

- We utilized your comments and direction to organize our findings section by first stating the current practices of the REC regarding each category of recommendations. Next, we outline the best practices of similar organizations. We then created a timeline for implementation of each strategy. Lastly, we included steps that should be used to complete the implementation of each strategy, and our recommendations are therefore action-oriented.
- We referenced previous IQP reports and IQP templates to revamp the presentation of our paper.
- We added sections titled “abstract”, “acknowledgements”, “authorship page”, “executive summary”, “considerations”, and “conclusion”.
- We completed the appendix by referencing materials when it would be appropriate for the REC to see an example or utilize a publication.
- We created links within our paper that directly open documents that will be extremely beneficial resources for the REC.

**Regional Environmental Council (REC) Food Justice Program Revenue-Generating
Strategy Development**



By
Christopher Walker
Ross Anderson
Nicolas Allen
Andrew Boucher

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An Interactive Qualifying Project
submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Science

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This report represents work of WPI undergraduate students submitted to the faculty as evidence of a degree requirement. WPI routinely publishes these reports on its web site without editorial or peer review. For more information about the projects program at WPI, see <http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects>.

Abstract

The sustainability of non-profit organizations has greatly decreased following the recent economic downturn, which has placed an extreme hardship on all financial sectors. The amplification of socioeconomic issues including food insecurity, urban blight, and youth violence has caused an immediate and vital need for non-profits to alleviate these issues within their respective communities. Specifically, the Regional Environmental Council (REC) Food Justice Program of Worcester, Massachusetts identified the need to improve organizational sustainability through the appropriate implementations. We designed these implementations to increase financial instability by creating new revenue streams and providing the organization with the necessary tools to obtain additional funding through government grants and private donations. The resulting recommendations that we developed offer direction for the REC to improve organization sustainability, which is imperative for the organization to continue providing the necessary services and products to the Worcester community.

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| Considerations | Christopher Walker |
| Conclusion | Nicolas Allen |
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Executive Summary

Non-profit organizations are the United States government's tool for providing products and services that our capitalist economy would not otherwise provide. However, just as the government relies on non-profits to provide products and services to those in need, non-profits often rely heavily on the funding obtained through government grants. With the recent economic recession, the government has been forced to reduce funding for these organizations across the country. This reallocation of government funds has sent many non-profits in search of new methods to compensate for this fiscal loss.

Similar to other non-profits, The Regional Environmental Council (REC) of Worcester Food Justice Program has concerns regarding the potential future negative effects due to the financial instability of the organization. These concerns provided our project team with the necessary information to begin conducting a literature review to obtain background research pertaining to the subject of sustainability of non-profit organizations. This research, coupled with a semi-standardized interview with Casey Burns, Director of the Food Justice Program, allowed our project team to gain an in-depth background in order to move forward with the project. From these concerns, we developed our project goal: to develop a set of recommendations that, when implemented, will offer the REC with direction toward organizational sustainability.

Once the project goal was established, objectives were determined to obtain this goal. The first objective was to examine the practices of organizations similar to REC. This involved searching for organizations with similar mission and program to the REC. After doing the necessary background research, we contacted and scheduled interviews with similar organizations. After conducting semi-standardized interviews with four organizations similar to the REC, our project team gained insight into the best practices to improve the organizational sustainability of the REC. After contacting similar organizations, we turned our focus to the REC Food Justice Program. This objective involved discussing the current programs and practices with the REC staff members to illuminate any areas for improvement. Through numerous discussions, we discovered that the REC needed assistance in areas including developing grant application materials, creating sound business and marketing plans, obtaining the materials and resources necessary to implement new strategies, and creating timelines and instructions for the implementation of various new strategies. Once we developed a comprehensive list of potential

new strategies for implementation and improvements to current programs and practices, we needed to evaluate each strategy to determine if the strategy is appropriate for implementation by the REC. Through this evaluation, we determined if the REC was able to implement each strategy, and if so, at what time the organization should explore the implementation of the strategy. Lastly, we organized the appropriate strategies into a time-structured, action-oriented format. We satisfied this requirement by categorizing the strategies into pertinent topics, creating timelines for implementation, and including instructions for the REC to implement and use each strategy. Through these methods, we complete our project goal, which will hopefully aid the REC Food Justice Program in improving organizational sustainability and diminishing financial instability.

Following the completion of all the project objectives, we determined that the REC can improve numerous portions of the organization to improve organizational sustainability. Broadly, these improvements include:

- ❖ Generating additional revenue
- ❖ Reducing operating cost
- ❖ Marketing and advertising to increase community awareness
- ❖ Maximizing resources efficiency
- ❖ Implementing general improvements to increase organizational sustainability

In addition to offering direction to the REC to improve organizational sustainability, this project will also have many indirect benefits to the Worcester community. To clarify, by providing the REC with the necessary information to become financially stable, the organization can also better concentrate on their mission. By establishing more urban gardens, the aesthetics of the Worcester community will improve by eliminating vacant properties. By maximizing farm yields and increasing community awareness, the REC will increase the access to healthy, organic food throughout Worcester. Lastly, by continuing to involve youth participants in the REC's programs, the organization will continue to provide beneficial, safe and healthy alternatives to Worcester's youth.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1980s, governments, at all scales, have relied more heavily on non-profit organizations to provide services to ameliorate socioeconomic concerns. Since 2008, these concerns have been amplified by the recent economic downturn putting increasing pressure on non-profits and their volunteers and private donors (Boris, 2006). This financial restructuring has presented challenges for non-profit organizations. For certain organizations, which have relied heavily on government funding to operate, the vulnerability of financial instability has increased drastically.

For many non-profits with a lack of funding diversity, a financial crisis could occur if just one of their sources were to dry up. Non-profit organizations undergo a continuous struggle to sustain their services for people who need them. In fact, a recent study administered by the TCC Group revealed that 30% of non-profit organizations perceive organization sustainability as a primary challenge (The TCC Group, 2009). Additionally, without establishing sound market-based business strategies, an organization is restricted from fulfilling their mission or dictating program direction (Lane, 1996). Therefore, the organization must develop successful business practices in order to eliminate the gap between revenue and expenses, which requires a long-term, systematic planning process.

The Regional Environmental Council (REC) Food Justice Program of Worcester, Massachusetts, has perceived problems regarding program funding. According to Casey Burns, the director of the Food Justice Program, 80% of program funding is generated through government issued grants. The remaining 20% of funding is comprised of private donations from individuals and foundations (personal communication, September 9, 2010). Several problems could result from this undiversified funding structure.

Relying solely on government funding, the REC is inviting a volatile financial situation. The Food Justice Program's insecurity of government funding was a direct result of continuously changing government policy with regards to government spending and the distribution of those funds. However, the lack of reliable government funding was only part of the problem. One of the major obstacles appeared when applying for government grants. Applying for government grants is an elaborate process, and the Food Justice Program staff need direction to create sound

business models and plans. With this, the REC will have the direction to increase organizational sustainability by developing reliable sources of funding and creating internal revenue streams. In past years, receiving funds from the government proved to be a risky, but rewarding, venture for the Food Justice Program; however, the dependence upon this funding proved to be problematic when planning for long-term program sustainability. Therefore, the REC Food Justice Program identified the need to diversify program funding.

In order to aid the REC Food Justice Program move toward organizational sustainability, we conducted research on pertinent background information and outlined the project goal and objectives. The project team developed a set of recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program that offer direction for program self-sustainability. To accomplish this goal, five core objectives have been completed: explore strategies of similar organizations, identify the current and future opportunities for the REC, evaluate improvements to current REC programs, compare and assess the feasibility of these strategies and develop a set of recommendations. By following the specific research methodology, the project team efficiently completed the project goal. The completion of these recommendations provided to the REC will greatly benefit the organization by defining viable revenue-generating strategies for the program. This will allow the organization to make informed decisions regarding future opportunities to decrease grant dependency. In doing this, the organization can better concentrate on and accomplish its program mission. Developing a list of recommendations for the REC Food Justice program will promote self-sustainability, and in effect, ensure that the benefits that the organization provides are received.

Project Objectives

The goal of this project was to develop a set of recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program to provide direction toward organizational sustainability. The project team identified five objectives that are essential to the completion of the project. These objectives included:

- ❖ Explore revenue-generating strategies of similar organizations

We explored revenue-generating strategies of organizations similar to the REC Food Justice Program. By examining organizations that have a similar mission,

and have possibly undergone struggles regarding self-sustainability, successful strategies emerged. The project team developed a comprehensive list of strategies that organizations similar to the REC have utilized. This data provided a variety of strategies that have been implemented successfully and gave insight to strategies that the REC Food Justice Program could utilize. This information was imperative to completing the project goal, because it provided validity to the given recommendations.

❖ Assess current REC programs and practices to identify opportunities

We identified opportunities within the Food Justice Program to make recommendations to the REC. This was done by collecting feedback from the REC through semi-standardized interviews to determine which programs would be best to expand or improve. For instance, the REC identified the addition of an alternative farmer's market location as an opportunity. Determination of the program's current sources of revenue and potential future strategies, helped identify opportunities for the REC. This avoided making recommendations that are not feasible for implementation by the REC. It was imperative to observe and study the REC programs to develop an in-depth understanding of the organization's program mission. By recognizing this, we avoided recommending strategies to the REC that are not consistent with their program mission. By identifying the opportunities for the REC Food Justice Program, potential recommendations will become clearer.

❖ Evaluate improvements to current REC programs and practices

Evaluating potential improvements to the REC's current practices and future market-based business strategies was necessary to quantitatively assess each prospective new venture. With the data that was collected through the previous objectives, it was possible to generate detailed logistics and project the financial results of each strategy. Additionally, market research conducted in previous objectives provided insight regarding market need, appropriate pricing, and potential partnering organizations for each new venture or improvement to current

practice. Through the evaluation of the opportunities of the REC, the most effective method of implementation was highlighted for each strategy.

❖ Compare information to identify compatible strategies for the REC

We revealed viable business ventures by comparing the strategies of similar organizations to the opportunities within the REC Food Justice Program. Once the list of potential strategies was created, it was vital to assess the practicality of each in order to make appropriate recommendations to the REC. To complete this, we examined the proposed venture through a feasibility study. The four stages of a feasibility study are describing the purpose of the venture, assessing its resources, exploring its market and anticipating the obstacles. This analysis identified strategies that have been successful for similar organizations and are most appropriate for implementation by the REC.

❖ Develop a set of time-structured, action-oriented recommendations for the REC

We compiled the previously collected and analyzed data into a report of short, intermediate and long term recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program. By separating the viable strategies into a time-structured, action-oriented list, the Food Justice Program will be able to implement strategies at times when the organization is adequately equipped. Additionally, we will provide the REC with templates and examples, so that, in the future, the organization can sufficiently produce these documents (e.g. grant application materials) themselves. Without a structured set of recommendations, the REC Food Justice Program would not have the appropriate tools necessary to implement the strategies in a way which would promote sustainable development.

Chapter 2: Background

The project was driven by various factors; all of them imperative to the financial stability of non-profit organizations. This section will first address the topic of non-profit organizational self-sustainability, which will discuss the restructuring of funding from the government, undiversified funding of non-profits, and organizational financial instability. Next, the section will discuss methods that non-profits can utilize to diversify the funding that they receive. We examine the grant application process, in addition to conducting market research to develop business plans as methods to obtain funding. Lastly, this section will extensively discuss the background of the REC Food Justice Program, and the situation that the organization is currently in. With the knowledge of the driving factors of this project, the rationale for this project will become much clearer.

Project Rationale

The issue of organizational self-sustainability is faced not only by the REC Food Justice Program, but also many other non-profit organizations throughout the United States. Although this is currently a major problem for the non-profit sector, it was not always this way. Prior to the turn of the century, the U.S. economy was in surplus and funding for non-profit organizations was not an issue. The IRS also estimated that there were roughly 378,000 fewer non-profit organizations than there are presently, a 32% increase (Internal Revenue Service, 2009). The recent economic crisis, however, has had negative effects on the sector. A growing budget deficit has threatened the ability of the government to guarantee funding for nonprofits. The decline in the stock market has also decreased the number of endowments of, and contributions to, non-profit organizations. At the same time, events such as September 11th and Hurricane Katrina have caused the government to rely heavily on the non-profit sector (Boris, 2006). The following section will discuss the restructuring of government funding for nonprofits, as well as the increased vulnerability of these organizations due to the resulting financial instability that many currently face.

