

**Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)
Final Performance Report**

The IRC in Baltimore is pleased to report on the Local Food Promotion Program's (LFPP) activities and accomplishments throughout the reporting period. This report was adapted from a template provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture with numbers/questions listed originating from that template.

Report Date Range:	September 30, 2014 – September 29, 2015
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Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	2014 Local Food Promotion Program – IRC in Baltimore
Grant Agreement Number:	14-LFPPX-MD-0083
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Baltimore, Maryland
Total Awarded Budget:	\$25,000

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: _____ Email: _____

Introduction

The International Rescue Committee, Inc. (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Since its opening in 1999, the IRC's office in Baltimore has resettled more than 10,000 refugees in central Maryland and worked to help refugees become self-sufficient and integrated into their communities. One challenge faced by refugees in Baltimore has been maintaining and applying the rich agricultural and culinary traditions from their homelands, particularly in the face of low-income urban living. In response to these challenges, the IRC in Baltimore launched the New Roots Program in 2012, which was designed to help refugees as they transition to life in the United States by focusing on three main areas: nutrition, food security, and community gardening.

Agricultural enterprises are not foreign to resettled refugees. Ninety-eight percent of New Roots participants in Baltimore have farming experience from their country of origin all of whom currently reside in Northeast Baltimore's Frankford neighborhood. The neighborhood is home to roughly one-third of the refugees served by the IRC in Baltimore. While housing in this neighborhood is affordable, it has been designated as a low-food-access area with high rates of poverty.¹ Frankford has a population of 8,192

¹ United States Department of Agriculture, "USDA Food Access Research Atlas", <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx> (accessed 12/13/2015).

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people per square mile, but there are no farmers markets or retail spaces that supply the community with fresh, local produce.² The physical, social, and economic barriers in the neighborhood have had a direct effect on the health and wellbeing of its residents (e.g. rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease are high).

The IRC in Baltimore utilized the IRC’s extensive institutional knowledge to inform the development and implementation of this project throughout the past year. A primary focus remained on empowering refugee microproducers with skills to overcome challenges, particularly limited English proficiency, unfamiliarity with American production and market norms, and insufficient business skills. Research conducted over the grant period illustrated that individual gardeners could blossom into an income-generating cooperative that increases access to fresh food in the community. The development of a refugee cooperative within the IRC’s New Roots program will address community needs by strengthening the local food system, increasing access to affordable food, and ameliorating many of the factors that create barriers to access.

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.**

Objective #1 Utilize a community-based participatory approach to develop and implement focus groups and key informant interviews to determine the current capacity of microproducers and other stakeholders, target population market access, and available resources.	
Action Taken	When Completed
16 Key Informant Interviews Conducted (First Interview) 1 Group Interview Conducted With 8 Key Informants Total of 24 Key Informant Interviews Conducted	November 2014 – September 2015
2 Listening Sessions Conducted	March – April 2014
1 Community Workshop Conducted in three language groups (Nepali, Kinyarwanda, and Arabic) 3 themes were discussed: 1-Food in Baltimore. 2-Food in the household 3-Food and Health.	August – September 2015

Progress Made

Through this extensive community based participatory research (CBPR), which included workshops, sessions, and key informant interviews with diverse expert contacts across the country, New Roots Baltimore has detailed best practices of farmer training cooperatives (see Appendix to the Business Plan entitled, "Refugee Farmer Cooperative/Micro-Producer Best Practices Research"), and learned about regional opportunities for a refugee farming microproducer program in Baltimore city, the state of Maryland, and the Mid-Atlantic region. New Roots also discovered important refugee and immigrant-specific farmer training resources, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) curricula which will be integrated into the IRC’s training, and learned from the vast experience of immigrant focused farmer

² Visit Baltimore, “Baltimore Farmers Markets”, <http://baltimore.org/article/baltimore-farmers-markets> (accessed 12/21/2015).

training programs such as Agriculture and Land Based Agriculture Training Association (ALBA) and New Roots Programs in Salt Lake City and Phoenix.

