

FMPP FINAL Performance Report

Report Number/Period: *September 30, 2014- September 29, 2016*
Date: 4/30/2016
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Recipient Name: Bureau and Putnam County Health Department
Project Title: Bureau and Putnam County Farmer's Market Promotion Program
Grant Number: 14-FMPPX-0064
Project Location: Princeton, IL
Amount Awarded: \$94,256

Objective: To develop new farm-to-market opportunities in low income/low access tracts; increase promotions; and provide market analysis, technical assistance, and outreach through the addition of a market manager.

Goal #1: Increase access to local produce for low income/low access populations from 0 to 4 by developing new farmers markets, CSA's, and other direct producers-to-consumer market opportunities in the three low income/low access and one low income (transportation) tracts identified by 9/29/16.

Goal #2: Increase promotions/outreach of existing and newly developed farmers markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture from 3 to 7 by 9/ 29/16.

Goal #3: By September 29, 2016, utilize a market manager to:

- Provide training and technical assistance for direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities,
- Provide training and technical assistance for local producers,
- Provide and generate a comprehensive advertising plan, and
- Promote agritourism related to local foods opportunities.

Through this project, we plan develop a market manager for Bureau County who will work to increase farmer networking, and provide training, market analysis, planning and promotion of local direct producer-to-consumer marketing operations. The market manager will work with local farmers to increase domestic consumption of and locally produced agricultural products through advertising of new and existing markets, roadside stands, CSA's, and agritourism activities and increase access by developing new market opportunities in low income/low access census tracts.

In the body of the report, all underlined items are hotlinks to newspaper articles.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

Goal #1: To increase access to local foods, growers and markets we completed the following activities:

- Launched and maintained a new farmers' market in Sheffield, IL, in partnership with the Cornerstone Wellness Center, a not-for-profit organization in the heart of our largest food desert that is specifically reaching out to low-income/low access residents. The market ran both years, every week from 4-6 pm on Thursday nights. This was one of the specific expected outcomes for this grant and we are pleased to be able to have had two successful seasons. This market had five regular local vendors, representing a nice variety of local foods including produce, fruit, eggs and baked goods. Additional vendors joined as the summer progressed. The customer base is not huge but it was steady.
- In the first year, we increased participation by local growers in accepting WIC and Senior Nutrition Program vouchers by 250% so as to open the markets up to greater access by low-income clients. In the second year we made a push to get growers to accept SNAP/LINK cards. Many were hesitant but we did have some measure of success.
- Produced three recipe cards featuring eggplant, zucchini, tomato and corn, helping all consumers know how to use the vegetables sold by growers. These cards included nutritional information about the recipe and we printed 2,500 copies of each and provided them to growers. The recipe cards are also available on our From the Ground Up website. <http://www.bchealthdepartment.org/recipes.php>
- Encouraged growers and Master Gardeners to donate produce to the area food banks. In turn a fund was set up at the main food pantry that allowed the pantry to buy food from local growers. Five growers sold a significant volume of food to the pantry this season.
- A few wonderful developments have happened including the establishment of a fund at the Bureau County Food Pantry for purchase of food through the Princeton Farmers Market. This fund was set up by an anonymous donor and was well publicized by an article in the local paper called, "Fresh off the Farm at the Food Pantry". This article also served as an invitation to other donors to contribute to this fund. In the past month an additional \$500 has been donated to seed the fund for the 2017 year.
- We held a conference on February 18th 2016 called "The Best in Local Foods" (link to the newspaper article) which was attended by over 45 people. This conference focused on issues relevant to growers and included a session called, "Increasing Access to our Local Foods through SNAP and LINK" in which we had a virtual presentation by Corey Chatman, Experimental Station, LINK Up Illinois Program Manager. He focused on:
 1. How to apply to accept SNAP for both Farmers and Market Managers and
 2. SNAP support grants - Market Managers. We've been encouraging local growers to apply for SNAP consulting, please complete the online application found at; <http://experimentalstation.org/snap-consulting>.

Goal #2 To increase promotion and outreach for local foods, growers and markets we completed the following activities:

- The following planned educational/promotional events were conducted in 2015:
 - April 15th – Main Street Motivation – community wellness center talk in Walnut IL
 - April 23rd Farm-acology Talk at Princeton Public Library that highlighted several local growers and facilitated networking post-event. ([Hotlink to event announcement](#)) (Power Point Available)
 - May 19th – Victory Gardens Talk with a local grower at the LaSalle Library
 - June 8th – Perry Memorial Diabetes presentation
 - June 11th – Presentation at Summer Horticulture Day, at Boggios
 - July 2nd- Conducted classes promoting the local growers”. [Cornerstone Community Wellness Inc. hosts a class](#), (Link to article)
 - September 30th – Metro Center Local Foods DINNER

- The following planned educational/promotional events were conducted in 2016:
 - Feb. 10th Viva La Local Kick Off Event Ottawa IL
 - Feb 17th Illinois Farmers Market Association Meeting, Chicago IL
 - Feb. 18th Walnut Growers/Vendors meeting
 - Feb. 18th “The Best in Local Food Conference”
 - Feb. 25th Presentation to Good Greens, USDA regional office, Chicago
 - March 10th CSA Night at Princeton Public Library
 - March 22nd Meet the Meat Night at Princeton Public Library
 - Monthly live cooking demos at each of the markets throughout the growing season
 - Two Live radio programs at WZOE, the local public radio station on AM and FM.
 - Three Farm Crawls to local growers June 20, August 8, and September 19th
 - Farm to table Dinner Sept 29th, 2016 at the Barn at Hornbaker Gardens.