The restructuring of funding from the government related to the nonprofit sector is problematic, and organizations currently struggle with obtaining this type of funding. The recent economic crisis has forced the U.S. government to rewrite the alleged “social contract” with these organizations. This new contract is incomplete; however, with little interest from officials

to successfully complete it, nonprofits suffer. The government has taken a passive, fiscally conservative role in providing for non-profit organizations. In effect, nonprofits have been expected to make up for this decrease in funding through private donations and volunteer work. Unfortunately, the economic crisis has also resulted in a lack of extensive industrial and private growth for organizations to tap into. As a result, non-profit organizations have been caught in the middle of the uncertainty and inconsistency in the current social contract. Organizations are forced to satisfy the growing needs of the public while struggling with financial limitations.

Some assume that nonprofit organizations use fundraising and donations as their primary source of funding, however, these organizations also rely on government funding and the sale of products and services to fund their programs (Carrol, 2008). The recent decrease in charitable donations available for nonprofit organizations has caused an increase in the latter types of funding, specifically government grants. In effect, the sources of funding for many non-profit organizations have become undiversified. A decline in any one source, therefore, could result in a financial crisis for the organization. During a study related to the diversification of revenue in non-profit organizations, it was found that organizations which rely predominantly on contributions and grants experience greater levels of financial instability. Consequently, these organizations experience greater financial risk from resource dependency. It was also found that these same organizations would be less volatile over time by adopting diversification strategies, specifically by equalizing their reliance on earned income, investments and contributions (Carrol, 2008). However, due to the state of government-nonprofit relations, the funding in many of these organizations has remained undiversified. This increases the potential of financial instability, and in turn, a compromised program mission. In order to successfully sustain themselves, non-profit organizations must find the balance between accomplishing mission-related goals while at the same time maintaining a strong, diverse financial portfolio.

Many non-profit organizations face troubling financial conditions, and these sustainability issues could lead to potential negative effects in the near future. Organizations are now threatened by financial instability, which can diminish concentration on the program mission (Lane, 1996). This financial situation can be attributed to reduced government, private and foundation support, in addition to increased competition of non-profit organizations and general economic uncertainty. Furthermore, the current market has forced non-profit

organizations to be financially accountable and self-sustaining (Boston University, 2010). Due to decreased private funding, nonprofits are moving in a revenue-generating direction by utilizing fee-for-service activities. However, these organizations struggle with generating funds while staying true to their program mission. Organizations that rely on government funding as a primary source of revenue risk compromising the program's mission; however, government and private funding is still essential for non-profit organizations. Often times, organizations that become too dependent on grant funding leave themselves vulnerable to the demands of their benefactors. Researchers have warned that non-profit organizations receiving a large portion of funding from the government may find themselves caught in a "subsidy trap". This trap occurs when an organization structures itself to support the demands of public funding (Hodge, 2005). Once in this scenario, organizations may begin to focus their efforts towards satisfying the requirements of the grant and its renewal, rather than accomplishing the organization's mission. Furthermore, organizations which are overly concerned with obtaining public funding can become over-professionalized. If this occurs, the progress of organizations, whose identity sprout directly from their informality and sensitivity to grass-roots issues, will be hindered (Salamon, 1996). Therefore, it is imperative that non-profit organizations take the necessary steps to reduce or eliminate financial instability in order to better concentrate on the program mission.

Methods to Diversify Funding

To address financial instability, non-profit organizations need to diversify their revenue streams. Non-profit organizations must first identify current funding sources to reveal the extent that the organizations must diversify. Funding options may include grants, public or private, in addition to incorporating revenue-generating strategies into their current programs or services. Although difficult for many non-profit organizations, developing market-based business strategies for their programs is a crucial step towards promoting mission direction. These market-based strategies involved developing a solution that is driven solely by market need, and using this to align personnel, processes, and resources. This process of developing market-based business plans culminate with financial models and plans that can be used to successful implement and maintain the venture (Future Sight Consulting, 2010). Successfully developing and implementing these strategies will allow for more diversified funding within the organization. As a result, the organization will become less vulnerable to financial instability and program misdirection. Figure 1 (below) shows the process for developing a strategic marketing

plan that focuses on marketing to the target consumer. This section will discuss the grant application process, as well as, the steps an organization may take to develop sound market-based business strategies.



Figure 1: The Process of Developing a Strategic Marketing Plan (Studysols.com, 2010)

The Grant Application Process

Successfully obtaining grant funding is critical for the financial stability of non-profit organizations (Cruikshank, 2009). Therefore, it is imperative that an organization acquire the resources and knowledge necessary for the grant application process. Non-profit organizations must allocate adequate time for and preparation of the application. Outlines for grants vary marginally, but most are organized as follows:

1. **Executive Summary** – Similar to an abstract that explains the strategy in a way that appeals to funders.
2. **Problem Statement** - Describes why the particular project is needed and normally includes statistics.

3. **Goals and Objectives** - States what the ultimate purpose of the venture (goal), and explains the specific results or outcomes expected to be accomplished (objectives).

4. **Program Design** - Details the strategies used to complete objectives to achieve goals.

5. **Evaluation** - Lays out a plan to make sure the program design is on track to complete the intended goals (this is sometimes done through surveys that monitor the progress of the program).

6. **Sustainability** – Proves that the project will last and provides evidence that the program is receiving multiple sources of funding and support.

7. **Organization Information** – A detailed descriptions of the organization. This section may include a short history, the mission, and the structure of the organization.

8. **Budget** – Explains how funds are allocated for the program and outlines previous and projected revenue streams.

9. **Additional materials** – Includes any additional information that compliments previous materials (e.g. past budgets, a list of board members, and financial statements of past years).

To see if a project or program is going to be successful in its mission most grant applications contain at least a simplified form of a business plan. Before constructing a business plan, market research is essential.

Conducting Market Research

Market research is the process involved with the systematic gathering, organizing, and analyzing of data related to the marketing of goods and services. This information can help understand the behavior (e.g. how the group obtains information) and needs (e.g. price points) of the target consumer (Chickery Kasouf, personal communication, November 10, 2010 – Appendix A – Interview Guide for Conducting Market Research). With this knowledge, organizations can then devise effective marketing strategies, which, when implemented, may help them to reduce business risk, recognize current and future problems in the market, identify sales opportunities and develop business plans.

Although people's desires and behaviors are constantly changing, the process used to study these changes does not. According to Imber, the six fundamental steps of market research are:

1. Identify and define the issue or problem
2. Examine secondary data
3. Generate primary data
4. Analyze data
5. Make recommendations
6. Implement based on findings

An organization must first define the problem by developing a statement of the topic that is under examination. This focused definition avoids the collection of irrelevant or expensive data. There are two types of research methods when investigating a topic: exploratory research and conclusive research. Exploratory research is used when broadly studying an issue to gain insights to break a vague problem statement into multiple, more precise statements (Imber, 2000). This method of qualitative research may involve small-group discussions to discover underlying trends. In contrast, conclusive research is a structured collection and analysis of data specifically relating to the problem or issue under investigation. This method requires larger samples and questions that limit responses in order to generate quantitative data to make decisions. After defining the issue under examination and deciding on the appropriate research method, data collection may commence.

Secondary data is information that was collected for other purposes than the current research problem and is available from external sources. Secondary data is more easily accessible and less expensive to obtain than primary data, and therefore should be the first source of data collection. There are general advantages and disadvantages associated with the use of secondary data, which are outlined in Figure 2 (below).

Secondary Data

Advantages

- Many types are inexpensive
- Data assembly can be swift
- Several sources and perspectives are available
- A source (such as the government) may obtain data that is inaccessible by the current research group
- Data assembled by independent sources are highly credible
- Helpful when exploratory research is involved

Disadvantages

- Available data may not suit the current research purpose
- Information may be dated or obsolete
- The methodology used in collecting the data may be unknown
- All findings of a research study may not be made public
- Conflicting results may exist
- The reliability of the data may not be proven

Figure 2: The Advantages and Disadvantages of Secondary Data Collection (Imber, 2000)¹

If obtained secondary data is not sufficient to make an informed marketing decision, it is essential to gather primary data, which consists of information gathered specifically to address the current problem or issue. To complete this research step, key components must be address. These topics include the following:

- ❖ What information should be collected?
- ❖ What target population should be studied?
- ❖ Which research method(s) will be used to obtain the data?

This information will be vital when designing the research study, and will ensure that the proper data is collected in using effective means. The data may be analyzed once the necessary data has been collected using primary and secondary sources.

Data analysis involves systematically evaluating the information that has been collected. First, the data must be coded and organized in a form that is appropriate to analyze. Then,

¹ Diagram taken from Imber has been altered organizationally; however, content is consistent.

through quantitative assessment, the data is analyzed and evaluated (usually by statistical techniques) to determine how it pertains to the specific issue (Imber, 2000). Conclusions can be drawn from this form of data, which will then be converted into recommendations.

Based on the findings of the conducted market research, an organization can develop recommendations for future action. This is typically presented in written form to decision makers of the organization. This report must be written appropriately for the intended audience in order to be effective. Then, the decision makers of the organization can make informed, market-based decisions regarding the implementation of the recommended strategies based on the findings. This implementation can be planned in a time-structured orientation using a business plan. The previously conducted market research will justify this plan when determining if the potential venture is worth implementing (Evans, 2007).

Developing a Business Plan

A business plan is an in-depth description and organizational plan for a business's financial and structural future. Developing a business plan can be very useful for non-profit organizations. A business plan helps organizations progress, meet deadlines, and achieve program goals. For nonprofits, specifically, it is a vital instrument for acquiring grants and other types of funding. To make this document more organized, it is broken down into the following sections:

1. **Executive Summary** – Describe the organizations purpose, history, strengths, menu of products and services and market need, as well as operational plan and financial plan
2. **Body of Plan and Organizational Structure** – Generally describe the organization and corporate structure, including subsidiaries, stage of organizational maturity, objectives, expansion plans and industry trends
3. **Products, Programs or Services** – Describe products, programs and services provided as well as a special features of delivery, benefits and future development. Include info on copyrights etc.
4. **Marketing Plan** – Define the market and sub-sectors of the market, trends and importance of the market, need for services, competitive forces, distribution

networks, promotional efforts, projected number of clients, cost and projected income. Include samples of promotional material in appendix.

5. **Operational Plan** – Explain the organizations plans, location of facilities, capital equipment, inventory, program and service development, distribution approach, maintenance and evaluation of program services
6. **Management and Organizational Team** – Describe management team, principles and key management expertise. Include board member and advisory board expertise as well as active financial sponsors. Include organizational chart explaining lines of authority and responsibility and staffing needs.
7. **Major Milestones** – Describe major program, service or organizational milestones. Detail how organization plans to accomplish their goals. Include timeline and schedule of planned major events.
8. **Capitalization** – Describe the organizations capital structure, outstanding loans, debts, holdings, bonds and endowments. Explain subsidiary relationships relative to the flow of capital to and from the organization.
9. **Financial Plan** – Illustrate the organizations current projected financial status. Include an income statements, balance sheet, cash flow statement, financial ration analysis (if possible) and three-year financial projections and explanation of those projections.
10. **Considerations** – Articulate the organizations request or needs for financing, grant awards, major contributions, in-kind support etc.
11. **Appendix** – May wish to include some or all of the following: Resumes of key management, board member lists and pertinent charts, graphs and illustrations.

The materials necessary to apply for a grant are included in a business plan (outline above). A business plan provides a complete and organized model to be used in a grant application. Every business plan must be revised when market or organizational changes are encountered or at least once a year. In every business plan and grant application, it is necessary

to show why a certain direction was chosen; a way to do this is by producing the results of market research².

To successfully maintain a strong financial portfolio and avoid financial instability, it is necessary for non-profit organizations to diversify their program funding. Through well designed grant applications, as well as, sound market research and business plans, organizations can develop new strategies for generating revenue. This will be the foundation for the sustainable direction in which the organizations aim to move. However, before it was possible to conduct market research and develop these plans specifically for the REC Food Justice Program, it was first necessary to research pertinent information regarding the program itself.

The REC Food Justice Program

Mission and Goals

The REC has been dedicated to building healthy, sustainable and just communities since its founding in 1971. It has developed the Food Justice Program in Worcester, Massachusetts, that is solely devoted to growing and providing accessible, healthy foods in proximity to the consumers with the greatest need. Food production is an energy intensive process, and as energy costs increase so does the price of a loaf of bread. From 2007 to 2008, global food prices increased nearly 40% (Spencer, 2008). Global instability and economic hardship has emerged from this rise. This jump in food prices, combined with the high poverty rate in the area, has contributed to the rate of food-insecure individuals in the Worcester community (United States Census Bureau, 2008).

The REC accomplishes its mission in various ways. Staff coordinates programs that bring the community of Worcester together by addressing environmental justice issues, educating residents (including youth), and providing services and goods that combat environmental and social injustice. The REC has several programs that alleviate the socioeconomic issues caused by the recent economic downturn.

² An example of a complete business plan developed by a non-profit organization is shown in Appendix B.

