nutrition education events and cooking demonstrations to increase customer demand – over 220 events over the past two years. Beat the Streets summer festivals held bi-monthly this past summer reached over 400 unique individuals each time. For our expanded stores, we hosted launch events at each location named “Community Parties”. We marketed through mailers, flyers, text messages, and word of mouth. These launch events not only gave us an opportunity to engage with existing customers, but also created new customers for the stores. Each of

our launch events included an on-site cooking demonstration (sometimes with a guest culinary expert), raffle giveaways, nutrition education activities, and corner store tour to showcase the different produce items sold – highlighting local items where possible. We engaged a total of 238 unique individuals at these events.

- ii. Marketing, outreach, and community partnerships are the tools Healthy Corners uses to drive customer demand and promote community health and wellness. Healthy Corners provides free marketing materials to corner stores which includes floor stickers, shelf decals, window signage, and recipe cards. In August 2017, Healthy Corners launched a mass marketing campaign using nearby buses, bus shelters, and Metro rail stations to display Healthy Corners advertisements navigating customers to the closest healthy food access point. This month-long ad campaign increased sales of one of the target stores by 96%, and another by 60% compared to August of the previous year. In addition to print marketing, Healthy Corners utilizes MailChimp email marketing to send monthly community newsletters promoting upcoming events as well as food assistance redemption reminders, purchases geo-targeted mailing lists to send direct-mail to community residents informing them of upcoming store and promotions events, and maintains a calendar of community events on DC Central Kitchen’s website. Healthy Corners now offers 100+ annual events both at corner stores (including cooking demonstrations and guided store tours) and at nearby community locations (including nutrition workshops, taste tests, produce giveaways, and produce raffles). This work has been made possible by strategic partnerships with more than three dozen farmers markets, health clinics, public libraries, community centers, and nonprofits. Hosting monthly store events has helped to create a reliable customer following and built trust between store owners and customers who previously felt tensions due to security measures like bulletproof glass, and community partnerships have allowed DC Central Kitchen to engage customers on an ongoing basis outside their shopping experience. At each of these events, customers have the option to sign up for Healthy Corners’ text messaging service, which sends bimonthly healthy eating text messages and monthly reminders to residents to redeem food assistance benefits, creating one more touch point to improve public health. More than 200 community members now receive monthly newsletters regarding healthy retail activities including store offerings and upcoming events, and 700 individuals have signed up to receive healthy eating text messages and event updates.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

- i. Who are your community partners? How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project? How will they continue to contribute to your project’s future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?
 - a. This project would not be possible with the support of corner store owners who purchase, advertise, and sell the Healthy Corners products. As this project moves forward, we plan to partner on a deeper level with corner stores to help them understand the benefits of selling local products, grow their revenue from the sale of local products, and better meet the needs of their customers—the majority of whom reside in low-income and low access communities. Over the past year, we have worked deeply with DC Greens and Grubb’s SE Pharmacy and Mini Mart to pilot an effort to transform a corner store into a small grocery store. Last year, DC Greens approached us with research showing that the more quantity and variety of produce available on the shelves, the more purchasing

that takes place. We selected Grubb's SE Pharmacy and Mini Mart, one of the top performing corner stores in our network, to serve as our pilot store for this effort. From July 2016-September 2016, we upgraded their unit to a much larger open-air unit to stock up to 45 pounds of produce and over 12 different varieties of fruits and vegetables. We highlighted which products were local on price tags. During this pilot program 100% of the produce was subsidized. We then smoothly transitioned to incremental payments after September. Starting in January, Grubb's paid for 100% of all produce. Since then, we have conducted monthly cooking demonstrations that highlight different seasonal and local items including collard greens, kale, and sweet potatoes. In addition to increasing the amount of fresh and local produce available in this neighborhood, this pilot project has inspired other storeowners to want to grow and expand their Healthy Corners purchasing. We will plan future projects with DC Greens along with additional community-based nonprofits including Dreaming Out Loud and CentroNia. As described in more detail below, we plan to work with Wholesome Wave to implement a nutrition incentive programs at Healthy Corners stores with the support of a USDA-NIFA-FINI grant in 2018.

b. Grassroots partners that help us engage our target communities and nearby residents in conversations about expanding healthy food access and building a more resilient food system include the Ward 8 Health Council and the Ward 7 Health Alliance. Additionally, we partner with DC government and university researchers, including American University's Department of Health Studies, and DC Food Policy Council.

5. did you use contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project? N/A

6. Have you publicized any results yet?*

i. If yes, how did you publicize the results?

ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach?

a. DCCK has a demonstrated track record of proactively sharing program information, lessons learned, and best practices with peer organizations and academic researchers across the country. For example, in February 2015, DCCK released "Turning the Corner," a free, open-source manual on how to replicate DCCK's established best practices. Since its release, our best practices manual has been profiled by The Chronicle of Philanthropy, The Atlantic, and The Huffington Post; the widespread publicity has inspired over 100 businesses and nonprofit organizations in 13 states to express interest in replicating this model. Leveraging that success, DCCK is set to release an updated manual in January 2018 with lessons learned from the past two years and a documented sustainability plan through 2020. We plan to share lessons learned and scalable practices with a wider audience as members of the USDA Farm to School Network, Social Enterprise Alliance, DC Food Policy Council, Ward 8 Health Council, Ward 7 Health Alliance Network, Catalyst Kitchens Network, and as grantees of the DC Healthy Corner Store Partnerships program and the SNAP Employment & Training Program.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? If so, how did you collect the information? What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
- a. Results of two-years of corner store evaluation show that 97% have seen increases in the number of customers in their store; 97% agree that this program has helped them think differently about selling produce, and 50% have seen an increase in their profit. During community engagement events, Beat the Streets, and special survey days conducted in partnership with graduate students from American University, we surveyed corner store customers specifically for this grant project. By reaching 91 individuals, we found that 59% indicate they take into consideration whether an item is local or not when purchasing produce, and 55% report purchasing locally-grown food. These results are promising, but a deeper dive found that local produce is not a top consideration. When surveying customers regarding the factors that impact their decision-making process when purchasing produce, results (below) indicate that quality, price, and convenience all factor into their decision more than grown locally. By ensuring that those top priorities are accounted for, customers can then start factoring in locality into their purchasing decisions.

What is the most important aspect when purchasing fruits/vegetables? (multiple answers accepted)	
Quality/Freshness	95 (66.4)
Grown Locally	10 (7.0)
Price	19 (13.3)
Convenience	19 (13.3)

In response to these survey results, in the spring, we shifted our product development processes to be more customer centered. We conducted product testing at some store events where we have prototypes of value-added locally-sourced products. Our team collected the following feedback from customers: if they would purchase this item, how much they would be willing to pay for this item, what additional ingredients or products they would like to see included, and which prototype do they liked the most. This process has allowed us to refine our local produce offerings to best meet consumer needs.

8. Budget Summary:
- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:
 - ii. Did the project generate any income?
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? N/A
9. Lessons Learned:
- i. Summarize any lessons learned. Draw from positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).
 - a. Ensuring equitable access to healthy food in urban food deserts requires system-level change and a wide array of collaborations. In Washington, DC's

food deserts, full-service grocery stores, farmers' markets, and charitable feeding programs are all part of the solution. A robust Healthy Corners program contributes to the success of each of these endeavors by reinforcing positive behavior changes among consumers while demonstrating the significant opportunity missed by businesses who do not offer nutritious, affordable food options. Just as importantly, Healthy Corners contributes to the social determinants of health through its linkages with SNAP and SNAP education, job training activities, and healthy physical activity promotion in area schools. Today, Healthy Corners is positioned at the intersection of market forces and mission-based work, addressing a critical public health need while investing in small businesses, DC's local food system, and accessible career pathways for adults with high barriers to employment.

- b. **Expanding Produce Lines:** Healthy Corners began by selling only whole fruits and vegetables such as bananas, apples, and carrots. This was successful in building initial demand for produce, but to better meet customer expectations of convenient, grab-and-go purchases and respond to store owner feedback, the team sought to offer a wider variety of produce, more fresh ingredients for home cooking, and prepacked items customers could take with them. Healthy Corners expanded its product line to whole watermelon, butternut squash, onions, collard greens, eggplant, and kale; it added fresh-cut items including strawberries, pineapples, cantaloupe, honeydew, and carrots; and it prepared and packaged healthy trail mix and fresh salads. Healthy Corners coupled the new produce additions with easy-to-make recipes and nutrition education materials that featured the key nutrients in each produce item. Healthy Corners also knew to stimulate demand as well as meet it, and did so by crafting healthier versions of familiar food items. The most popular of these items has been a Better for You Brownie, a healthier desert alternative made with black beans and packed with protein, fiber, and essential vitamins and minerals. Healthy Corners offered 48 unique products which corner stores could purchase by 2017. To meet growing customer demand for local produce, in 2017, Healthy Corners conducted a produce line audit to determine which fruits and vegetables could be sourced locally. As a result, the team sourced seven items (apples, pears, broccoli, spinach, sweet potatoes, and strawberries) directly from local growers instead of wholesalers. Now, nearly three-fourths of Healthy Corners retailers stock locally-sourced produce items.
- c. **Personalizing Technical Assistance:** Healthy Corners is not just about selling produce, it is about creating healthier food environments. But transitioning corner stores from exclusively offering shelf-stable items to stocking sufficient quantities of fresh items means asking store owners to reorganize store layouts, manage new equipment, learn to handle food that spoils, test new marketing strategies, add produce displays in visible areas, and work with new vendors. To ease this process, Healthy Corners began offering increasingly robust technical assistance. In addition to creating and disseminating a Corner Store Guide which walks store owners through common questions involving store layouts, ordering, and customer preferences, the Healthy Corners team began by providing each store with an annual store report detailing their sales, waste, and retail value of produce purchased over the year. This popular feature led to the creation of monthly sales and waste reports, and working one-on-one with