Impact on Community

By engaging in this CPBR research, New Roots growers and their families began to network and connect with those in their wider community about the growth of the program. For example, New Roots gardeners met with staff of a local school in the Frankford neighborhood this past July who are interested in potentially providing land and water for future organic food production. Since the September 2015 Community Workshop, the New Roots community made a group decision that the search for land should focus on Baltimore County or another predominantly rural area, as they believe this is the best area for agriculture. Cyizanye, a hopeful future microproducer from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) said in the workshop, “Land in the county is better because the air quality and weather is better.” Hassan from Darfur, Sudan said, “We should move to [Baltimore] county to live closer to the farm land.” The momentum produced by gardeners, potential microproducers, and IRC staff has fueled the search for farm land and additional partnerships in order to expand New Roots Baltimore into a farming program.

OBJECTIVE #2: Research best practices methods for the development and implementation of refugee micro-producer cooperative program.	
Action Taken	When Completed
Conducted 1 literature review of existing refugee/asylee micro-producer cooperatives. Combined with information from Objective 1 interviews. Conducted 1 literature review of best practices of beginning farmer training programs.	September 2014 - August 2015
New Roots Specialist attended the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED) BFRDP grantees conference in Nashville, TN. Training and collaboration with peers in the field of refugee farmer training.	March 2015
Visited 2 farm sites in the IRC New Roots network in Arizona and Virginia.	AZ, July 2015 VA, September 2015
New Roots Specialist attended NIFTI Field School in Durham, NC. Visited 2 incubator farm programs: Transplanting Traditions (refugee run) and Breeze Incubator Farm (American-born run) in the Durham region.	October 2015

Progress Made

The results of the research on best practices have been synthesized into a report which was essential for the “Business Plan for New Roots Cooperative Beginning Farmer Training Program,” which will form a foundation on which future programming will be built. Research was enhanced through opportunities over the year for the New Roots Specialist to participate in four field farm site visits, farmers’ market visits, and conferences in Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, and Arizona.

The site visit to the IRC in Phoenix’s New Roots program was in conjunction with the California Cooperative Center for Development’s (CCCD) Summit. The CCCD Summit was attended by staff from ALBA’s farmer training program, New Roots programs in 6 cities and university agricultural extension offices. The second site visit to the IRC’s New Roots Farm in Charlottesville, VA was conducted on a Saturday to allow for both

the observation of morning harvest market preparation and the afternoon Michie Farmers Market run by New Roots.

Impact on Community

This in-depth research and visits to these farmer training programs to connect with the beginning farmers and their trainers enabled the New Roots Specialist to give the Baltimore New Roots community a knowledgeable and realistic perspective on what a new microproducer program in Baltimore could look like. Sharing the pictures, videos, curricula, and tools collected through this research with future microproducers has enabled the community to formulate concrete plans and ideas about program expansion.

OBJECTIVE #3: Synthesize findings from focus groups, interviews, and best practices research into microproducer cooperative program plan specific to the IRC in Baltimore office.	
Action Taken	When Completed
Key Informant Interviews were conducted throughout the year, and used to develop the business plan.	December 2014 – September 2015
Two (2) Listening Sessions were completed.	March 2015 – April 2015
1 Community Workshop was completed.	September 2015
Research on best practices of microproducer and beginning farmer cooperatives was conducted.	Finalized September 2015
“Business Plan for New Roots Cooperative Beginning Farmer Training Program and sent to key stakeholders for review.	Finalized September 2015 IRC reviewed September 2015 Sent to stakeholders October 2015

Progress Made

The “Business Plan for New Roots Cooperative Beginning Farmer Training Program” was developed at the culmination of this year of the project. The Business Plan maps out the exciting growth that New Roots programming in Baltimore will take: cooperatively increasing the capacity of interested growers from community gardeners to beginning farmers in training. The Business Plan has been sent to key partners and the New Roots program looks forward to their input and further partnership.

Impact on Community

The community has been heavily involved throughout the grant period and has significantly informed the creation of the Business Plan. This process has helped all stakeholders create a clear blueprint for how the program will move forward and feel a greater sense of ownership around the program and process.

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, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: **0**
- ii. Number of jobs retained: **0**
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created:

There were seven (7) interpreters, two (2) childcare providers, and eight (8) facilitators who were paid hourly rates throughout the implementation of this program in the past year, for a total of 17 indirect jobs.

iv. Number of markets expanded:

The two existing New Roots weekly Mobile Farmers Markets in the Frankford neighborhood with our partner Real Food Farm were expanded this year. This expansion brought more market outreach efforts, new volunteers, new market shoppers, the Fresh Fund incentive program, a Fresh Fund survey, and Enumerator training for survey administrators. The New Roots team conducted outreach by flyering and speaking with residents in Frankford door-to-door about the market. The partnering farm expanded their selection for sale to include free range eggs and increased the amount of culturally appropriate ethnic specialty crops at the market, including ginger, turmeric, and mustard greens to target market demand and sales to the refugee and immigrant community living in the neighborhood.