Programs

The REC Food Justice Program is a combination of three unique subprograms, which aim to alleviate issues prevalent in the Worcester community. These include YouthGROW, UGROW, and farmers' markets. The YouthGROW program is an eight week summer urban agriculture youth employment and leadership program. This program targets low-income, at-risk teens from the ages of fourteen to sixteen years old. Through this, the participants learn organic farming, develop teamwork and leadership skills, and participate in youth empowerment activities. The UGROW program's mission is to bring together the community while addressing problems regarding community food security and mal distribution of resources. This mission is accomplished by assisting people of the community to transform vacant, potentially dangerous lots into urban gardens. Currently, this program has created forty gardens, and utilizes 250 volunteer gardeners throughout Worcester. The Food Justice Program also offers weekly farmers' markets in two locations, the Great Brook Valley Health Center and Main Street. At these markets, produce from local farmers and the YouthGROW program are sold. This produce is made more accessible to impoverished community members, because the market doubles the value of government funded food stamps. These programs are implemented to help resolve the socioeconomic issues including food insecurity, troubled youth, and environment (Regional Environmental Council, 2010).

Given this background information, we modified our project goal and outlined the objectives necessary to complete this goal. This information aided in the design and organization of our research. The background knowledge of the target demographic of the REC Food Justice Program guided the methods we utilized to collect data. Collectively, this preliminary research provided the foundation for new areas of exploration.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter, we describe our research design and methodology. This research clarified what data to look for and where to uncover it when completing an objective. The objectives identified for this project included researching similar organizations, identifying opportunities for the REC, evaluating improvements to the current programs and practices of the REC, comparing and assessing the feasibility of strategies and making recommendations to the REC.

We utilized project management tools to create a time-structured outline of the tasks necessary to complete each objective (See Appendix C – Project Management Tools). The following sections will provide more detailed information regarding data procedures and methods involved with each objective.

Objective One: Explore Successful Revenue-Generating Strategies of Similar Organizations

Exploring organizations that are similar (or contain similar programs) to the REC Food Justice Program identified successful revenue generating strategies to help the team achieve the project goal. By examining organizations that have a similar mission, and have possibly undergone similar struggles regarding self-sustainability, successful strategies emerged. In order to develop a list of recommendations for the REC that will provide direction toward self-sustainability, it was necessary to first develop a comprehensive list of strategies that have been implemented by similar organizations. This provided a variety of strategies that have been implemented successfully, and gave insight to strategies that the REC Food Justice Program could utilize. This information was imperative to completing the project goal, because it provided validity to the given recommendations.

We collected various types of qualitative data using many different data collection methods. This data included archival information and information obtained through personal communication. The project team attained the archival information using literature review of publicly accessible data from the internet and journal or newspaper articles. Specifically, we uncovered this data through the use of the organization's website and local newspaper articles. Semi-standardized interviews provided useful, subjective data through personal communication with representatives of the organization being examined. Before interviewing, we developed a semi-standardized interview guide (See Appendix D – Semi-Standardized Interview Guide for Exploring Similar Organizations). This guide created objectivity and consistency that was necessary for the analysis of this data. We accessed this data through telephone conversations, web chat communication, and in-person contact. Semi-standardized interviews were the most effective method of data collection, because we obtained useful, opinionated data from credible sources. It is more useful, because it provided insightful, subjective data rather than the mostly factual information presented in literature. With this opinionated data, it was easier to complete

other objectives (e.g. assess feasibility of strategy implementation) to complete the project goals. It was necessary to obtain both archival and personal communication data in order to gather information regarding strategies of similar organizations that could be recommended to the REC Food Justice Program.

Objective Two: Observe REC Programs and Practices to Identify Opportunities

In order to make recommendations to the REC Food Justice Program, it was imperative to identify program opportunities. This aided in achieving the project goal immensely by allowing for the reduction of potential recommendations to only those that the REC had infrastructure for. This avoided making recommendations that are not feasible. By identifying the opportunities for the REC Food Justice Program, potential recommendations became clearer.

We collected this qualitative and quantitative data to complete this objective. It was imperative to completely examine the REC Food Justice program. By doing this, the group determined the program's current sources of revenue and plausible strategies for the program's future. We used several data collection methods to obtain this information. The required information was obtained through semi-standardized and unstandardized interviews REC staff members. Additionally, we observed the current programs and practices of the REC. By observing how the REC operates and attending events, such as the Farmer's Markets, the group gained a greater understanding of the function of the program. The project team also conducted market research in regards to the three core revenue-generating strategies utilized by the REC. These strategies included the farmers markets, the YouthGROW vendor booth at the farmers market, and the YouthGROW cooperative business. After collecting this data, the group had the necessary information to evaluate improvements to these programs and practices (objective three). Lastly, through archival work and examining existing resources, knowledge of further program opportunities emerged. By utilizing the REC's website and provided literature, we learned more about the organization's current sources of revenue. With this data, the project team brainstormed about possible strategies that the REC has not yet identified. The most effective method of data collection was interviewing REC staff members. This method was the most informative, because this interactive source provided detailed information. The other data collection methods provided objective background information. The timeline for this objective was approximately three weeks, and we completed it concurrently with exploring revenue-

generating strategies of similar organizations (objective one). Identifying the program's opportunities allowed for the comparison and assessment of strategies of similar organizations and opportunities of the REC Food Justice Program to be completed.

Objective Three: Evaluate Improvements to Existing REC Programs and Practices

By evaluating the possible improvements to the current programs run by the REC, we effectively assessed each proposed strategy. We collected detailed logistics and projected financial results of each strategy from previous objectives, which then allowed for the quantitative assessment of each new venture. We considered market need, potential partnering opportunities and pricing options (identified through previous market research) when evaluating each potential endeavor. Through the process of evaluation of the opportunities of the REC, we highlighted the most effective strategies and methods of implementation.

This objective required a variety of hybrid data taken from the previously completed objectives. Therefore, the use of existing resources was the only method of data collection exercised in this objective. With primary focus on analyzing the data, we evaluated the possible improvements in order to identify the most appropriate strategies****. We analyzed the data gathered from exploring successful revenue-generating strategies of similar organizations (objective one) in order to identify detailed themes in the logistics of similar programs, such as farmers' markets and youth cooperative businesses. Projected financial timelines specific to the REC Food Justice Program were developed from this data, which provided a benchmark to evaluate each strategy. The second aspect of the evaluation process was assessing the strategies using previously collected market research (objective two). By examining data on market type, market need, potential partners, advertising possibilities and effectiveness, pricing options and other relevant methods, we narrowed down the list of potential improvements to only those most appropriate for the REC. Evaluation of the data from both market research and similar programs was crucial in determining the most viable improvements to current REC programs.

Objective Four: Compare and Assess the Feasibility of Potential Strategies

By comparing the newly discovered strategies of similar organizations to the opportunities within the REC Food Justice Program, we revealed viable business strategies. Once we created a list of potential strategies, it was vital to assess the practicality of each in order to make appropriate recommendations to the REC. To complete this, we examined the proposed

strategy based upon three key criteria – consistency with the REC Food Justice Program’s mission, the REC’s ability to obtain the required resources and the overall sustainability benefits that the strategy will provide. The following paragraphs aim to clarify the essential information (data) for each criterion and the appropriate methods used to obtain this information.

We ensured that the proposed strategy is consistent with the REC Food Justice Program’s mission, which is essential in determining the future implementation of strategy. To do this, we, first, determined the purpose of the strategy. We examined both the external and internal effects that the implementation of the strategy will bring to the REC and the Worcester community. We uncovered the external effects by determining who the strategy will benefit and how. After examining the external effects, the project team examined the internal effects. To do this, it was necessary to establish how the strategy will benefit the REC. Included, is the rationale for implementing the strategy. We obtained the answer to these questions through the use of two qualitative research methods. The first, and most effective, was a semi-standardized interview with the REC staff. We interviewed REC Food Justice Program staff members including Casey Burns (REC Food Justice Program Coordinator), Amber Huffstickler (Urban Farms AmeriCorps VISTA), and Julius Jones (Community Gardens Coordinator and Farm Manager), which allowed the project team to gather the necessary information from the most reliable source. The second method, group brainstorming, complimented the interview and elaborates on alternative answers to the above questions. Recommending only strategies that are consistent with the mission of the REC were vital to accomplishing our project goal.

After investigating the effects of the strategy, it was important to assess the operational and financial resources required for implementation. To do so, we identified the necessary operational resources. This included the staffing, equipment, facilities and transportation needed to operate the strategy. We used the total cost associated with each aspect of the operations to determine the financial resources. Exploring revenue-generating strategies of similar organizations (objective one) aided in the estimation of these resources. This information was pertinent when assessing the feasibility of a business strategy.

To evaluate each strategy regarding the projected sustainability benefits, we qualitatively determined how each strategy will impact the REC. We considered the resources required to implement and operate each strategy, and compared this against the potential resources that the implementation of each strategy will provide to the REC. This assessment was essential to ensure that our recommendations will offer direction for the REC to improve the sustainability of the organization.

We developed a table to assess each strategy based on this criterion. This table is shown below in figure 3.

| Strategy | Consistency with Mission | Ability to Obtain Required Resources | Sustainability Benefits | Total Score | Recommended? | | |
|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|--------|
| | | | | | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
| Strategy 1 | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 2 | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 3 | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 4 | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 5 | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 6 | | | | | | | |
| Strategy 7 | | | | | | | |

Figure 3: Table for Evaluating Strategies

The process used to evaluate each strategy within this table is as follows:

We evaluated each strategy based upon the above mentioned criteria. We used a scale from 1-3, 1 meaning does not meet criteria, 2 meaning partially or indirectly meets criteria and 3 meaning sufficiently meets criteria

By comparing opportunities for the REC Food Justice Program with successful strategies of similar organizations, the project team determined which strategies are viable to recommend for implementation. Further examination involving the feasibility of the strategy provided additional insightful advice for each strategy. This objective analyzed the information that has been collected through the previous objectives in order to clarify the recommendations that will be presented to the REC Food Justice Program. This objective provided the necessary information to organize the recommendations in an action-oriented and time-structured manner.

Objective Five: Make Recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program

Organizing the data that the project team has compiled into a report of short, intermediate and long term recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program was crucial to completing the project goal. By separating the viable strategies into a time-structured list, the Food Justice Program will be able to implement strategies at times when it feels that the organization is adequately equipped. Without a structured set of recommendations, the REC Food Justice Program would not have the appropriate tools necessary to implement the strategies in a way which would promote self-sustainable development.

This objective involved collecting and organizing the hybrid data from the previously completed objectives. This information included the various strategies which are found to be feasible for the REC Food Justice Program, as well as, the organization's current opportunities. We used this information to assemble the recommendations, in addition to organizing them into a time-structured, action-oriented list. The method of data collection utilized for this objective was the use of existing resources. The data used to create the final list of recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program was taken from the data already collected during the preceding objectives. We used this data to develop the basis of the recommendations, as well as, the format for the organization of the report. This organization of data was vital to the formation of the time-structured recommendations. By organizing the data, the project team successfully categorized the strategies into short, intermediate and long-term goals, which the program can then use to move towards a direction of self-sustainability. Although the data used for completing the recommendations was already determined through the previous objectives, the use of existing resources and organization as methods of data collection and analysis was crucial to the completion of the project goal.

Summary

Identifying the project team's methodology was an important step towards completing the project goal. The preceding sections have detailed the data required to complete our project goal, as well as the best methods of collection and analysis of that data. We compared successful strategies of similar organizations and opportunities for the REC Food Justice Program to determine possible strategies. We then evaluated and assessed the feasibility of these strategies to determine which are the most viable. With this information, the project team developed a

detailed, action-oriented and time-structured list of recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program. These recommendations will provide direction for the future toward self-sustainability of the program within the larger organization.

Chapter 4: Findings

After completing the data collection and analysis included in the core objectives, we formed our key findings. In an effort to stay consistent with our goal of developing recommendations for offering direction toward sustainable development, we designed our findings as possible improvements to the specific programs of the REC. The team identified the following eight points as key project findings:

- Finding One: Plant Sale Revenues can be Improved
- Finding Two: Expanding the UGROW Program Can Increase Revenue
- Finding Three: Improving Marketing and Advertising Methods Can Increase Revenue
- Finding Four: Improving the YouthGROW Program Can Improve Organizational Sustainability
- Finding Five: Utilization of New Revenue-Generating Strategies Can Diversify Organizational Funding
- Finding Six: General Improvements Can Be Implemented to Increase Organizational Sustainability
- Finding Seven: Improving the YouthGROW Vendor Booth Can Increase Revenue
- Finding Eight: Additional Revenue Can Be Generated Through the Farmers' Markets

Each finding incorporates numerous strategies obtained through exploring revenue-generating strategies of similar organizations and observing the current programs and practices of the REC. These strategies intend to address the specific improvement outlined in each finding. The following section will address each finding and discuss the strategies in further detail which can be implemented by the REC Food Justice Program to move in a more self-sustainable direction.