- We developed the From the Ground Up Loyalty Program complete with punch cards and prizes for loyal shoppers. The program incentivized the purchase of fruits and vegetables only. In the first year 16 growers enrolled in the program and an additional 8 in the second year. We supplied them with information about how to conduct the program and the materials need for prizes. Prizes for loyal customers included stickers, cloth bags, T-shirts, cutting boards, aprons with the stitched From the Ground Up logo, and an opportunity to win a free ticket to the Farm to Table dinner.
- In the first year, we contracted with three local newspapers; Bureau County Republican, Walnut Leader and Bureau Valley Chief for newspaper advertising throughout the growing season. These purchases also helped to secure interest by reporters in writing stories about the markets, growers and agritourism events throughout the year.
- Articles include these from 2015:
 - Sheffield’s Farmers Market opens at Cornerstone;
 - Cornerstone Community Wellness Inc. hosts a class,
 - Bureau and Putnam Counties Farmers Market Loyalty Program and
 - Farm to Table Dinner Highlights local growers.
- In the second year, the relationships we had cultivated lead to many more positive articles providing From the Ground Up with excellent media coverage throughout the growing season. Articles include these from 2016:
 - Loyal to the Land
 - Cards read = families fed
 - The Farm Crawl
 - Area Farm Crawl is set for June 20
 - “Fresh off the Farm at the Food Pantry”.
 - Meet local growers at the PPL
 - Good Local Food Tour is May 12
 - “The Best in Local Foods”

Explanation of the activities:

- During year one we partnered with University of Illinois Extension who attended at least 6 farmers market times, demonstrating fresh produce in recipes with samples available. We led sampling of grower produce from the From the Ground Up table at market.
- During year two we partnered with University of Illinois Extension/ Snap Ed and Master Gardeners, and the local hospital dietitian from Perry Memorial Hospital. Together we formed a master plan such that one of us was at one of four farmers markets on the same day every month of the growing season. We printed 3,000 small cards out with the schedule for LIVE FOOD DEMOS at the Farmers Markets and gave them out with the Loyalty program materials. This provided greater consistency such that consumers could plan to come on those days. The plan was marketed in newspaper articles like this one: Live classes and food demonstrations planned.

- Following our initial assessment of existing advertising for our 5 farmers markets; Princeton Farmer’s Market Cooperation, City of Spring Valley, Boggio’s Orchard, Walnut market, and Sheffield, we implemented a “From the Ground Up” advertising Strategy. This allowed us to promote all the markets without having to pay for each market individually and allowed us to reach consumers that are in the various rural parts of the county.
- Developed an extensive From the Ground Up website that got excellent traffic for our rural area. Data from the site demonstrates that we had 1,073 visits in 2015 and a bit more than that in 2016, 1,136 totaling 2,209.

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Jan 2016	0	0	0	0	0
Feb 2016	0	0	0	0	0
Mar 2016	0	0	0	0	0
Apr 2016	0	0	0	0	0
May 2016	0	0	0	0	0
Jun 2016	41	64	199	2,467	51.59 MB
Jul 2016	254	320	556	7,182	345.42 MB
Aug 2016	253	301	580	6,303	339.91 MB
Sep 2016	105	179	431	3,547	141.22 MB
Oct 2016	152	228	421	2,704	128.91 MB
Nov 2016	38	44	81	531	35.00 MB
Dec 2016	0	0	0	0	0
Total	843	1,136	2,268	22,734	1.02 GB

- Developed a Mail Chimp list serve with 338 people and used it in addition to Facebook and our website to promote certain big events. We used this sparingly to prevent people from feeling they were being spammed! When we did use it then our mail open rate was significantly higher than industry standards.

WZOE interview

- Sent Tue, May 26, 2015 04:17 pm
- 1 149 (45.4%) Opens

Loyalty Program and Upcoming Talks

- Sent Tue, Jun 30, 2015 12:30 pm
- 2 138 (42.1%) Opens

Dinner

- Sent Thu, Sep 17, 2015 02:48 pm
- 3 112 (34.7%) Opens

- Utilized qualitative data to begin developing a strategic advertising/outreach plan. We focused on the Who, What, Where and When details, as we had learned that a lot of people just missed the markets due to busy lives and not knowing how to access the market. These details ran as ads in our local papers as well as making the majority of the text of one side of the 3,500 rack cards that we had printed and distributed throughout the

growing season. They are [available for view here](#). We chose this strategy over our originally proposed billboard expenditure because in the very rural nature of our communities, we felt that print materials would be a better investment. We repeated this strategy in our second year but expanded the number of locations where the rack cards were available all over the two counties in local businesses, not-for –profits and churches.

- Managed and extensively promoted the [“From the Ground Up!” Face Book page](#) that promotes local foods, growers, and markets. The number of likes were 283 as of 10/26/15 and 381 likes as of 11/2/2016. Posts are related to nutrition, fruit and vegetable growth and consumption and profiling local growers and markets. We “boosted” posts extensively, which on average, increased visibility beyond 1,000 people for just \$5 each time.
- Utilized the [“Nourish” curriculum](#) that was recommended by a national organization to promote growers, farmers markets and farm fresh foods at several local venues and even loaned it to some growers that used it in their promotional and educational efforts.
- Purchased radio advertising on two local stations including a full interview highlighting local growers and regularly running PSAs. [All can be listened to here](#). These ads were run in our second year for free as PSAs.
- Developed Memorandums of Understanding for the farmers markets to sign to formalize the partnership with the Health Department.
- Used the logo we had developed in the first reporting period, with input from the local growers and markets for “From the Ground UP!” Significant feedback and collaboration resulted in a logo that is accepted by growers as a helpful tool to promote collaboration and community identity. We used it in all marketing and advertising.
- Promoted our 5 farmers markets; Princeton Farmer’s Market Cooperation, City of Spring Valley, Boggio’s Orchard, Walnut, and Sheffield market, at an event called [“Viva La Local” in nearby Ottawa Illinois](#). This event was held at a newly renovated restaurant that has invested heavily in local foods and plans to serve a huge percentage of local foods on their menu. [Joy Kauffman, our Public Health Educator, was invited to be a presenter](#) at the event.