The Maryland Farmers Market Association (MFMA), and through this organization, the Catonsville Farmers Market on Wednesdays, has begun to build a formal partnership allowing New Roots and the Fresh Fund incentive to be integrated into their farmers markets. During the previous year New Roots provided the Fresh Fund incentive program at this Catonsville Wednesday market. This market is supported substantially by the Maryland Farmers Market Association who was introduced to IRC by the Catonsville market manager. The partnership has grown from the Catonsville market to the wider network of farmers markets supported by MFMA throughout the State. The IRC in Baltimore has highlighted this expansion as being key to the success of New Roots farming and food security programming as a large portion of refugees assisted by the IRC live in the Catonsville area and currently have little to no access to growing space or culturally appropriate fresh markets.

v. Number of new markets established:

A key goal during the project year was to increase refugee and asylee gardeners' access to markets, so therefore New Roots growers have not sold their produce at new markets this year. However, new partnerships with area market managers and local business owners were developed to enable such growth in the coming year of programming:

- One (1) partnership with the Maryland Farmers Market Association (as mentioned above) that will enable New Roots microproducers to connect with Maryland area farmers markets for sales, federal benefits incentive programming, and potential market management.
- One (1) partnership with Rooftop Hot: a Baltimore city organic market in the Highlandtown neighborhood where the IRC office is located, as well as a Maryland based organic farm running an online order-based CSA program.
- One (1) potential partnership with a new Italian style farm-to-table restaurant to open in Baltimore in 2016.

vi. Market sales increased by \$ and increased by ____%. **N/A**

vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project:

There were 72 New Roots community gardeners and 77 interested potential producers benefited from the project for a total of 149 unduplicated individuals.

- a. Percent Increase: **46%** (the program's impact was restricted to 80 gardeners in the previous year). LFPP research activities allowed the IRC in Baltimore to reach new

potential growers and engage with a wider community base, adding to the increased percentage from last year.

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?

New Roots in Baltimore has expanded our potential customer base, our participant base, our partnerships, and our technical assistance network significantly. Our potential customer base has expanded beyond the initial target area of Northeast Baltimore to include greater Baltimore city and regions of Baltimore County. Outreach conducted through our monthly newsletter, flyers, outreach calls, interaction with other community-based organizations, and gardeners communicating about the program in their communities allowed us to engage a more diverse client base, as well as develop new partnerships with farmer's market managers, local food marketplaces, and networks such as the Maryland Farmers Market Association (MFMA). Interested potential growers have included people from the refugee, asylee, immigrant, and America-born communities who are also affected by low access issues. The native-born population participated in new community garden plots, a new partner garden called the Conkling Street Community Garden, and contributed through our listening sessions and community workshop. The Conkling Street Community Garden was initially created by the Highlandtown Community Association (HCA) with a particular goal of becoming a community space where American born and Latino residents come together to grow. Earlier this year the HCA approached the IRC about the possibility of setting aside plots for New Roots refugee gardeners. Opportunities such as this which involve American-born community members in New Roots programming will help Baltimore's refugees integrate into their new communities. During the Community Workshop, participant and facilitator Maisoon said on the topic, "When they grow their own food it can encourage the local community: different people from different places can meet together throughout the city."

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

i. Who are your community partners?

- **Goodnow Community Center** graciously provides current growing space for New Roots, and provided a localized meeting space for the majority of our Listening Sessions, the Community Workshop, and gardener workshops. The garden space is shared along with Real Food Farm who use the hoop house, shed, and raised beds along with the IRC growers at the Goodnow Community Garden.
- **Real Food Farm** has been a strong partner providing two mobile farmers markets in the Frankford neighborhood. At these farmers markets Real Food Farm provides fresh fruits, vegetables, and proteins, along with a food assistance incentive matching program for community members using WIC, SNAP, and Farmers Market Nutrition Program coupons (FMNP). The IRC also provides a match for community members using SNAP called the Fresh Fund through the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) USDA grant program.
- **The Farm Alliance** has provided New Roots with not only two (2) AmeriCorps volunteers to facilitate activities of the project year and community garden programming, but the Alliance continues to be an integral partner providing technical assistance, outreach, networking opportunities, agricultural education workshops to the public, and marketing support. While Baltimore city has over 15 urban farms, there is no current Baltimore-based farm incubator program. The Farm Alliance aggregates produce and products for markets, restaurants, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) with Alliance member farms. The Alliance also provides an urban beginning farmer training program, along with wider community

education opportunities for interested Baltimore area residents, including New Roots gardeners.