Finding One: Plant Sale Revenues Can Be Improved

The REC progressed over the past few years to develop the annual plant sale into a profitable, community-oriented event; however, further improvements can be still be made. Currently, the sale generates approximately \$1,500-\$2,000 in revenue for the organization. In contrast, The Southside Community Land Trust (Providence, RI) successfully utilized strategies to develop the organization's annual plant sale into an important community event that attracts

over 2,000 guests and raises over \$50,000 annually; however, this event did not always achieve this degree of success. 9 years ago, only 100 guests attended and the event only raised approximately \$5,000 (Rich Pederson, personal communication, November 9, 2010)³. Through our exploration of the practices of organizations that are similar to the REC, we found that this progression was driven by the implementation of various market-oriented and organizational strategies. Our findings regarding the REC's annual plant sale unfold as follows.

The REC could improve the annual plant sale through the following methods:

❖ *Improving documentation for market research*

The REC must improve documentation for market research to gain insight regarding consumer desires. By utilizing this strategy, the REC will better accommodate the wants of their consumers, and therefore, generate more revenue. The REC has documented inventory before and after the annual plant sale for the past two years, but staff determined that the data is unreliable. This skewed data creates problems when conducting informal market research regarding what types (and quantities of) plants sold to make improvements for the future. Rich Pederson, farm steward of the Southside Community Land Trust, consistently and meticulously documents the inventory of plants before and after their annual plant sale to gain insightful information regarding their target consumer market. This process involves determining the total number of plants and the amount of each type of plant that will be sold at the event. This inventory can be documented for market research purposes (See Appendix F – Example of Plant Sale Inventory to Conduct Market Research). This information will illuminate marketable plant types and provide guidelines for the inventory for future sales. The REC must complete the following steps to implement this strategy successfully:

- 1) Create a detailed list of all plants (type and quantity) that are grown for the annual plant sale
- 2) Calculate the number of each plant that sold at the plant sale by using the following equation:

³ See Appendix E for further information regarding the practices of similar organizations.

$$\text{Number of plants grown} - \text{Number of plants remaining} = \text{Number of plants sold}$$

- 3) Utilize the results of these calculations to make the appropriate changes to the inventory for the following year.

❖ *Increasing inventory and diversity of plants*

Presently, the REC's plant sale attendees are offered a variety of 3,000 annual seedlings including a mixture of greens (e.g. lettuce or collard greens) and garden ready vegetable plants (e.g. tomatoes or peppers). The REC can, however, generate more revenue and increase customer interest by increasing the diversity and quantity of plants that are offered at the plant sale. This strategy requires careful planning and insightful market research (explained above). A schedule for plant seeding can then be developed to ensure that all plants are ready for the sale (See Appendix F – Example of Plant Sale Inventory to Conduct Market Research

Taking an inventory before and after the annual plant sale is extremely important when working to meet consumer wants and needs. This can be used to make the appropriate changes to the inventory for the following year. In the example of this inventory shown, below, appropriate changes may include:

- Decreasing the inventory or eliminating the offering of Sun Gold Heirloom Tomatoes
- Increasing the inventory of non-fruit/vegetable annual plant varieties by approximately 1,000 plants
- Increasing the inventory of hot pepper varieties by approximately 750 plants
- Decreasing the inventory or eliminating the offering of Sage

| Plant Type | Inventory | | Plants Sold |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------|-------------|
| | Before | After | |
| Lacinato Kale | 500 | 300 | 200 |
| Collard Greens | 1000 | 150 | 850 |
| Red Russian Kale | 750 | 0 | 750 |
| Rainbow Swiss Chard | 500 | 0 | 500 |
| Sweet 100 Cherry Tomatoes | 1000 | 250 | 750 |
| Sun Gold Heirloom Tomatoes | 1500 | 1250 | 250 |
| Salad Greens | 1000 | 100 | 900 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Raspberries | 2500 | 0 | 2500 |
| Hot peppers | 2000 | 250 | 1750 |
| Non-fruit/vegetable Annual Variety | 3000 | 200 | 2800 |
| Fennel | 750 | 100 | 650 |
| Chives | 500 | 500 | 0 |
| Dill | 250 | 0 | 250 |
| Lavender | 750 | 50 | 700 |
| Thyme | 500 | 0 | 500 |
| Sage | 500 | 450 | 50 |
| | | | |
| Total | 17000 | 3600 | 13400 |

Appendix G – Example of Crop Field Plan). These strategies for preparing for the annual plant sale will greatly improve the organization of the event, in addition to providing insightful information regarding consumer wants for future planning. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Utilize previously conducted market research to determine the appropriate quantities for each type of plant.
- 2) Increase plant diversity by offering plants other than annuals (e.g. perennials).
- 3) Conduct market research (See Conducting Market Research) to evaluate the sales to make appropriate changes for the following year.

❖ *Planning and scheduling plant seeding*

Currently, the farm manager and farm VISTA organize and schedule the plant seeding in preparation for the annual plant sale. By instating an annual schedule for plant seeding, problems, such as staff management can be eliminated. The current planting scheduling process involves working backwards. First, staff must establish the date that the plants must be ready. Then, the time for the seedling to develop is uncovered through research efforts. Lastly, the time that is required for the seedling to develop is subtracted from the date that the plants must be ready to determine the planting date. This process is relatively inefficient, and improvements could eliminate many problems that arise throughout this process. The Southside Community Land Trust incorporates careful planning with market research to seed the correct types and amounts of plants based on consumer desires. By instating this process, the REC will greatly

increase the organization of the event while increasing revenue, as well. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Create a detailed list of all plants that need to be grown for the event by January 1st of each year. This list should include:
 - Type of plant
 - Quantity of plant to be seeded
 - Time required for plant to grow
- 2) Calculate when each type of plant should be seeded by using the following equation⁴:

$$\begin{aligned} & (\textit{Days remaining until plant sale} - \textit{Days required to grow plant}) - 7 \textit{ days} \\ & = \textit{Days until plants are seeded} \end{aligned}$$

- 3) Create a calendar that shows all seeding dates for each type of plant. Document this process to provide a baseline to use in future years.
- 4) Plant full quantity of each plant on the calculated date.
- 5) After revising the types and quantities to be offered the following year (determined through market research, explained below), utilize the documentation from prior plant sales as a template to develop a new plant seeding schedule for the present year.

❖ *Developing an organized layout that is portrayed to customers through a handout*

By developing an organized layout that is portrayed to customers through a handout, the REC will greatly increase customer satisfaction. Because there is currently no defined layout for the event, consumers may have trouble navigating to desired items. Organization is imperative to the success of an event, and we identified the REC's need to improve on this. One technique that the Southside Community Land Trust uses to improve the organization of their annual plant sale is to create a handout that is given to consumers that shows the layout of the event. This handout includes which products are being sold in which areas, where cashiers and volunteers are stationed, and the flow of foot traffic throughout the area. This handout is complimented by

⁴ By subtracting an additional 7 days, this equation ensures that all plants will be ready for the date of the annual plant sale. In fact, the equation plans for all plants to be ready one week in advance.

numerous friendly, helpful volunteers that have been designated to a specific area and responsibility.

When an event attracts large amounts of people, it is essential for the event to be meticulously organized, labeled, and well-staffed to achieve flawless event operation. Presently, the REC's annual plant does not attract a large amount of guests; however, in order for the event to grow, customer satisfaction is essential. This strategy will promote an organized, relaxed experience for consumers. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Develop an organized layout for the annual plant sale that allows for smooth foot traffic and is centered around entertainment (if any is provided).
- 2) Create handout of this layout. Also, attach informational handouts regarding plant seeding (See Appendix H – Plant Seeding Insight)
- 3) Portray this layout in a handout or flyer that shows noticeable landmarks, cashier tables, location of the entertainment (if any is provided), and which plants are being sold at each table (See Appendix I – Example of Plant Sale Layout Handout).
- 4) Staff a volunteer or employee to kindly give this handout or flyer to each attendee as they arrive at the plant sale. This staff member should also have the ability to answer any questions regarding the organization and layout of the plant sale.
- 5) Staff volunteers to maintain organization of foot traffic, direct guests to desired locations, and help transport purchased items to the consumer's form of transportation.

❖ *Increasing community awareness*

Utilizing various methods to increase community awareness of the REC's annual plant sale will directly result in increased revenue generation. To increase community awareness of the annual plant sale prior to the event, the REC currently utilizes multiple advertising methods; however, REC staff members question the effectiveness of these methods. Current membership holders receive a pre-order form for the plant sale, which has been extremely effective and generates approximately 25% of the revenue for the event. Additionally, the REC hangs flyers on Main Street and on the West side of Worcester.

By utilizing various methods used by the Southside Community Land Trust to reach, interest, and attract more consumers, the REC has the potential to generate more revenue. These methods include increasing advertising and incorporating music and activities at the event. To increase advertising, the REC must, first, conduct market research to identify the target economic demographic of the annual plant sale. Once this has been completed, the REC must develop appropriate advertising and marketing strategies to reach this target market. The target market may be reached through the utilization of a community outreach program (e.g. Main South Community Development Corporation or Great Brook Valley Health Center). These programs or organizations typically provide goods or services to the REC's target market, and therefore have the ability to distribute materials or information regarding events organized by other organizations to this market. This is an important step in improving the annual plant sale, because increasing community awareness is essential to increasing attendance for event. To fully utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Identify the target consumers of the annual plant sale.
- 2) Conduct market research to identify the wants and needs of the target consumers of the annual plant sale (See Conducting Market Research).
- 3) Conduct market research to identify the most appropriate methods to advertise and market to the target consumers of the annual plant sale (See Conducting Market Research).
- 4) Contact local community outreach programs to express interest in working together to increase community awareness of the REC. This can be done through the form of a phone call, e-mail, or letter.
- 5) Establish a list that details what each community outreach organization can do to increase community awareness.
- 6) Identify any gaps that need to be filled to reach the entire target consumer group.
- 7) Inquire about the interest of these community outreach organizations in helping fill this gap to increase awareness throughout the entire target consumer group.
- 8) Assign additional community outreach efforts to staff members that include completion deadlines.

Additionally, the Southside Community Land Trust also found it successful to incorporate entertainment (e.g. musical performances) or activities (e.g. art or games) into the event to create a festival-like atmosphere for consumers. This strategy can increase attendance and make the event more enjoyable for attendees. This strategy is important for retaining customers while working to establish a solid group of annual attendees. The REC can utilize this strategy by completing the following steps:

- 1) Reach out to other organizations regarding knowledge of any local musicians or performers that may be willing to volunteer time to perform at the annual plant sale. Be sure to acquire contact information for any potential performers.
- 2) Explore the interest of local musicians or performers in performing at the annual plant sale. This can be achieved by posting classified advertisements and utilizing networking resources. Be sure to obtain contact information for any potential performers.
- 3) Contact all potential performers using the obtained contact information regarding their interest in performing at the annual plant sale. If no volunteers are identified, the REC will need to develop a reasonable monetary offer to hire a performer or musician.

These strategies will work in conjunction to improve the REC's annual plant sale. We have organized these strategies in a time-structured manner, which is highlighted in figure 3 (below).