Goal #3: To [provide training and technical assistance](#) and [advertising/agritourism](#) plan we completed the following activities:

- During the second year of the grant we focused more extensively on Agritourism and training opportunities. We started the season with a series of meetings at the local library called [CSA night](#) (March 10 at the Princeton Public Library) and [Meet the Meat](#) night

(March 22 at the Princeton Public Library). These evenings were led by Joy Kauffman and featured local growers and meat raisers, inviting the public to learn more. Here is one of the advertisements: *"Meet the Meat" - Not all meat is the real thing these days. If you care what you eat, you'll want to know what's in your meat and eggs. Come meet several local farmers who raise high quality, pastured, healthy animals that result in nutrient-dense, healthy meats. Learn why it matters how the animals are treated, fed and butchered. Your body is worth the investment in better meat.*

- We also had a Good Food Learning Tour on May 12th, in partnership with Gateway Services the areas agency for persons with disabilities and BPART the local public transportation system, in which we took two of the local public transportation vans up to Wisconsin to learn from their local food system. Here is one of the advertisements: *Getting fresh food to market in North Central Illinois is not a lot different from Wisconsin. So why not learn from each other? Gateway Services and From the Ground Up are co-sponsoring two vans of people from Bureau, Putnam and LaSalle counties for one full and entertaining day of stimulating discussions, problem solving and ideas. Here's a fun, delicious way to be inspired. Throughout the day, you will meet CSA leaders, farmers' market managers, organizers of co-op groceries, commercial food kitchens and incubators, artisanal food producers and food entrepreneurs. You'll see innovative community gardens and organic farms and get tips on financing and distribution for food-related businesses.*
- We also felt that the best way to build loyalty is to have people meet farmers on their farms. We hosted three Farm Crawls in partnership with Gateway Services the areas agency for persons with disabilities and BPART the local public transportation system. (link to an article [Area Farm Crawl is set for June 20](#)). Here's the advertisement for the first one: *Want to meet local farmer's market growers and see the farms where local food is raised? A local farm crawl of the southern Bureau County route will be from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on Monday, June 20. This first farm crawl will visit three local farms which all participate in the Princeton Farmer's Market and are located in rural Tiskilwa. They include Dennis and Ellen Zehr of Coneflower Farm, Trevor Kauffman of Trevor Kauffman Produce and Bill Uher of Lazy-U-Farm.*
- During year one, we developed a 4-page full color newsletter for "From the Ground Up! Celebrating the Season. This was used both to advertise the Farm to Table Dinner, held Sept. 30th and also to promote local foods, growers, and markets The Public Health Educator personally delivered 250 hard copies of this newsletter to various constituent groups and at the farmers markets. It was electronically delivered to over 100 more.
- Organized two Farm to Table dinners, held September 30th, 2015 and Sept 29th, 2016. The dinners were sold out and were the grand prize for 10 lucky winners of the loyalty program who were put into a drawing after they had spent \$150 at a farmers market over the season. We sourced all the food locally from growers that are participants in the Loyalty program. We had a well-known, volunteer gourmet chef be the cook. We

advertised the dinner on Facebook and newspapers and got great local media coverage. The dinner sold out more than a week in advance and we were able to make the tickets just \$25 per plate, much more affordable than most dinners of this type. Because of this, we didn't price out the growers themselves from attending and it was a wonderful night, enjoyed by all. The Public Health Educator gave a brief talk and had a power point showing a slide of pictures from the farms and at the markets for each of the growers in the Loyalty Program. It was a great way for people who love local foods to get to know the people who grow it.

- Attended and spoke at the Illinois Specialty Growers conference in Granville, IL in order to promote the growers of the counties and to network amongst local growers and immerse ourselves in the issues facing the local growers and markets.
- Public Health Educator, who attained a Master Gardener certificate during the first reporting period, from the University of Illinois Extension networked in the agricultural community and was also able to provide research based advice and information to local growers. Resulting partnerships with University of Illinois Extension staff have facilitated a planned several events over the course of the summer.
- Delivered educational sessions at several local libraries including Putnam County in Hennepin and Bureau County in Princeton called "Farm-acology" utilizing nutritional and disease prevention and treatment research to help growers and the broader public understand the value of locally grown fresh produce in building their health "From the Ground Up!"
- Provided recipes and nutritional information to consumers so that they can better begin to understand the value of their food. Providing materials with this type of health, nutritional and recipe information for growers to hand out at their point of sale is a part of our strategic plan.
- Provided one-on-one technical assistance to growers, specifically addressing their expressed needs related to marketing their produce to a local market. Two growers that were selling for exclusively Chicago markets will now participate in a new local market as a result. Many other growers are increasing their production for the coming year.
- Provided assistance to growers related to how they can take different payment methods, especially through WIC vouchers, credit/debit cards and SNAP/LINK cards.
- Enrolled new growers in the WIC Voucher program resulting in a 150% increase in grower participation and expanding the markets where the WIC vouchers can be used.
- Addressed questions and concerns related to the health department regulations related to sanitation, food sampling, and cottage foods as it relates to farmers markets. Because this grant is awarded to a health department, we see a unique opportunity to demonstrate a very positive relationship between the health department and a local foods movement, something that is not always the case.

- Convened a training and technical assistance conference for local growers and foodies that included a packed agenda of local and regional experts in agriculture, marketing and access issues related to local foods.
- Attended the Illinois Farmers Market Association annual conference in Chicago and in doing so networked extensively gaining connections that are then used to benefit local growers. For example, Learning Zone Express has very helpful marketing materials promoting local foods that have been made available to local growers as a result.
- Encouraged several local growers, bakers and cottage food makers to attend the Food Sanitation classes offered by our local health department such that they can be in compliance with both Federal and State regulations while improving the offerings of the local farmers markets. Several attended the March and April classes.

ACOMPLISHMENTS:

Goal #1: Increasing Access

The first goal of increasing access to locally grown agricultural products in our county's Western food desert was accomplished with two successful seasons of the new Farmers Market opening in Sheffield, IL in partnership with Cornerstone Community Wellness, Inc. Establishing a successful Farmers Market in Sheffield was a primary outcome of the grant that we hoped to achieve. It was on Thursdays 4-6 pm throughout the growing season at 302 N. Mason St. This is a first for this small community and will contribute to the Health Department goals of as stated in the grant. Specifically this area has very limited access to fresh locally grown produce, with only one grocery store in a more than 300 square mile area. The market ran from May- September. We had at least one vendor present who accepted WIC vouchers at each market. The organization now also has over 200 people as members of their gym facility which is also positively contributing to the health of the community.