- **The University of Maryland Extension program** provides New Roots staff and volunteers with technical expertise in the areas of agriculture, nutrition and gardening. The extension program has also helped New Roots connect with volunteers for garden work days to construct new gardens.
- **Johns Hopkins University** provided the program with interns and researchers for the Key Informant interviews. This partner also provided expertise on community based participatory research including how to structure and carry out listening sessions and community workshops to ensure informative and useful program outcomes.

ii. How have they contributed to the overall results of the LFPP project?

Our community partners are instrumental to the success of our current and future programming. They provided technical assistance for the project through key stakeholder interviews, as well as feedback on the research and business planning. These partners have accompanied New Roots to site visits in the ongoing search for appropriate regional land for future production and access to new markets. The IRC continues to conduct meetings with potential land owners, often with our supportive community partners' contacts.

iii. How will they continue to contribute to your project's future activities, beyond the performance period of this LFPP grant?

Continued partnership with the University of Maryland Extension and the Farm Alliance will mean further agricultural technical assistance, regionally specific networking opportunities, and integral partnerships to assist in the search for land to grow our production. The Farm Alliance will be our key partner in our plan to train beginning farmers next year (see page three of the Business Plan for details). Through the Farm Alliance and Real Food Farm referrals, the Baltimore New Roots Specialist is now included on two Baltimore City Government working groups, which have informed – and will continue to inform – the project's progress towards food security and agricultural goals for the target community.

Continued partnership with Real Food Farm, the Goodnow Community Center, and Johns Hopkins University will mean future growing seasons in our existing community gardens, continued seasons of mobile farmers markets, as well as additional volunteers and AmeriCorps members to support the work of New Roots. Maintaining these integral partnerships will increase our organization's capacity and ability to provide quality support, education, and infrastructure for New Roots microproducers in Maryland (see activities on page nine of the Business Plan for details).

5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the LFPP project?

No contractors were used to conduct the LFPP project work.

6. Have you publicized any results yet?* No publications of outcomes of research to date.

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

No publications of outcomes of research to date, although New Roots in Baltimore was featured in the Baltimore Brew news outlet this year. See link [here](#).

ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

Not applicable at this time.

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

Not applicable at this time.

7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?

- i. If so, how did you collect the information?

Throughout the LFPP planning year the IRC in Baltimore has engaged the community and additional stakeholders in the planning process through community based participatory research including the listening sessions, phone interviews, leadership training for facilitators, a community workshop, and several meetings held with growers. These New Roots sessions were held with community gardeners and beneficiaries, interested community members, hopeful community gardeners from our waiting list, and targeted stakeholders and partners from Baltimore and greater Maryland. All facilitator notes were synthesized and included in the research report as well as the business plan.

- ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?

The current New Roots gardener community has shown interest in increasing the land cultivated for small scale community-based production to feed their families, friends, and community, as well as increasing their knowledge of effective ways to grow vegetables and fruits in Maryland. Lila from Bhutan said, "We work hard to grow vegetables we like and are very satisfied to have these fresh vegetables from our garden which is nutritious and organic." A total of 100 individuals from current New Roots gardeners and the gardener waiting list (a list of 77 names) have expressed interest to have workshops and further knowledge about farming and gardening in Maryland. Many of these individuals have expressed interest in a cooperative farming program in Maryland, which would enable them to sell their crops to earn income. Confiance from DRC, a workshop participant said, "I want to grow food to make some money to support my family." Those who expressed serious interest were often younger gardeners who indicated a preference for cultivating new farm land outside of the inner city. The elder Bhutanese, Sudanese, Iraqi, Congolese, and other gardeners voiced a desire to increase their skills in gardening and the size of their garden plots, but they do not intend to earn an income from their production. Instead, they want to focus on increasing the availability of their culturally appropriate crops, integrating within the larger Baltimore community, and helping to feed their communities. This feedback from our sessions and workshops mirrors the growing interest in small scale organic farming of middle-aged and young people in Maryland and the greater United States.

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?