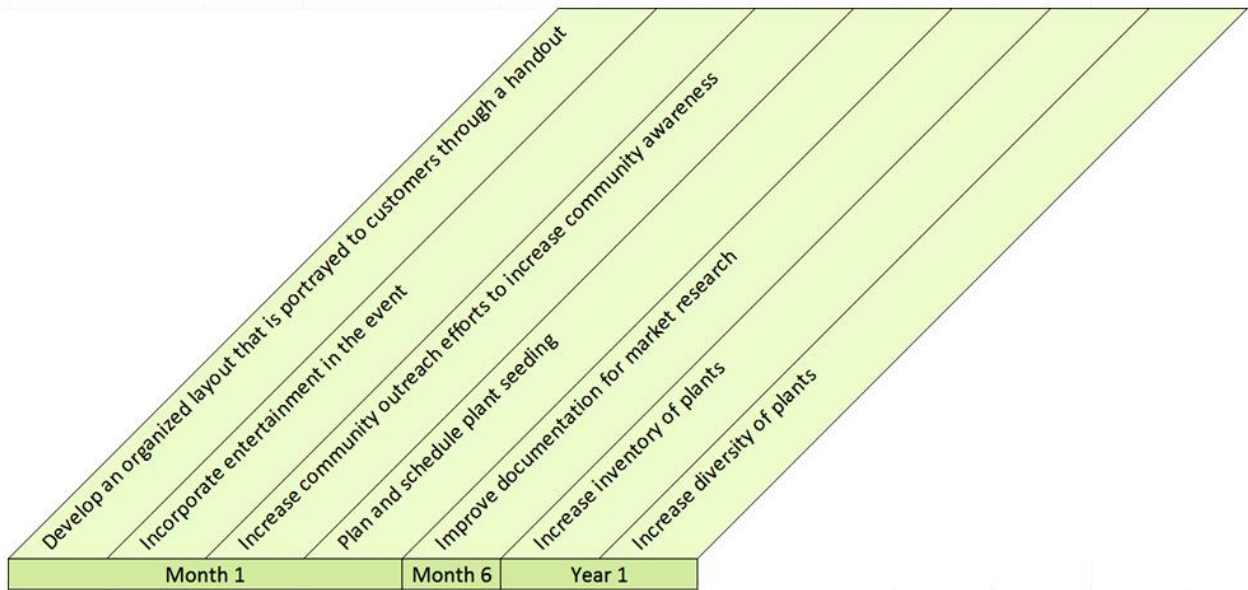


Figure 4: Timeline for Improving the Annual Plant Sale

Finding Two: Expanding the UGROW Program Can Increase Revenue

The UGROW program is the REC’s model for urban farming and could be improved through the following methods:

❖ *Offering a sales outlet for UGROW farms at the REC’s farmers market*

The REC provides the resources to start-up and sustain a community garden but has no actual involvement in the garden itself. Each garden is run independently of each other and by a garden manager who is in charge of the day to day operations. The UGROW program offers no opportunity for participants to sell their produce at the REC’s farmers market. Both The Food Project (Boston, MA) and Cultivating Community (Portland, ME) have offered community gardeners the opportunity to sell their produce alongside each organization at their farmer’s markets. Offering an outlet for UGROW farmers to sell the “fruits of their labor” at the REC’s farmer’s market will provide benefits to both the program participants and the REC. New entrepreneurial opportunities will arise for program participants who, in this economy, may need all the additional income they can get. The REC will gain new vendors at the farmer’s market and the marketing advantages of increased community involvement. For these reason we recommend the REC extend the opportunities of their farmer’s market to participants in the

UGROW program at the beginning of the 2011 farmers' market season. To do so, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Contact each garden manager to discuss the opportunities and gage their interest
- 2) Offer assistance in transporting the produce to market
- 3) Setup a designated booth next to the YouthGROW's booth at the farmer's market

❖ *Installing raised bed gardens for community members*

The REC currently offers many resources to the organizations participating in UGROW; however, they are not utilizing the full capabilities of the program. One way the REC can expand the program is by offering the resources necessary to operate an urban farm to individuals in the community, not just organizations. The Food Project (Boston, MA) generates funds while informing the community about urban gardens by installing raised bed gardens at community members' homes. They provide this service by asking consumers to pay for as much as they can. This type of payment option allows those who are less financially fortunate to get involved with and understand the benefits of urban farming. We recommend that the REC utilize this strategy within the first year, because the organization currently provides the required resources to setup and operate a garden. However, the REC does not do so for individual community members. To provide this service to individuals of the community the REC should do the following:

- 1) Inform the community about this opportunity by using the strategies found in the Marketing and Advertising section
- 2) Have the youth build the frame for the garden
- 3) Deliver the necessary materials (frame, compost, etc.) to the individuals home

❖ *Organizing and holding events and activities at community gardens*

The REC had once held four workshops a year at participating UGROW farms but now holds the workshops at the spring garden festival. Organizing and holding events and activities at the REC community gardens will increase community awareness regarding the organization and promote community organization. This form of public advertisement is one of the most effective

ways to draw attention to the REC's programs. This strategy aims to actively involve and educate community members on the importance and benefits of urban agriculture. These events could include the following:

- ❖ Educational workshops
- ❖ Entertainment
- ❖ Sales of fresh produce

These events must include an incentive for community members to attend. This could include, but is not limited to, lower priced goods, entertainment, or a free gift. To host these events, the REC might want to designate an event coordinator to organize these events. This position could potentially become a full-time employment opportunity. However, because the REC currently doesn't possess the resources to sustain that option, we recommend the REC explores employing a full-time event coordinator in year 3. The strategy of organizing events and activities at the REC community gardens, however, should be implemented within the first 6 months of the 3-year plan.

- 1) Send a survey to UGROW participants that lists possible events and activities and have them select the ones they are most interested in
- 2) Choose the event with the most interest
- 3) Designate one member of the REC staff to run the event
- 4) Select an appropriate location (one of the UGROW gardens), date and time for the event.
- 5) Utilize the strategies of the Marketing and Advertising section to inform the community about the event
- 6) Obtain the resources required to run the event

Each strategy above may not directly increase the revenue generated by the UGROW program. However, collectively these strategies can increase the participation in the program and thus attract more potential donors, customers, and partners. The timeline for the improvements to the UGROW program are shown in figure 4 (below).

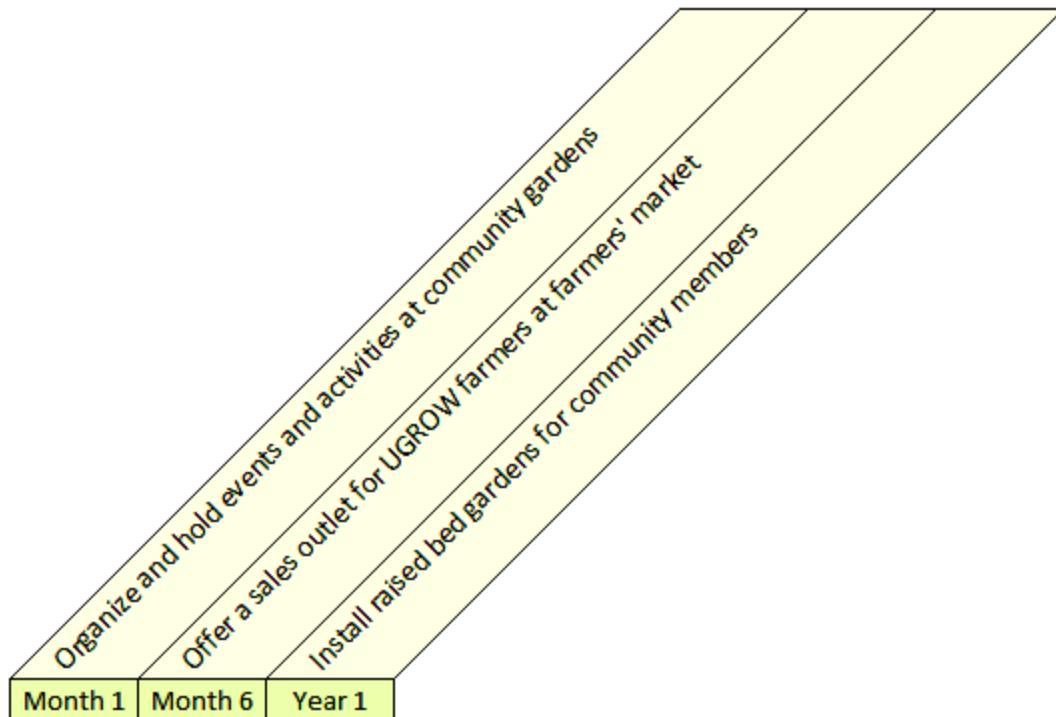


Figure 5: Timeline for Improving the UGROW Program

Finding Three: Improving Marketing and Advertising Methods Can Increase Revenue

The REC currently utilizes various advertising methods to reach the organization’s target consumer base; however, some improvements and the utilization of new advertising strategies could increase the overall effectiveness in reaching consumers. Through the implementation of various advertising strategies, the REC will generate additional revenue through all events and programs by increasing community interest and awareness. The following paragraphs outline and describe our recommendations for the REC to improve their marketing and advertising methods.

The REC could utilize the following strategies to improve the effectiveness of the organization’s advertising and marketing:

- ❖ *Creating connections with consumers*

The REC currently offers programs and services to the Worcester community; however, the relationship among REC staff members and the organization’s consumers is lacking. By

establishing and maintaining relationships with their consumers, the REC can generate additional revenue by retaining a solid foundation of consistent customers. Rich Pederson noted that this strategy was the primary driving factor for the success of the Southside Community Land Trust's Rare and Unusual Plant Sale.

This strategy is very open-ended; however, certain practices can contribute to the success of this strategy. First, the REC must staff the vendor booths at the farmers' markets with friendly, helpful, knowledgeable staff members. By providing insightful advice or taking a personal interest in the needs and wants of the customers, connections are made with consumers at a personal level. This connection will create sustaining relationships, which will increase sales at the vendor booths, while also promoting community togetherness. Next, the REC staff members working with the YouthGROW program must build strong relationships with the youth participants and the family members and friends of these participants⁵. This strategy is vital to accomplishing the mission of the REC and creating revenue streams for the organization, and therefore, should be implemented immediately. To utilize this strategy effectively, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Staff all events with helpful, friendly and knowledgeable staff members or volunteers.
- 2) Instruct staff and volunteers to take a personal interest in helping each customer individually.
- 3) Instruct staff members to learn the name of each consumer.
- 4) Build relationships with family and friends of YouthGROW participants (see Finding Four: Improving the YouthGROW Program Can Improve Organizational Sustainability).

❖ *Advertising through community outreach programs*

The REC currently utilizes community outreach programs; however, utilizing these resources more effectively, in addition to reaching out to other organizations will increase community awareness. The Food Project (Boston, MA) has found success when utilizing this strategy, because it provides cost-free advertising through programs that share a similar mission.

⁵ Strategies involving bring family and friends of YouthGROW participants together are explained in further detail in Finding Four: Improving the YouthGROW Program Can Increase Organizational Sustainability.

The REC must begin utilizing community outreach programs to reach more members of the Worcester community. The REC should contact the following organizations immediately to begin advertising the services and goods they provide:

- ❖ Main South Community Development Corporation (Contact: Casey Starr)
- ❖ Great Brook Valley Health Center
- ❖ Queen Street Family Health Center
- ❖ Local churches

Melissa “Casey” Starr (Main South Community Development Center, Worcester, MA) expressed extensive interest in working with the REC to connect with these local organizations to promote programs and events. Casey will be a great resource to expand the REC’s community outreach efforts. Casey suggested working with the WCUW radio station as another option to improve advertising and community outreach efforts. This strategy could provide immediate, inexpensive (or cost-free) advertising to a portion of REC’s target community. Additionally, the REC should explore the option of hiring a disc jockey (DJ) from the WCUW to play music at the Main South Farmers’ Market. These outreach efforts will be extremely beneficial to the organization. Therefore, because the REC currently has the resources necessary to begin this strategy, the REC should utilize this strategy immediately. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Contact local community outreach programs (listed above) to express interest in working together to increase community awareness of the REC. This can be done through the form of a phone call, e-mail, or letter.
- 2) Offer each community outreach organization a type of non-monetary compensation in exchange for their efforts. The options for this offer are immense, but some examples include:
 - i. Providing the organization with a reasonable, desired amount of produce.
 - ii. Involving the organization in urban agriculture by installing a raised bed garden for their use. Providing supplies to maintain this garden may be an applicable addition to this offer.
 - iii. Providing the organization with a cost-free opportunity to table at the farmers’ markets or other events.

- 3) Establish a list that details what each community outreach organization can do to increase community awareness.
- 4) Identify any gaps that need to be filled to reach the entire target consumer group.
- 5) Inquire about the interest of these community outreach organizations in helping fill this gap to increase awareness throughout the entire target consumer group.
- 6) Assign additional community outreach efforts to staff members that include completion deadlines.

❖ *Sending a monthly newsletter to members and supporters*

The REC currently sends a monthly newsletter to registered members, but these efforts must be increased in quantity and quality to build a network of community supporters. To keep supporters and REC membership holders informed and involved with the work of the REC, we recommend the REC, effective immediately, begin to construct this network and mail a monthly newsletter to all members and supporters. This strategy could result in an increase in volunteers and private monetary donations, which is essential for the sustainability of the organization. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Create a table at farmers' markets and other events that is specifically designated for people who are interested in getting involved with the organization. The staff member at this table should be able to discuss upcoming REC events and volunteer opportunities.
- 2) Utilize other previously discussed community outreach efforts to interest potential volunteers.
- 3) Create a "Get Involved" section on the REC website, which will allow volunteers to sign up for volunteer opportunities online.
- 4) Create a database of volunteers and supporters collected from the steps 1-3. This database should include the following information for each volunteer:
 - i. Name (last, first)
 - ii. Address
 - iii. Phone contact information
 - iv. Email contact information

- 5) Develop a monthly newsletter that will be sent via mail to all volunteers and supporters in this database that highlights:
 - i. Recent events and news
 - ii. Upcoming events
 - iii. Upcoming volunteer opportunities
 - iv. A form to submit a private donation
 - v. A paragraph thanking all current donors and supporters
- 6) Send a reminder e-mail to all volunteers and supporters in this database that highlights upcoming volunteer opportunities for events. This e-mail should be sent out two weeks prior to the event.