In the case of Sheffield, in June 2015 we averaged at least 40 per week. July was also at 40, August tapered a bit to 30 and September was actually quite slow at 6. This year, 2016, was similar except that the customers in August was a bit lower and the vendors decided to close at the end of the month. This was less than what we had hoped for and one thing that we learned is that because some of the vendors the first year were used to selling into the Chicago market with prices that were higher than our local economy can handle, there was a bit of a rumor mill that the farmers market was too expensive. Sadly, that was the perception although not the reality. We learned of the rumor a bit late in the season and it did not give us the time to address it head on. We hope that we can dispel that myth in the future.

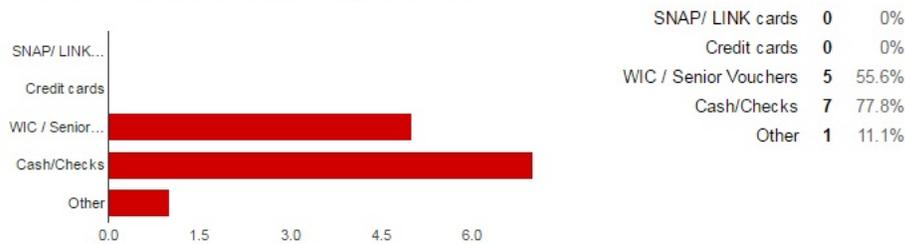
The Farmers Markets in Walnut, IL (Grow Walnut) and Spring Valley, IL markets had very positive seasons. We were able to increase the number of vendors and customers both. Also Spring Valley increased their growers accepting WIC from 3 to 5 with several covering more than one market so it expanded the reach even further.

Regarding SNAP Access, it is an effort we undertook with vigor. This article from our local paper, Cards read = families fed, summarized the effort and highlighted the success with one grower. *“Local Farmer’s Markets are a fantastic opportunity for area shoppers to purchase delicious local produce, but some citizens in the community just don’t have the adequate funds to buy the nutritionally-rich fruits and vegetables. In response to that, Joy Kauffman and others are making sure the lettuce on a person’s plate holds more weight than the bills in their wallet. Kauffman, Bureau and Putnam County Health Department’s public health educator, said they’re really trying to increase access at the Farmer’s Market to lower income people, so she’s pushing the growers to take Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) or Link cards, as well as senior vouchers. She’s also encouraging growers to acquire the machinery necessary for buyers to use credit cards.”*

The Spring Valley Market vendor, Don Wenzel, owner of Donnie Appleseed Orchard was highlighted in this story that was on the local public radio station. LINK Cards Still Work At Farmers Markets Despite Illinois Budget Impasse. He was able to acquire all of his equipment for free by working with the Farmer Market Coalition. Our hope is that other growers will also apply but sadly, many were not interested, despite concerted effort.

This data from our growers at the end of the season gave us hope that perhaps more growers will be applying to be SNAP Vendors in the future as 50% said they would like to.

Which forms of payment did you accept this season?



Which forms of payment would you like to accept that you CURRENTLY can NOT accept?



This year the Walnut market was run by growers themselves, rather than the chamber of commerce. They decided to change days and extend the time so it was held on Wednesdays

from 2-6pm. For about a month in the season there were certain growers that also held a market on Saturday also. So in a way we expanded the market, although after the month, they decided to just stick with Wednesday evening.

The Boggios market in Granville had great sales last year and has been a very active member of the From the Ground Up Loyalty Program. They were not allowed to take the WIC Vouchers because they are out of Bureau County where the vouchers are issued. They are regional experts in Agritourism so one of the Farm Crawls featured their farm and there were many local people who had never been there and were amazed by their facilities and also the crowds that they draw, up to 10,000 on a few days in the fall.

The Princeton Market fully participated in From the Ground Up this year. We were very happy to be able to partner with them as they have a significant proportion of the county’s customer base. They served a large number of WIC Customers as well as the traditional clientele. At this point the majority of their vendors accept WIC and one is far along in the process to be SNAP eligible.

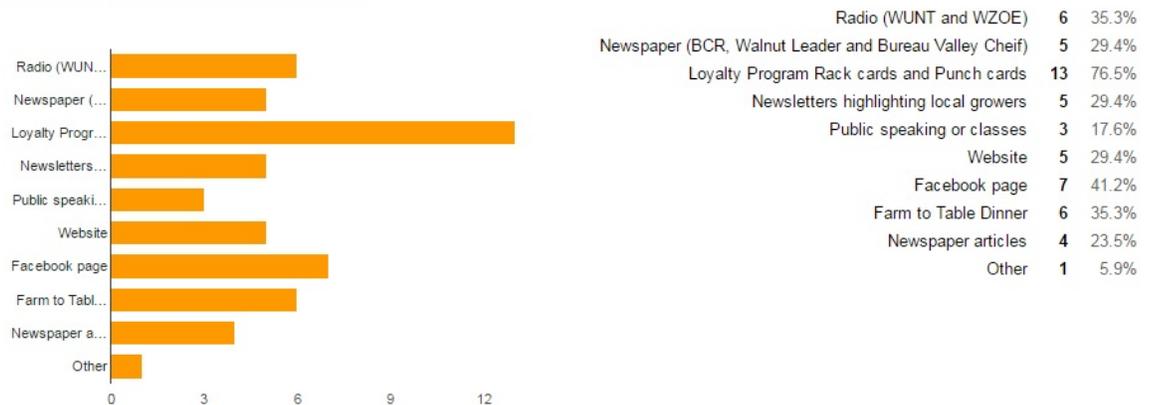
Goal #2- Marketing and Promotion:

- At the end of the grant, we surveyed the local growers about the impact From the Ground Up had on their business. I am pleased to say that:
 - 100% felt that From the Ground Up had a positive impact. And they ranked the Loyalty program as the effort that was most beneficial.

Do you feel that the From the Ground Up marketing and advertising was helpful to your business this year?

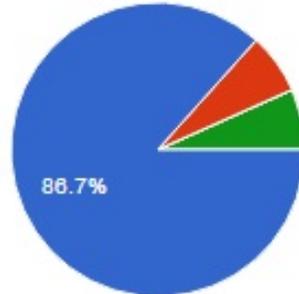


Which marketing effort were beneficial?