No. Per the Business Plan, NR envisions beginning farmers and microproducers selling at a pop-up market alongside the existing mobile markets (which are operated by our partner Real Food Farm in cooperation with IRC). This will be a pilot to test how produce sells and what income is generated.

- a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award? Not applicable at this time.

9. Lessons Learned

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on 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).

The IRC in Baltimore and community stakeholders learned a great deal from the Charlottesville and Salt Lake City New Roots programs about effectively scaling a program from gardening to farming and microproduction, particularly in the areas of production, land management, marketing, and training scale. The IRC was able to compare and contrast the methods of different New Roots microproducer programs and similar farmer training programs with immigrants in the United States. For example, Salt Lake City's program tailors its training into three levels based on the ability level of participants. In contrast, the IRC's Charlottesville New Roots program, a younger program, holds trainings with all microproducers together encouraging group rapport and collaboration. Baltimore plans to follow Charlottesville's model during the first year of keeping all 10 microproducers together in trainings.

The IRC also learned from stakeholder interviews, field visits, and conferences that marketing to restaurants should be considered carefully in the first few years of organic small scale farm production with microproducers and beginning farmers, as these sales can quickly become very complicated. Our aim is to empower farmers and it may feel as though the restaurants are dictating their crop plans, marketing avenues, and revenue. By beginning marketing in farmer-managed avenues such as farmers markets, pop-up markets, and community supported agriculture (CSAs) shares, each farmer has more control over the price, the produce and products offered, and when and where they choose to market it. The IRC in Baltimore witnessed the success of the Charlottesville New Roots program, where microproducers began selling produce at pop-up markets that grew into a weekly market. Baltimore plans to follow this method with its local New Roots microproducers.

- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:

All goals and outcomes were achieved.

- 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:

For groups interested in undertaking a year of truly community-based participatory research with a targeted community, it is important to begin early in the process to work on facilitation guides, key questions, and other documents which will be given to stakeholders. The staff or volunteers who develop these should, if possible, be able to follow the research project to its completion. Staff turnover has proven particularly challenging throughout the past year, with the current New Roots Specialist being hired seven months into the grant period and the program manager hired two months prior to the grant closing. Support from additional IRC staff members, volunteers, and IRC clients was instrumental in meeting all LFPP objectives on time. It is also important to consider the growing season in your timeline when asking gardeners and farmers to come to meetings, as they will be much less reliable during this time. The IRC in Baltimore found it most

successful to plan ahead, call, hand out fliers, and verbally remind our growers of meetings during the growing season to improve attendance.

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.

The Baltimore New Roots program will build on the momentum gained during this planning year to craft a successful New Roots cooperative beginning farmer training program in the Baltimore area. In this program, microproducers will be able to sell their organic ethnic specialty crops and other various products within their communities and the larger Maryland market. Our New Roots microproducers (beginning farmers), staff, and community partnerships will be integral to the success of this expanded programming. NR will continue to provide the Fresh Fund SNAP incentive program at all our farmers markets through the Food Insecure Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant program, which will enable low-income shoppers in the community to afford more of the microproducers produce and products. The Fresh Fund gives SNAP shoppers more buying power and will make the market more profitable for farmers.

The IRC in Baltimore has identified 10 microproducer families to train, grow, market, and empower each other cooperatively through organic farming in our local community. Through our expansion and partnership with The Farm Alliance and the Maryland Farmers Market Association markets, these refugee and asylee families will have the opportunity to integrate further into the American culture as these organizations traditionally work with American-born beginning farmers and market shoppers. The ethnic specialty crops our farmers grow will naturally become more recognizable in Maryland through New Roots marketing and these partnerships.

- 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?

The IRC in Baltimore will create a farmer training program called New Roots Cooperative Beginning Farmer Training Program. NR will also open a call for applications to the New Roots Cooperative Beginning Farmer Training Program in winter 2015 and enroll 10 beginning refugee farmers to start within year one of training. The farmers' families will be encouraged to participate and support their family member's engagement in the new initiative. There will be a requirement of intermediate English speaking ability from these beginning farmers to increase their chances of success in the program and decrease the need for interpretation which can be very costly. To best support these beginning farmers for success in cooperative small scale organic farming, Winter Workshops will be held in preparation for the Maryland growing season. Training will continue throughout the growing season with weekly workshops beginning with a group lesson before breaking out into field-based lessons and technical assistance with New Roots staff and visiting farming experts (see page 9-11 of the Business Plan for details).