❖ *Exploring the possibility of free advertising in local newspapers*

The REC intermittently utilizes print advertising in Worcester magazine, articles written in the City Times, and press releases published by the Worcester Telegram and Gazette. The Southside Community Land Trust concludes that this strategy was an effective method to promote and advertise their annual plant sale. Contacting local newspapers to explore inexpensive or cost-free advertising is a viable option for the REC. The REC currently utilizes this strategy, but not with the frequency or consistency that is necessary. Many local businesses are willing to provide this service to non-profit organizations, because community members should have the opportunity to utilize these services. Therefore, the REC should begin contacting local newspaper businesses within year 1 of the 3-year plan to initiate this advertising option. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Contact 3 local newspapers to inquire about their interest in offering cost-free advertising for the REC. This can be done in the form of a phone call, e-mail, or mailed letter. During this contact, REC staff should thoroughly and convincingly explain why this advertising is important to Worcester community members.
- 2) Create a document that lists the following information:
 - i. Newspaper name
 - ii. Frequency of publications offered

- iii. Cost (if any)

- 3) Review this strategy following 3 months of utilization. Evaluate the effectiveness of the publications in reaching and interesting the target consumer group of the REC.

❖ *Improving protocol for media research*

With all the advertising methods used by the REC, why hasn't the organization seen a direct increase in the utilization of REC programs and services by consumers? We have identified the need for the REC to improve protocol for conducting media research. This process involves studying various advertising strategies to evaluate which will be most effective. For advertising and marketing strategies to be successful, the REC must improve the protocol for media research. This includes understanding how the REC's target demographic receives reliable information, developing a complete list of advertising options, and determining which methods are most appropriate for use by the organization. The REC then has the ability to make informed decisions regarding the advertising methods which are utilized. Because this strategy is an essential piece of the organization's overall advertising success, this strategy must be implemented within year 1. To effectively utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Contact community outreach programs and organizations to better understand the REC's target demographic, which includes the following information:
 - i. How does this group receive reliable information?
 - ii. What would interest this group (e.g. double food stamp value)?
 - iii. Who are some of the leaders in the community that can spread this information to other community members?
- 2) Develop a complete list of advertising options, which includes the following information:
 - i. Advertising method
 - ii. Relative effectiveness
 - iii. Cost (if any)
- 3) Using the information collected in step 1, determine which advertising strategies are the most effective in reaching the REC's target consumer groups.

- 4) Contact community leaders (collected in step 1) to inquire about their willingness to help spread information regarding the REC to fellow community members through various methods, including word-of-mouth, social networking tools, and e-mail. It may be effective to offer these candidates a non-monetary compensation for their efforts.

❖ *Increasing utilization of social networking tools*

The REC currently utilizes Facebook, a social networking website, to promote their events. Based on findings from our interview with Casey Starr (Appendix J – Semi-Standardized Interview Guide for Obtaining Information on Target Market), director of community outreach at the Main South Community Development Corporation, we determined that the REC must immediately increase the use of social networking tools to improve community outreach. This effort involves utilizing social networking platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. Because many community members use these networks, this strategy will be effective in providing information regarding REC programs and events to the community. Because this strategy only requires staff time to develop and update these materials, this strategy should be implemented within year 1. This strategy can be utilized by completing the following steps:

- 1) Creating a new Facebook page or improving the current page. This page should be used to increase community awareness, while also providing information to supporters and volunteers.
- 2) Request Facebook friendships with local businesses, other non-profit organizations, volunteers and supporters, community members, and community leaders.
- 3) Post information regarding upcoming events and volunteer opportunities multiple times within the week prior to the event.
- 4) Explore the utilization, and potential effectiveness, of Twitter. Evaluate the use of this resource following discussion with community leaders, community members, and community outreach programs or organizations.

❖ *Increasing frequency and consistency of publications*

Increasing the frequency and consistency of publications will directly benefit the sustainability of the organization by increasing their consumer base. The REC currently releases publications through various sources; however, this effort must continue to increase following the acquisition of partnerships with local businesses and organizations. The partnerships that the REC will make with other organizations in year 1 will create additional avenues to continue the expansion of the organization's community outreach efforts. Following this acquisition, the REC should utilize these partnerships to increase the frequency and consistency of publications that are provided to the community. This effort will increase community awareness and improve how community members reflect on the reliability of the services and goods that the REC provides. This strategy should be implemented within year 2, following the acquisition of partnerships with local organizations that can aid in the distribution of this information. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Establish partnerships with local restaurants and businesses.
- 2) Conduct market research to determine how the target consumer base obtains reliable information (See Conducting Market Research).
- 3) Increase the frequency and consistency of publications through the use of community outreach organizations and local newspapers, businesses, and radio stations.

❖ *Acquiring graphic design support*

The REC utilizes students of Clark University (Worcester, MA) to create graphic design images for the organization's flyers and publications. We recommend that the REC continue to build this relationship with Clark University to work to establishing consistent graphic design support. If this partnership is not viable, the REC should explore employing a local artist to provide part-time support in developing these materials. This strategy could also involve the improvement of the current REC website. The resources, noted above, could provide the knowledge and support that the REC needs to revamp the organization's website into a user-friendly, aesthetically-pleasing website. The acquisition of these resources is necessary for the implementation of this strategy; however, the REC must first improve organization infrastructure

before utilizing this strategy. Therefore, it is recommended that the REC explore the utilization of this strategy in year 2.

- 1) Contact the coordinator of the current Clark University partnership with the REC to express interest in establishing a permanent group of graphic design supporters from the university.
- 2) If this partnership is not applicable, utilize the Clark University students as graphic design support for posters, flyers, handouts and signage.
- 3) Once the support of Clark University students has ended, immediately explore employing a local artist for part-time support in creating these graphic materials.

❖ *Improving quality and quantity of flyers, posters and handouts*

The REC must take the necessary steps to improve the quality and quantity of flyers and posters that are used to advertise their programs and services. This method will greatly increase community awareness regarding the weekly events and services that the organization is providing. After acquiring graphic design support through local universities or artists, the REC will have the resources necessary to utilize this strategy. It is important to note that the implementation of this strategy will require extensive funding or staff time. Therefore, this strategy should be implemented in year 2 of the 3-year plan. This strategy can be utilized by completing the following steps:

- 1) Continue to encourage the improvement of the developed materials by the students of Clark University.
- 2) Increase the quantity of handouts, flyers and posters that are distributed to community members by 15% every 6 months.
- 3) After 1 year of utilizing this strategy, evaluate the effectiveness of the increased distribution of advertising materials including handouts, flyers and posters.

❖ *Creating a brand name product*

Creating a brand name for the products or services that a local business provides can be a lucrative method to increasing public awareness. The REC has already begun this effort; however, we recommend that the REC utilize other strategies before preparing to embark on a venture of this caliber. Once the REC has completed strategies that are recommended for earlier years, the organization will have the community involvement, resources, and infrastructure to implement this strategy. Therefore, we recommend that the REC explore this venture throughout year 2 to evaluate its implementation in year 3.

- 1) Determine the type of product or services that the REC plans to sell or provide, respectively.
- 2) Based on the result of step 1, create a brand name (Reference [Creating an Effective Brand Name](#) for detailed instructions to complete this process).

It is always important for any business, for-profit or non-profit, to continue to increase the utilization of various marketing strategies. These efforts improve the awareness of the public regarding the goods or services that the business provides. Even non-profits, when working toward organizational sustainability, must utilize various marketing strategies to ensure that the community is properly informed of the organization's mission, programs, services, and events. Therefore, we recommend that the REC continue to evaluate the advertising and marketing efforts which are utilized to continue to progress as an organization. The complete timeline for the REC to improve marketing and advertising is shown in figure 5 (below).

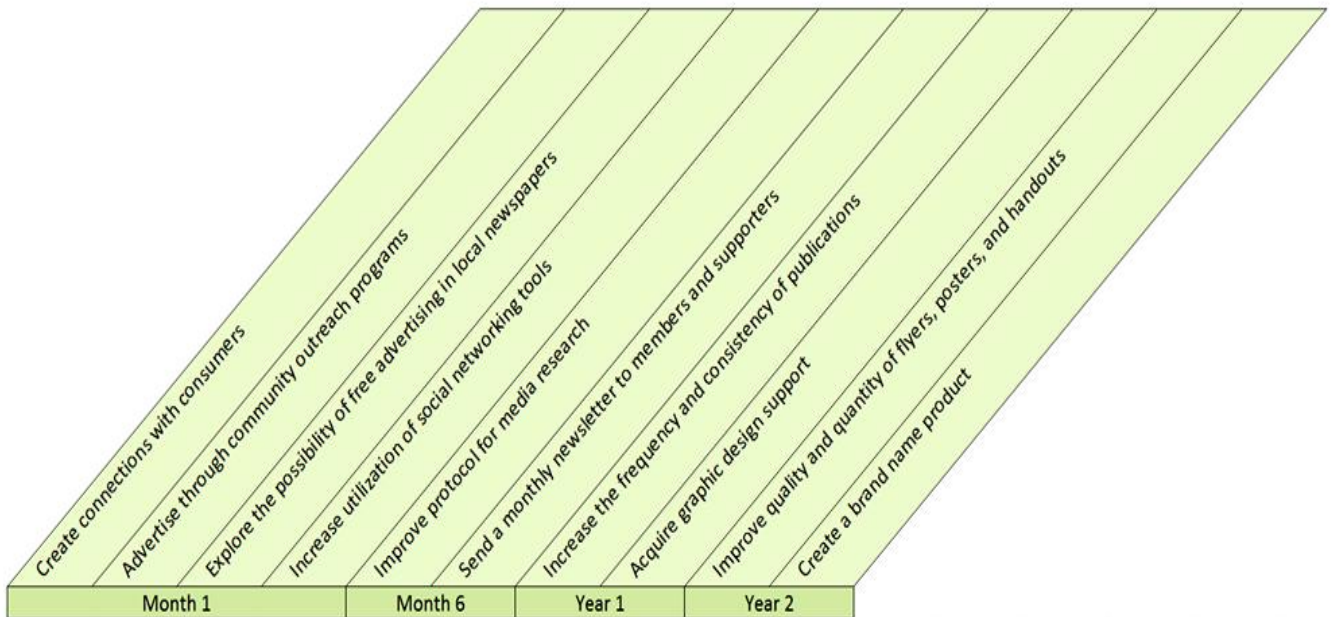


Figure 6: Timeline for Improving Marketing and Advertising

Finding Four: Improving the YouthGROW Program Can Increase Organizational Sustainability

The REC's YouthGROW program operates two urban farms within the city of Worcester in order to educate the youth it employs. Youth apply for the summer program where they work and learn on the farm for a modest pay. If they so choose they can continue to work for the REC in throughout the year. The YouthGROW program is the main staple of the Food Justice program within the REC and it is done very well, however, a few changes would make it that much better. Those Methods are listed below:

❖ *Employing a farm steward*

The Southside Community Land Trust employs a farm steward as a permanent staff member; we found this to be a good practice and one that the REC should adopt. Currently the two YouthGROW farms are managed by a taskforce including the farm manager, an AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America), and two assistant farm managers. Because maintaining the farm isn't their only role in the REC it makes it hard to just focus on one thing.

Because of this they only have time for 8-10 hours a week on the farm. Also, because there are four people invested in the farm, decision making is hard to do because consultation has to happen before any changes can be implemented. Making farm steward a permanent position will alleviate these problems and allow for several other benefits within the YouthGROW program. Having a permanent farm steward would mean hiring a full-time dedicated and knowledgeable farmer to maintain the two YouthGROW farms and make them as productive as possible. By making this position permanent it means that there is no drop in productivity because positions are constantly being vacated and refilled. This means the farm steward can develop projects and see them through instead of dropping them off onto the next AmeriCorps volunteer. With this productive and better managed change in staffing comes with a price and that is the farm manager's salary. Because the REC doesn't currently have the funding for this position we suggest this recommendation to be carried out in the third year of our plan. The following steps are necessary in order to implement the permanent farm steward position:

- 1) Acquire necessary funds for the position's salary.
- 2) Develop position's niche within the organization so once someone is hired he/she can conduct their job most effectively.
- 3) Go through the hiring process for the best candidate.