- 76% of them felt that the Loyalty Program had a positive impact,

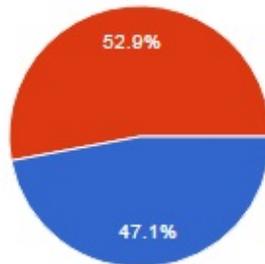
If yes, do you feel that the Loyalty Program helped your business?



Yes	13	76.5%
No	1	5.9%
Other	1	5.9%
	0	0%

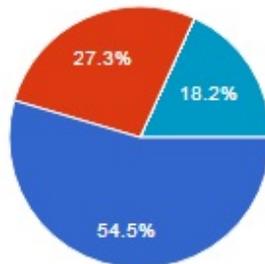
- 82% reported having more repeat customers this year
- 56% made more money than at the same market(s) - or CSA- last year (with 27% off them saying they made 75% more money!)

Do you feel that you had an expanded consumer base this year?



No	8	47.1%
Yes	9	52.9%

If yes, please estimate the percentage increase in customers:

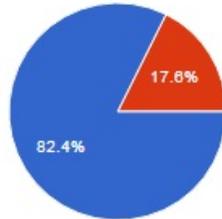


20%	6	54.5%
40%	3	27.3%
75%	0	0%
100%	0	0%
More than 100%	0	0%
Other	2	18.2%

-

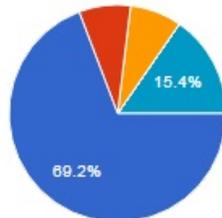
During 2016 season, in which national trends were not that favorable to Farmers Markets, we are thrilled that 82% of growers reported an increase in repeat customers:

Did you have an increase in repeat customers and/or CSA members this season?



Yes	14	82.4%
No	3	17.6%

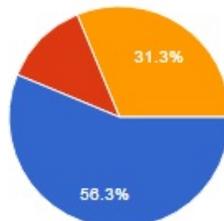
If yes, please estimate the percentage increase:



20%	9	69.2%
40%	1	7.7%
75%	1	7.7%
100%	0	0%
More than 100%	0	0%
Other	2	15.4%

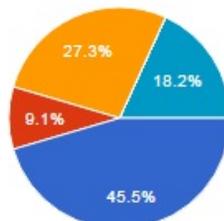
When it come to the bottom line, From the Ground Up has had a great impact as well with 56% of our growers saying they made more money this year than last and three of them 27% of respondents had made 75% more money.

Did you on average make more or less money than you did at the same market(s) - or CSA- last year?



More	9	56.3%
Less	2	12.5%
Same	5	31.3%

If yes, please estimate the percentage increase in income from the markets or your CSAs:



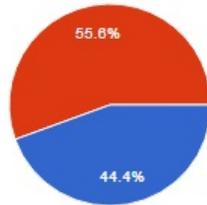
20%	5	45.5%
40%	1	9.1%
75%	3	27.3%
100%	0	0%
More than 100%	0	0%
Other	2	18.2%

This result is even more impactful because in 2015, 71% of our growers indicated that they had

made more money last year than the year before and 28% said they had made the same. No respondents said they had made less than the previous year. We are exceptionally pleased with this result especially since the spring was very wet and the development of many crops were really hindered.

Partially as a result of this effort, 44% of the growers cultivated new land.

Did you add any new square foot area of land cultivating local produce this season?



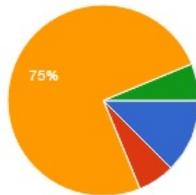
Yes	8	44.4%
No	10	55.6%

If yes, please estimate how many additional square feet.

20000
500
200
We just squeezed more into what we already have
12,000
1/2 an acre
1/2 acre

Regarding jobs created by this effort, 19% of the growers reported hiring new full time or part time staff.

Did you hire any new staff this year as compared to last year?



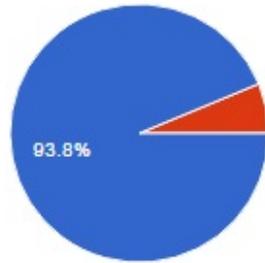
Yes, part time	2	12.5%
Yes, full time	1	6.3%
No	12	75%
Other	1	6.3%

For new staff, please provide information on how many new staff and hours of employment.

One full time intern, 40 hour a week position
12 hours a week for farmers markets 2 people
See above
One three days a week.

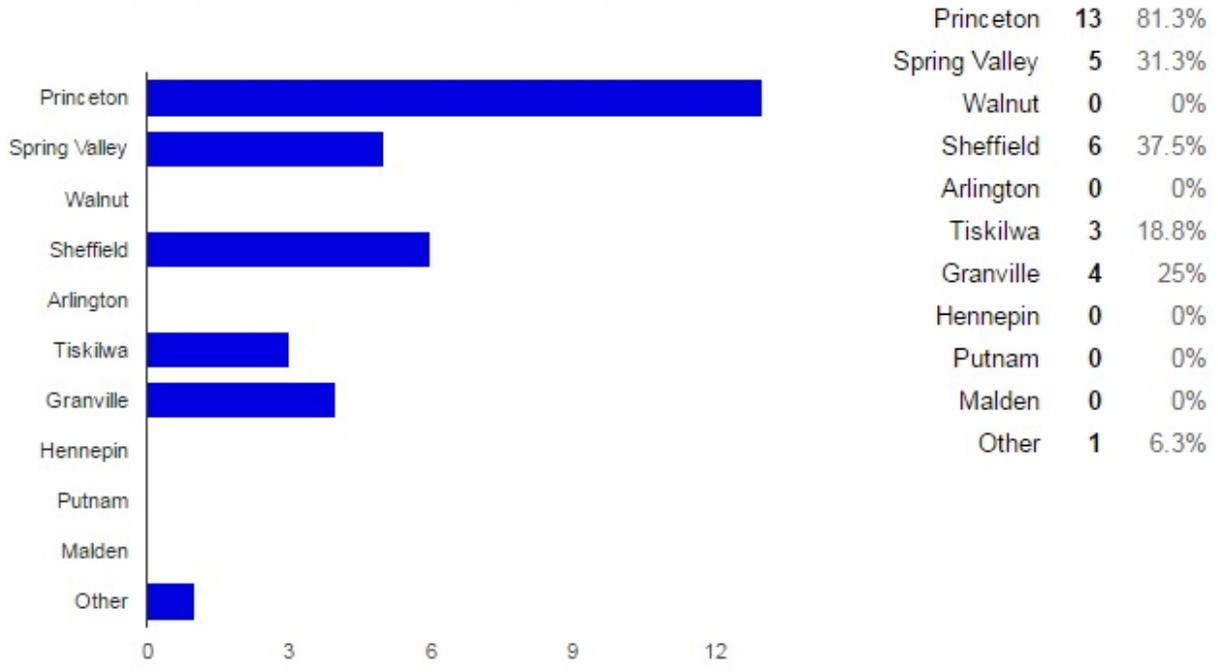
We also surveyed customers of the farmers markets and received the following feedback. Although it wasn't a big sample, it was nicely representative of the markets that we worked with:

During the summer/fall of 2016, did you purchase any goods from local farmer's markets, CSA's (Co



Yes	15	93.8%
No	1	6.3%

Where did you shop for your fresh local produce?



During 2015:

- We created and distributed a grower survey assessing the impact of all of these efforts to encourage direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Surveys were distributed electronically to growers and we had a 50% response rate of Participating From the Ground Up growers the first year and much higher the second year. The results are attached but in summary:
 - 100% feel that the From the Ground Up marketing and advertising was helpful
 - 100% of those in the Loyalty Program felt that it helped their business

- 83% feel that you had an expanded consumer base this year (between 20-40%)
 - 67% made more money than you did at the same market(s) last year (20-40%)
 - 83% increase in repeat customers and/or CSA members this season (20-40%)
 - 42% added new square foot area of land cultivating local produce this season
 - 100% anticipate participating in the Loyalty Program next year
- One grower sent this note: Hi Joy! Wendy and I wanted to drop you a quick note of thanks for all your hard work! It's because of all your and Debs efforts that we can boast of a nearly 30% increase in our sales year over year at the Spring Valley market. Keep up the great work! Looking forward to the 2016 season! Don and Wendy Wenzel
- We assessed the strategic advertising/outreach plan and we were given this feedback in response to the question, “Which marketing effort were beneficial?”
 - Loyalty Program Rack cards and Punch cards 6 85.7%
 - Facebook page 3 42.9%
 - Farm to Table Dinner 3 42.9%
 - Newsletters highlighting local growers 2 28.6%
 - Radio (WUNT and WZOE) 2 28.6%
 - Website 2 28.6%
 - Newspaper articles 1 14.3%
 - Newspaper (BCR, Walnut Leader and Bureau Valley Chief) 0 0%
 - Public speaking or classes 0 0%
 - We were also especially pleased at the interest in “Recipe/Nutrition cards for various fruits and vegetables”, as our Public Health Educator has a BS in Nutrition and a Master’s in Public Health. These cards, featuring Eggplant Zucchini and tomatoes and corn helped to drive consumer demand for these locally grown products by educating the public about the health benefits. We made 7,500 of these cards and distributed about ½ of them. Growers were very happy with them and have asked us to do other vegetables next year.
 - This education is informed by the recent USDHHS, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion announcement in the “Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee” stating that “healthy dietary pattern is higher in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low- or non-fat dairy, seafood, legumes, and nuts; moderate in alcohol (among adults); lower in red and processed meat; and low in sugar-sweetened foods and drinks and refined grains. Vegetables and fruit are the only characteristics of the diet that were consistently identified in every conclusion statement across the health outcomes.”
 - Additionally, we got a full page article and a ½ page advertisement in the “Experience Bureau County 2016” Guide which is distributed free to over 20,000 people and at many

events throughout the entire year. This will put our 5 Farmers Markets on the priority list for many people who live here and are visiting Bureau County!

- We purchased new signage for the Walnut Market in the second year that changed the day and time of the market and after the growers determined that the other signs were not as effective as they would like.
- In order to promote that option, we hosted a CSA night on March 10th at the local library and highlighted 5 farms. We also had articles in 3 local papers promoting the night and the farms that were there. This sparked interest in the CSA model that we hope will carry over to better sales in this season.

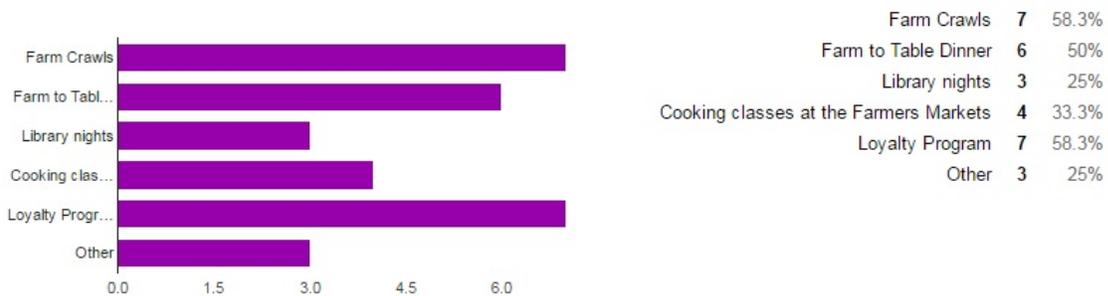
Goal #3 Technical Assistance and Agritourism:

This year we focused extensively on Agritourism. We felt that the best way to promote the local growers was to get people to their farms so we created the Farm Crawl series. We spent three nights touring local farms, June 20th, August 8th and Sept 19th in partnership with Gateway Services the areas agency for persons with disabilities and BPART the local public transportation system.. On one of the nights we had a local photographer, Daniel Acker who shoots for the AP document the evening. [His photos are available here:](#) We asked customers about the activities that they engaged in and also there was a nice representation. They seemed to really enjoy the Farm Crawls, Farm to Table Dinner and the Loyalty Program:

What From the Ground Up events/activities did you participate in?



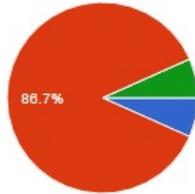
Of these events which were the most likely to make you want to buy local?



As a result of From the Ground Up, growers are networking amongst themselves to a greater extent and thereby planning their own collaboration. There has been a number of partnerships in businesses formed as a result of these social events including one grower who sells into the suburbs of Chicago who now includes baked goods from a local baker.