owners to increase the amount of variety of products they offer. DC Central Kitchen created monthly newsletters for each store which detailed promotions and upcoming activities to share with customers and began offering bi-annual meetings to bring together store owners to share common challenges and successful strategies.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving
 - a. N/A
- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:
 - a. In 2017, Healthy Corners partnered with American University's Department of Health Studies to understand program impact and create a tool to help predict the long-term success and sustainability of a Healthy Corners store. American University surveyed customers regarding their visit frequency, produce purchases, and healthy eating decisions. They also leveraged three years of Healthy Corners store evaluations and sales data to create a scorecard that ranks nine key variables of success which include length of time in the network, growth of sales, variety of product offerings, and store owner satisfaction. Each store is assigned a numeric value against these indicators, and can receive a maximum total value of 13 points. With the concept that a higher score on the scorecard may be a predictor of long-term engagement and increased healthy food offerings, this tool allows Healthy Corners to compare network stores to each other to determine how to maximize investments of staff time, marketing dollars, and outreach activities to improve corner store success. This tool could be helpful to other grantees in their administration of this project, and we are willing to open-source this resource if useful to other groups.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.
 - a. Partner researchers from American University found that 63% of customers surveyed at Healthy Corners store shop at that store almost daily. The high percentage of returning customers and frequency of visits to Healthy Corners stores indicates a prime target population for increased marketing and outreach efforts. Healthy Corners plans to double down on creating in-store marketing materials to direct customers to the availability of fresh produce and healthy snacks and training store owners on appealing product placement. After the success of the August 2017 ad campaign, which increased sales of Healthy Corners items by to up 96% at targeted stores, Healthy Corners will conduct supplemental geo-targeted ad campaigns. In addition to tracking increased sales, Healthy Corners will develop and publish a unique URL displayed on Healthy Corners ads that allows for tracking resulting engagement on the program website. Meanwhile, Healthy Corners will leverage DC Central Kitchen's new Food Access and Education department staffed by three outreach

professionals. This team builds the capacity to lead more cooking demonstrations, community tabling fairs, and nutrition workshops for Healthy Corners customers and residents nearby. Through surveys and creative tracking techniques, Healthy Corners seeks to gain a better understanding of what types of activities drive consumers to corner stores and once there, influence their purchases.

b. Considering looming changes to SNAP benefits at the Federal level and recent USDA regulations that expand stocking requirements of fresh, healthy food for SNAP-authorized retailers, DCCK is prepared to do more to ensure that consumers can maximize their SNAP benefits on healthy, fresh, items. We have crafted an application to the USDA's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program which, if funded, will be the first project of its scale to offer nutrition incentives at urban corner stores. We plan to engage up to 20 of our partner corner stores in doubling the value of their consumers' SNAP dollars spent on fresh produce and other healthy items with the goal of increasing sales of fruits and vegetables at Healthy Corners stores by 300% by 2021. To execute this project, we will leverage the expertise of Wholesome Wave in developing effective in-store and community-level marketing strategies. In addition to our impact on changing consumer behavior and contributing to a healthier built environment, this project will create and sustain living wage jobs for men and women with significant barriers to employment through linkages with our workforce development programming.

ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals

a. Healthy Corners is one proven successful venture within a web of food access programming in the District of Columbia. Healthy Corners sees itself as a critical complement to organizations offering free meals, produce bags, farmers markets, community gardens, and community supported agriculture subscriptions. Because each of these critical initiatives provides access to fresh and nutritious foods on certain days and hours, Healthy Corners wishes to inform those recipients of the availability of healthy options at their neighborhood corner store. Through coordinated outreach efforts and shared events, Healthy Corners and its food access partners will help ensure that access to healthy foods in underserved communities exists year-round and low-income consumers can use their purchasing power to encourage the development of an equitable food ecosystem where they live. In partnership with these organizations, Healthy Corners will facilitate healthy food access and coordinate robust nutrition outreach in ways that promote community-wide health and wellness. Integrating materials and best practices from SNAP-Ed, USDA My Plate guidelines, and Healthy Corners' holistic health curriculum into the team's 100+ annual outreach events at corner stores and nearby mobile markets, health fairs, and community events will promote healthy eating and active living on a budget. Strengthening partnerships with physicians at Unity Healthcare, a network of federally qualified health centers, and DC Greens to implement the Produce Prescription Program at corner stores will promote a food as medicine framework.