❖ *Acquiring additional farm land*

The most obvious way for the REC to generate more money is to sell more produce. To sell more produce a larger supply is needed, which is why we suggest an acquisition of more farm land or at the very least increase the current farms' yields. A good place to start would be increasing the two farm's yields because it greatly benefits their production while being at low cost. Rich Pederson the farm steward at SSLT was adamant on this advice. Next would be looking to acquire more land either in the urban areas of Worcester or the surrounding suburban/rural areas. The two plots the REC currently farms on were donated (they are allowed to use the space but don't actually own the plots) by two different groups (a local business man after an earth day project cleaned up the spot and the Christ Baptist church). They also have been offered to use space in the rural areas surrounding Worcester by Lutheran Social services, but

they didn't take up on the offer because they don't have the transportation or resources needed to operate that space. Depending on whether they acquire the land through purchase or if they are lent it this could be a very expensive or inexpensive endeavor. Either way the REC does not have the staffing resources and infrastructure for more land in its current state, but if they follow our plan they should be able to begin utilizing additional land in year two. To implement this strategy these tasks must be completed:

- 1) First research has to be done to determine maximum crop yield for the two YouthGROW plots. See appendix for crop yield formula.
- 2) These crop plans then need to be implemented.
- 3) Next an assessment needs to be done to see if acquiring additional farm land is feasible. If not then the REC needs to build to the point where it is feasible.
- 4) Once all the necessary resources (e.g. transportation, staffing, tools, etc.) are gotten for the new farmland outreach to local organizations needs to happen.
- 5) This outreach will be to determine if the REC can get land for free from other organizations. If not then contacting local government to see if acquiring land from them is possible.
- 6) If land cannot be gotten for free than funds to purchase property would be needed, thus a campaign for them would be started
- 7) Once funds are acquired a thorough search for new space would need to be conducted.

❖ *Developing an event bringing family and friends of youth together*

The REC does an excellent job with the youth education program, however, the organization's target consumers aren't teens but are adults within the community. To reach these consumers, the REC must utilize the youth participants by developing events that bring family and friends of the youth together. The REC does this a little bit with their Slow Food Gala, however, it does not engage the youth as much as is necessary (attendees can sponsor youth to come to talk about their experiences in the YouthGROW program). The REC also had a Parent Potluck dinner where only two families attended; this obviously wasn't very successful but it is a step in the right direction. Other than these examples, parents of YouthGROW members are not

very involved in the program, and this needs to be changed. Perhaps by allowing and encouraging the youth to take their work home with them (i.e. help them build gardens in their backyard or take produce home) the REC can better engage family members and neighbors in the Food Justice program. Currently the REC has the resources and capabilities to implement this strategy within year one. This leads to another recommendation: increasing community awareness.

❖ *Increasing community awareness*

Some of this awareness will result from other recommendations (i.e. advertising, events, etc.), however, it still should be a prominent idea for the REC. Community awareness is vital to the success of the REC, and should be continuously improved for the organization to grow. The steps needed to reach develop the event to reach parents and the steps needed to increase community awareness are listed here:

- 1) The Food Justice staff needs to brainstorm for ideas to increase parental involvement in YouthGROW and the REC in general. Ideas could include: Have YouthGROW curriculum include having participants starting gardens at home, allowing YouthGROWers take produce they grow home, have a YouthGROW family and friends day at the farm or farmers' market.
- 2) Also brainstorm for ideas and event planning for community awareness needs to happen. Ideas and events could include: Attending and presenting at community watch meetings (an idea suggested by Casey Starr of the CDC), more outreach to local organizations, increased advertising, better communicating with community.
- 3) Seek funding for these ideas so they can be implemented.

As stated the before the YouthGROW program within the REC serves a valuable purpose and is a program kept in high regard, however, a few changes we suggest will help with logistics and organizational problems within the program.

❖ *Documenting curriculum*

The first change needed is the youth coordinator should document the curriculum more thoroughly. The REC's education guide has been semi-documented but by several people and it

is in various states. A master copy of the YouthGROW curriculum will provide consistency between the year to year education of the youth. This will also allow for better, speedier training of new educators. This is a very easy change and only requires staff time to draw up a manual to be used. This can happen within the first year, however, the curriculum should go through periodic updates so that it is up to date.

❖ *Providing year-round stipends to youth*

Next, providing a stipend for the youth is a very important recommendation that is very consistent with the mission of the REC. Unfortunately, it is a costly change and would require time to acquire appropriate funding, so it is recommended to be implemented in the second year so that adequate funding can be got.

❖ *Acquiring and utilizing an additional campus*

Thirdly, acquiring an additional campus is also recommended. This would allow for more youth to be admitted into the program as well as provide more awareness of the program and ensure that the youth become really invested in the REC. The REC does not have the resources necessary to add an additional campus either it be another farm or permanent kitchen for the hot sauce, thus we've suggested it for the third year.

❖ *Providing reliable access to transportation*

Lastly, the REC should provide reliable and accessible transportation for the youth whether it be through purchasing a van to transport them in or providing free bus tickets and information. The REC currently transports the youth by their own personal vehicles and while this works it is neither efficient nor the most effective way to transport them. They also transport produce this way and when big trips happen they have to rent a school bus which is costly. By getting their own vehicle the REC could transport youth as well as move produce to the markets or tools to the farms. This would have to happen in year two especially if they want to buy or

acquire a van for transport because they currently do not have the funds or the in-kind donation for it. The tasks needed to complete the methods five through 8 are listed below:

- 1) Document YouthGROW curriculum by collaborating with educators, combining previous documentation, and using outside manuals like The Food Project's online manual.
- 2) Apply for grants, seek donations, and allocate funds for a stipend for the youth.
- 3) Seek in-kind donation for bus passes to give to YouthGROWers
- 4) Seek in-kind donation for a passenger van to transport youth and produce to the market.
- 5) Determine if kitchen space for value added product or more farm space for YouthGROW is more needed as an additional YouthGROW campus.
- 6) Locate new campus space ideally through donation.
- 7) Make sure resources for new campus are met, such as staffing, transportation, funding, tools, and participants/volunteers.
- 8) Implement new campus into program.

The proposed improvements to the REC YouthGROW program will provide direction toward organizational sustainability by decreasing expenses, while increasing community involvement, and prospectively, profits. A timeline for the implementation of the strategies to improve the YouthGROW program is shown in figure 6 (below).

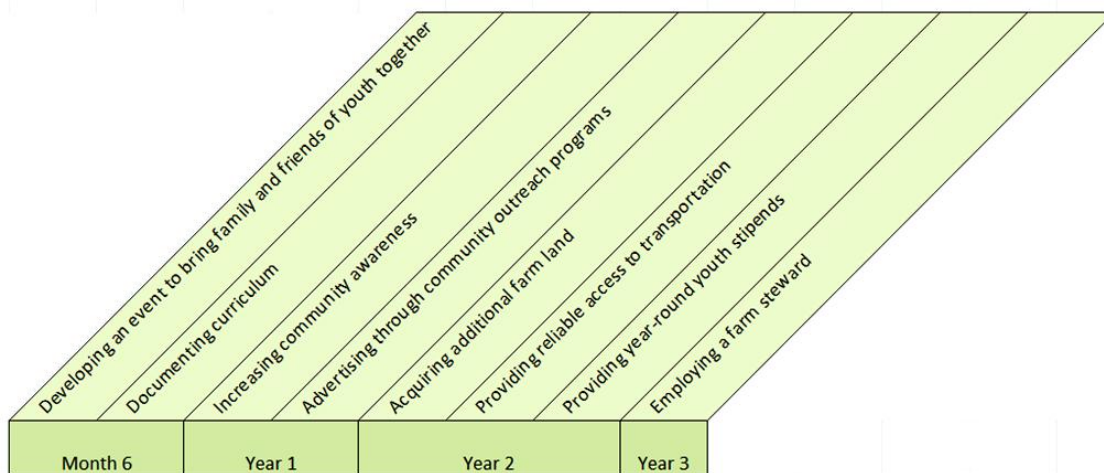


Figure 7: Timeline for Improving the YouthGROW Program

Finding Five: Utilizing New Revenue-Generating Strategies Can Diversify Organizational Funding

Through our research and data collection we discovered some great ideas that the REC could implement for revenue generation. Some of these strategies or methods did not have a neat fit into any of the previous categories so we decided to detail them here:

❖ Targeting a new economic demographic

The REC currently targets economically less-fortunate individuals and families as primary consumers, and while this greatly benefits the community, it comes at a great expense to the REC. Because those of lower income cannot afford as much, buying from the REC's farmers' markets doesn't always make sense. By expanding the organization's target economic demographic, the REC will build a greater consumer base, and thus, diversify their target market making their program more sustainable. The Food Justice Program has started a plan to implement a mobile farmers' market and by utilizing this as a test for adding a new economically different market they can see if this new demographic market is feasible. The addition of this new economic demographic could cause strain within the Food Justice Program, so we recommend the REC thoroughly evaluates this strategy before implementation. After the appropriate evaluation techniques are carried out to determine if the organization possesses the resources to sustain this venture it can be added in. Following our evaluation plan this objective should take three years. Steps needed to add a new economic demographic are:

- 1) Do market research and analysis to determine where, when, and how new initiative will be feasible.
- 2) Use new mobile market as testing ground for new market.
- 3) Identify best way to add new market without compromising mission. Meaning, to make sure there are enough resources to add it without taking away from other markets.
- 4) Find vendors, staff, signage, tables, tents, and space for new market.
- 5) Have a grand opening event for new market to kick-start the new initiative.

- 6) Continually measure success of market to insure its self-sustainability and compatibility with program mission.

❖ *Developing an event committee*

Developing an event committee could contribute to additional revenue generation. Currently events within the REC are taken up by whoever wants to create one. The problem with this is the person creating the event has other roles, so by creating a new event they are giving themselves extra work. By creating an event committee this problem is eliminated. This new committee is comprised of multiple staff members solely dedicated to creating, organizing, and seeing through fundraising events and completing grant applications. The Food Project (Boston, MA) found this strategy to be extremely beneficial, and the organization's fundraising staff currently generates \$3.5 million in funds annually (see Appendix D). This committee will develop events and locate key private funders to help fund the REC. Organizing this group will be labor intensive and potentially financially straining; therefore, we recommend this strategy be implemented in year 2 following an evaluation of resources by the REC staff. The steps needed to complete this goal are as follows:

- 1) Allocate funds for new staff or shift around roles within the organization to allow for event staff.
- 2) Go through the hiring process and logistics of creating a staff to specifically apply for grants and put on events for the Food Justice program.

❖ *Partnering with local businesses*

Exploring the opportunity to partner with local business will expand community involvement and awareness, and generate funds. By selling produce to or receiving food from local restaurants, the REC receives immediate returns on this investment. The REC should expand on this strategy by soliciting for local chefs to volunteer to serve samples of tasty meals created from produce grown by the REC. This strategy will expand customer bases, produce positive publicity and foster relationships within the community for businesses, while the REC

diversifies their outreach, networks in the community, and profits. The REC begun this venture by building solid relationships in the community; however, more outreach and preparation is necessary to implement this strategy. We recommend the REC evaluates the utilization of this strategy before implementation in year 2. This objective can be completed by following these tasks:

1. Do market research to determine feasibility for and market demand for local business partnerships
2. Ask local chefs to prepare samples of meals, using produce from the REC farms, at the weekly farmers' markets.
3. Get more restaurants and local shops to be vendors at the farmers' market.
4. Sell percentage of produce to local restaurants and have them advertise in their establishment that they do that.

It is more difficult for an organization to implement a new strategy, rather than improving an existing program or practice. Therefore, the REC should carefully examine and evaluate these strategies before implementation. The timeline, shown in figure 7 (below), shows the projected time of implementation for each new revenue-generating strategy.