Out of these same people with lots of engagement with our events, we are pleased that 87% continue to want to learn more about the local growers.

Would you like to learn more about the our local growers/producers?



Yes, I don't know any local growers	1	6.7%
Yes, I know some local growers would like to know more	13	86.7%
No, I don't really care where my food comes from	0	0%
Other	1	6.7%

- During both years, many informal hours of technical assistance to growers has been provided to local growers through conversations at markets, meetings, one-on-one conversations, and consulting with an agricultural expert in local CSA farming and local foods marketing.
- Heath Department staff have conducted farm visit; sharing information and photographing for publicity on 6 local farms. These visits resulted in a compelling story to be told to local media and the public through educational events. The photographs were provided to the media for stories. They also provide a source of networking and encouragement to growers who are often isolated, especially in the non-selling months. These include: Mill Road Farm; Walnut Acres Family Farm; Walnut Custom Veggies; Coneflower Farm; Edgewood Farm; and Plow Creek Farm.
- The Public Health Educator attended and received certification as a FSSMC food service sanitation manager. We felt this was a priority both for our ability to provide technical assistance to local growers and to be in total compliance with food safety regulations
- In February 2016 the Public Health Educator attended and received certification as an Illinois Department of Health “Farmers Market Food Product Sampling Handler Certificate”. This was a new requirement in the State of Illinois.
- As a result of From the Ground Up, the reputation of Bureau and Putnam County growers is extending far beyond our two counties. Joy Kauffman, our Public Health Educator was asked by Alan Shannon, Director of Public Affairs for USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, Midwest Region to present at the Good Greens meeting that reached out to all the states in the region.

- Ms. Kauffman gave that presentation on February 25th and this is an excerpt from the summary that USDA's Alan Shannon sent out to an undisclosed number of participants.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the February 25th meeting and to our fantastic speakers! Below please find a meeting summary, news items, grant information and other opportunities. Our next meeting is on March 24th. We'll send additional information, including call-in info, closer to the meeting date.

February Meeting Summary

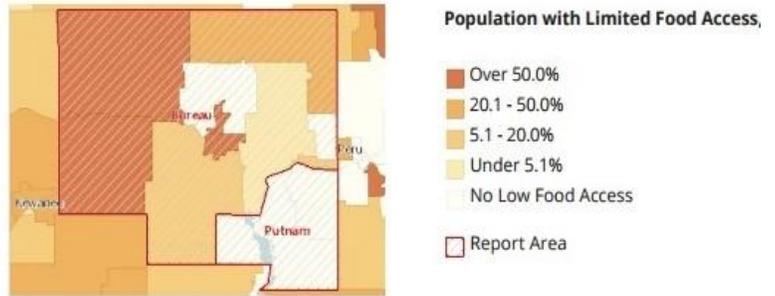
1. Joy Kauffman, Bureau and Putnam County Health Department (IL), talked about the Health Department's From the Ground Up project. The project refers to building foundational healthy habits like regularly eating antioxidant-rich fruits and vegetables to prevent chronic disease. The Health Department identified farmers markets as places for communities to establish healthy relationships with food and began a successful loyalty card program that incentivized the purchase of fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, and eggs. Not only has the program helped shoppers to eat healthier, but the program has benefited market vendors (now more than 45 farms). Expanded market opportunities have helped farms like Mill Road Farm and Plow Creek Farm to begin supplying wholesale food to CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture), restaurants, and other outlets. Farm to Table events and collaboration with chefs like Chef Monica from Chestnut Inn have helped shoppers build closer relationships with their food producers. For Putnam County, which has been identified as a food desert, these efforts in the Sheffield, Spring Valley, Walnut, and Granville Farmers Markets have contributed greatly to promoting the community's health, environment, and economy. During the meeting, Joy mentioned a number of resources including: Chef Monica's healthy recipes on the Health Department's website and resources for faith-based organizations involved in nutrition and wellness efforts (<http://creationhealth.com/> and <http://newstartclub.com/>). Joy can be contacted at jkauffman@bchealthdepartment.org

- Additionally, Joy referred one of our local growers to Mr. Shannon as a speaker for the March Good Greens meeting that was focused on Women in Agriculture. Ms. Katy Clarke presented and this was the summary of her remarks that was sent out by Mr. Shannon:

1. Katy Clarke from Edgewood Organics shared information about her farm, which she began in 2014, and the community-supported agriculture (CSA) as her farm's business model. The farm includes 130 acres for grain production, two acres that are receiving organic certification, a barn, and a high tunnel. Besides marketing at the Princeton, Illinois farmers market, Katy also incorporates a work-share program to encourage community members to build a relationship with food production, maintains an email newsletter with recipes and has hosted an annual summer hoedown. Despite these successes, Katy also shared about challenges, which included flooding in the spring 2013.

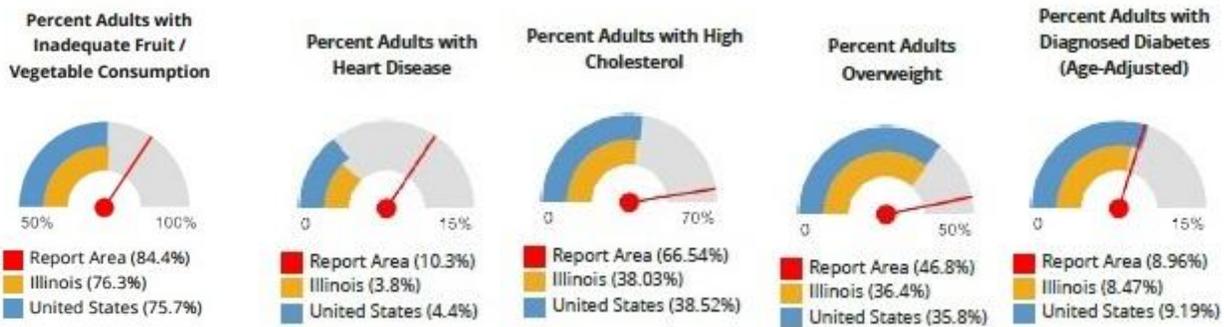
BENEFICIARIES:

The overall purpose of this project was to increase the health and well-being of residents in Bureau and Putnam County. More than a third of Bureau County’s 847 Square miles are designated as a food desert by USDA’s ERS data. The entire area (100%) is designated a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) by USDHHS, indicating our great need for innovative solutions.



This grant worked with 47 local growers, farmers or bakers. Specifically there were 24 of them that raised fruits and vegetables that enrolled as part of the From the Ground Up Loyalty Program. Out of those 24, 18 of them responded to our grower survey as reported above they were significantly benefited by the work of From the Ground Up.

The local population also benefited by those purchases. During the second year we had over 30 complete Loyalty Program Cards, which meant that those individuals had purchased over \$150 of food in the season. Many people also made significant purchases but they did not keep track of their cards throughout the season. The following health indicators, compiled from national sources by Community Commons, from Bureau county could each be improved by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption:



This bold claim is consistent with USDHHS, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion announcement that “Vegetables and fruit are the only characteristics of the diet that were consistently identified in every conclusion statement across the health outcomes.”

LESSONS LEARNED:

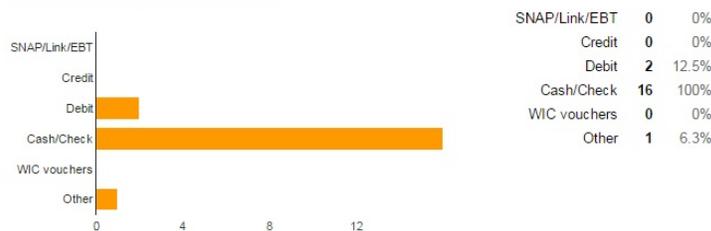
We were able to achieve our goals during the two years of the project. One challenge that we continued to face is that we are trying to work with five farmers markets and they are all very different and geographically dispersed. In our new market, launched in the spring of 2015 in Sheffield, we had 5 initial vendors committed to participate. We were thrilled with the variety

on their offerings but we ended up recruiting vendors that are used to selling into the Chicago market. Some of their prices were set for that market, especially the grass-fed, certified organic meat. The reputation of the prices being high spread quickly and deterred some of the lower income participants that we hoped would be engaged.

Also Sheffield is a very small town, so there is not a large customer base to draw from so we initially decided that we would limit the number of vendors, so as to have greater income possibility for those that committed to be there. In hindsight, and our plan for year two which worked well, was that we allowed all vendors to come and sell what they had to offer. In the first season we had a good customer base established, with the Loyalty program being a real help in building it, but interest seemed to drop off when school started in mid-August. This was in part because several of our growers actually work with schools or have kids and they became suddenly less available, making it a less attractive market for customers as well. During the second season we hoped we could overcome this challenge but still the mentality was the same. So, even though most of our markets go into October and even beyond, the Sheffield market closed at the end of August.

Overall, we learned that there is still quite a stigma against the SNAP Program and our growers are hesitant to deal with the government in general. This is understandable given the rural, conservative demographics of the area but we hoped that we could overcome it more than we were able to. Our farmers market in Spring Valley that pulls from a more ethnically diverse market was very accessible and the growers that did accept SNAP did make money doing so. But in our other markets no one accepted SNAP and therefore no one came to use those SNAP benefits that we know of. Of the customers that responded to our survey, none used it and none were interested in using it, as seen in the graph below.

What form of payment did you use?



Would you be more likely to purchase locally if these payment options were available?



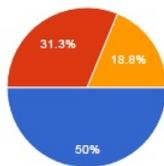
One lesson learned was that we should have just pushed the growers to be able to take credit cards, through the grant through the Farmers Market Coalition. In doing so, they could have added on the SNAP benefits as well. Our grower, Don Wentzel that did become SNAP eligible made only \$70 in SNAP but made over \$700 in credit card sales.

We also learned that the relationship with the Princeton market, that started out to be very challenging, was able to be transformed. During the first year the market, which is run by a not-for-profit board, the personalities involved were challenging. A few members of the board, without consulting the growers, declined participation in the Loyalty Program. This decision was made in early May 2015, prior to our acquisition of the materials and supplies to physically show them what we were offering. During the second year of the grant we managed to overcome the initial barriers aided by members of the community who expressed their frustration in not being able to use their Loyalty Program cards at the market. Once the board reversed their decision in early 2016, all of the growers participated and many of them expressed regret that they didn't have the opportunity for two years. There was also a change to the composition of the board such that it really was positive in the end.

Partnerships the other three markets have been entirely positive and productive. We had to overcome a few communication challenges between growers learning to use the loyalty program but we did so through emails, one-page updates hand delivered to the markets and phone calls. By the end of the season everyone had the supplies they needed to "own" the Loyalty Program themselves and use it in a uniform way so that all the participating growers played by the same rules.

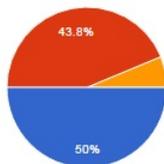
One area that we wish we could have focused upon more, and perhaps we will be able to in the future is the challenge of convenience and transportation. Our customers agree with 50% saying they would be more likely to buy if the food could be delivered to a convenient location and another 50% saying they would be more likely to buy if they could order on the internet. The data can be seen below.

Would you be more likely to subscribe to a CSA or buy local produce if it was delivered to a nearby pick-up location (schools, churches, etc)?



Yes	8	50%
No	5	31.3%
Don't know	3	18.8%

Would you be more likely to buy local produce if you could order what you want on the internet?



Yes	8	50%
No	7	43.8%
Don't know	1	6.3%

Overall, the opportunity presented by this USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant was a tremendous blessing for our community and the health of its residents. We at the Bureau & Putnam County Health Department are committed to the health and wellness of all. When 8 out of 10 cause of death in this country are related to lifestyle choices, anything that promotes

better nutrition, socialization, community involvement, fresh air and sunshine is a positive. During this grant period, we have also helped to increase:

- the number of local farmers markets,
- the number of local growers,
- the income of local growers,
- the number of customers,
- their loyalty to growers,
- the amount of land in cultivation for fruits and vegetables, and
- the number of jobs.

We know that the awareness of and appreciation for our local food system has been significantly increased over the course of the past two years. We are thankful to the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program for providing us with the opportunity to bring these blessings to our community.