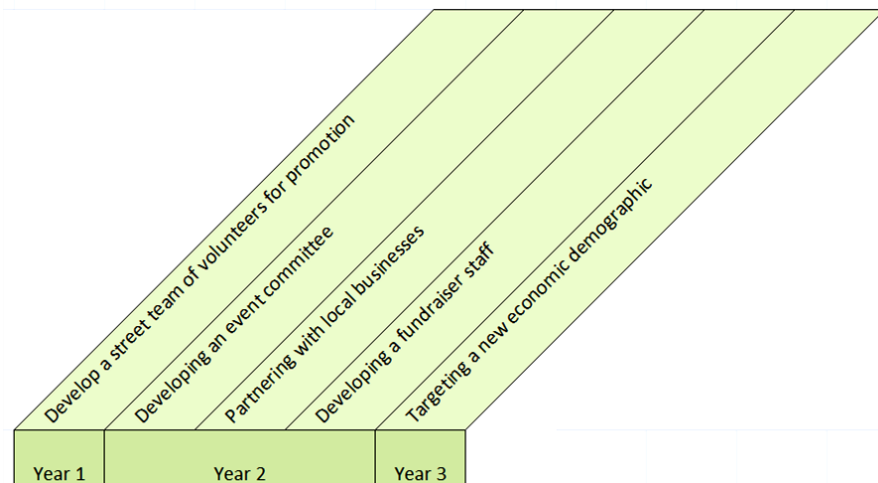


Figure 8: Timeline for Implementing New Revenue-Generating Strategies

Finding Six: General Improvements Can Be Implemented to Increase Organizational Sustainability

The following general improvements will help the REC decrease expenses and increase revenue to strengthen the financial sustainability of the organization:

❖ *Establishing a foundation of volunteers*

The REC currently takes a passive approach to finding volunteers. When volunteers are needed, the REC will advertise on their website and send out emails to members of their database. Volunteers, however, are the lifeblood of any non-profit organization. They provide the organization with cost-free labor that would otherwise be a devastating expense. Therefore, it is imperative that REC create a foundation of volunteers. To do so, the REC must first establish a way to advertise volunteer opportunities. This means identifying and contacting local organizations that promote and require volunteering and community service activities (See Appendix M – Sample Letter for Requesting Volunteers and Community Gardeners). Some of these organizations include nearby colleges, universities, high schools, churches, youth groups and businesses. Once the word about volunteering opportunities has been spread, there must be a way for the volunteers to notify the REC of their desired participation. Cultivating Community (Portland, ME) uses an innovative method to receive contact with future volunteers by providing an event registration form on their website. This allows the volunteer to see what opportunities are available and when. It also provides the organization with the ability to count volunteer participation for specific events. This information will prove vital when planning and organizing the volunteer event. Volunteer recruitment is only half of the struggle associated with establishing a foundation of volunteers. The REC must also keep those volunteers coming back. To do so, the event organizer must explain to each volunteer the organization's mission and their role in accomplishing that mission. With this understanding, volunteers are likely to have a fulfilling experience and a continued desire to participate. The REC should also outline and make known the responsibilities of each volunteer to ensure a productive work day. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Identify and contact local organizations that promote and require volunteering and community service activities.
- 2) Create a comprehensive list of events and activities that require volunteers.

- 3) Utilize the Marketing and Advertising strategies to inform the members of these organizations about the volunteering opportunities.
- 4) Develop a method for volunteers to inform the REC about their desired participation (this can be as simple as an email or phone call).
- 5) Explain to each volunteer the organization's mission and their role in accomplishing that mission.
- 6) Clearly outline the daily responsibilities and tasks of each volunteer
- 7) Have volunteers fill out their contact information so the REC can continue to build their database

❖ *Partnering with local schools*

The REC currently has 12 community gardens at public schools and is in the process of drafting a set of curriculum for those schools. A partnership between the REC and Worcester's public schools has the potential to increase community involvement in urban agriculture and teach the youth about earth stewardship. To build this bond, Cultivating Community (Portland, ME) has created a set of curriculum for both school-day and after-school programs. These programs offer a hands-on approach to learning about environmental and food justice. To ensure this interactive learning experience, Cultivating Community installs raised bed gardens at local schools. Although the youth do not have any economic power to aid in sustaining the program, their voices do. Educating the youth will spread the word about urban agriculture and all of its advantages. As community interest in the programs rises, the sustainability of the program and its organization will increase concurrently. For this reason, we recommend that the REC partner with schools within year 1 of the 3-year plan. To utilize this strategy, the REC should consult with Cultivating Community's youth curriculum. This curriculum, complete with a seven-week lesson plan for the spring months, can be accessed through the following links:

Seed Starting.pdf

[Lesson One: Seed Starting](#)

[Lesson Two: Recognizing Our Impact](#)

[Lesson Three: Planning Your Garden with Students](#)

[Lesson Four: Plan to Plant](#)

[Lesson Five: Our Planting Recommendations](#)

[Lesson Six: Garden Planting Checklist](#)

[Lesson Seven: Garden Planning Resource List](#)

❖ *Partnering with other non-profits*

To obtain specific resources required to operate the organization, non-profit organizations often partner with others. Because neither organization has the capital to pay for the resources provided by the other, the bond formed between non-profit organizations is often one of symbiotic nature. This leads to the mutual exchange of goods and services between organizations. The REC, like most other non-profit organizations, has problems establishing this connection with others. They currently partners with local organizations like the Main South CDC, Lutheran Social Services, Worcester Food Bank and the YMCA. From these organizations the REC receives use of property, staff and advertising resources. In return, the REC provides the organization's clientele with the services and programs that are consistent with the organization's mission. The first step to partnering with another non-profit is to determine what resource the REC is hoping to gain and what they are willing to give in exchange. They must then identify local organizations that have the desired resources. The last step in this process involves contacting the organization and setting up a time to meet and discuss the benefits of the new partnership.

- 1) Determine the resources the REC is trying acquire.
- 2) Identify organizations that can provide these desired resources.
- 3) Brainstorm goods and services the REC can provide in exchange.
- 4) Create a document that is specific to a particular organization which outlines this mutual partnership.
- 5) Contact the organization and schedule a meeting to discuss the proposed arrangement.
- 6) Continuously evaluate the partnership to ensure that both organizations are fulfilling the terms of the arrangement.

❖ *Developing a model (grants) of how a program can foster participant sustainability*

Program sustainability is one criterion that reviewers of grant applications desire. It represents the organization's acknowledgement that the program will not forever rely on the money provided by the grant. One way organizations similar to the REC build aspects of sustainability into their programs is by teaching relevant and useful skills. What is learned from the program will endure much longer and prove to be more beneficial to community members than any tangible product. In this way, program participants will use the skills learned to better their own personal sustainability, as well as, pass on the skills to others and foster the sustainability of the entire program. The teaching of a certain skill set has a relatively low cost associated with it. The only resources required are expertise and the time it takes to transfer this knowledge to program participants. The REC should keep this in mind when developing new programs and applying for grants. To complete this process, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Outline the goals of all programs and services that are offered.
- 2) Draft a document that relates the teachings of each program to the benefits that it will provide to community members.
- 3) Ensure that the REC's programs are accomplishing all program goals by utilizing post-program evaluation methods.
- 4) Present these findings in grant applications to identify how each program improves the personal sustainability of community members.

❖ *Creating an easy to use, attractive website*

The REC website has not been updated since the 1990's. However, they currently have enlisted the help of a Clark student to redesign their website. A website that is more attractive and interactive will provide many benefits to the REC. A more attractive website will speak to the professionalism of the organization and thus be more appealing to volunteers and donors. Improving the REC's website will require resources the REC does not currently have. They will need to hire or find another source of payment for someone who has expertise in the field of graphic and webpage design. To complete this task, the REC must complete the following steps:

- 1) Include the following information (and additional relevant materials) on the website:
 - i. Information about your organization (include staffing, mission and contact information)

- ii. Information about the programs and services your organization offers
 - iii. Information regarding how to get involved with the programs and volunteering opportunities
 - iv. Offer additional online resources (i.e. manuals, contact information, etc.)
 - v. Information about upcoming events
- 2) Explore volunteer interest in webpage design of students of local colleges and universities.
 - 3) If necessary, explore the feasibility of employing a trained web page designer.

❖ *Improving office management and financial practices*

Improving office management and financial practices will increase the efficiency of the REC. To do so, however, will require enlisting the help of professionals. This may be costly, but the REC should invest in this help, because it will foster the growth of the entire organization. One way the REC can start to improve their management and financial practices is by doing an equipment inventory. By doing such the REC will be able to keep track of the resources it already has. To implement this strategy effectively, the REC must complete the following tasks:

- 1) Contact similar organizations and local partnering organizations to develop plans and schedules for the improvement of office management practices.
- 2) Continuously check that these practices are being observed.
- 3) Make necessary changes when necessary to improve the overall organization of your office.

These general improvements to the current programs and practices of the REC Food Justice Program are essential for the progression toward organizational sustainability. These improvements will increase the resources available, improve community outreach efforts, and generate financial and organizational documentation that will be available for future use. A timeline that shows the projected implementation of the strategies for general improvement is shown in figure 8 (below).

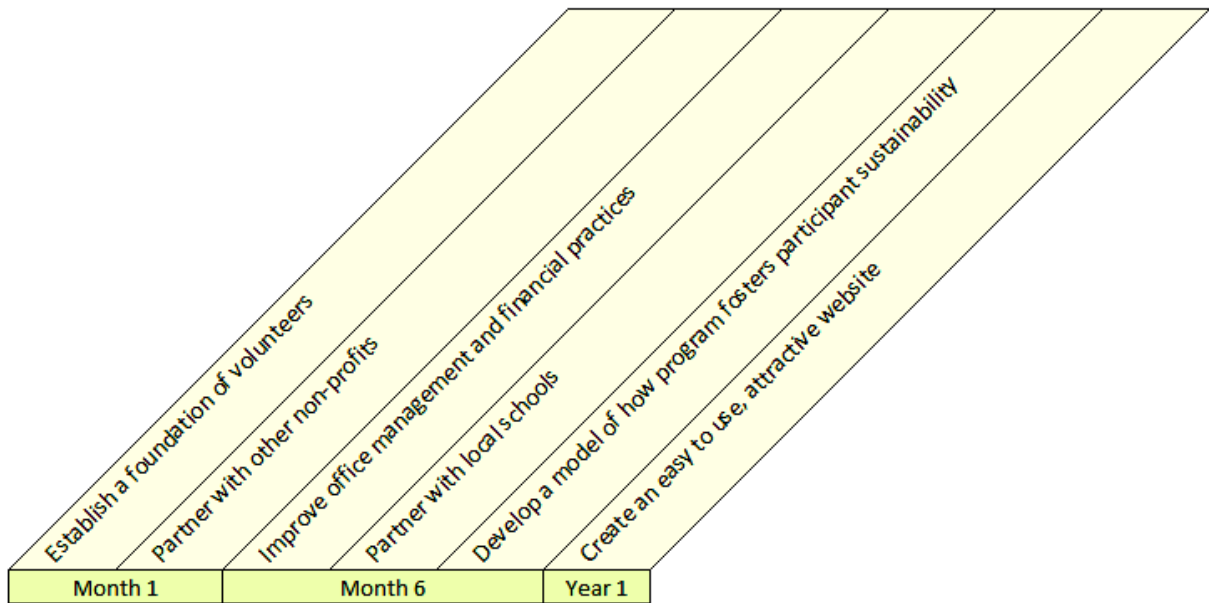


Figure 9: Timeline for Implementing General Organizational Improvements

Finding Seven: Improving the YouthGROW Vendor Booth Can Increase Revenue

Young teens who participate in the summertime YouthGROW program have the unique chance to sell the produce they have harvested at their own booth at the farmers market. The YouthGROW booth offers a variety of fruits and vegetables and serves just as any vendor at the market would. Unfortunately, the booth suffers from a lack of notoriety and interest from consumers and has, at times, generated only a few dollars after an entire day at the market. In contrast, Farm Fresh Rhode Island has been able to sustain its vendors and their customers at eight markets for over four years. By investigating the strategies of similar organizations, as well as the ideas of the REC itself, we were able to identify possible methods of improvement.. Our findings regarding the REC YouthGROW vendor booth are outlined as follows:

The REC Food Justice Program could improve their YouthGROW farmer's market vendor booth through the following methods:

- ❖ *Selling value-added products*

A successful method for increasing interest and booth sales, which has also been recommended for other farmer's market vendors, is the addition of value-added products. The

YouthGROW team began work on a value-added product line to boost sales at the booth; however, the project is still in the development phase and is far from implementation. REC staff identified that partnerships were needed to complete legal, safety and nutritional requirements, as well as, secure adequate space for production. Introducing a new product line will spark interest from consumers and create an additional revenue stream for the YouthGROW as a vendor. The REC Food Justice Program has begun by initiating the process of research and development regarding recipe trials, taste testing, other brands and safety regulations. In order to move forward the organization will need to first finalize the recipe and then set price points for their product. Securing kitchen space through rental or networking with a community kitchen will be necessary to begin production. Upfront costs of the venture will include staff time, youth time, packaging and kitchen equipment. Using produce from the YouthGROW gardens will lower the initial startup of the venture. Once in production, the product can be immediately sold at the YouthGROW booth. Grassroots advertising through local festivals, events and word of mouth will aid in increasing community interest in the product. As for any new venture, this process will take up valuable time and resources. When implemented, however, the product line will provide a valuable stream of revenue, as well as, customer sustainability benefits for the organization. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following tasks:

1. Continue taste testing trials to identify most appropriate product and recipe
2. Finalize price points for the product through analysis of mainstream prices and surveys of community members
3. Build relationships with community outreach programs and other non-profit organizations to satisfy legal and safety requirements for the venture
4. Research local businesses and organizations and acquire kitchen space for production
5. Utilize the youth and produce from YouthGROW farms to begin pilot production of the value-added product
6. Begin advertising the product through local festivals and events
7. Sell the product at the YouthGROW vendor booth and other REC events

❖ *Improving booth presentation*

Improving the overall presentation of the booth will be a simple method for improving its overall operation. Aesthetics and atmosphere are important aspects of a successful vendor which are often overlooked. The REC staff recognized the need for better overall booth presentation. The booth was described as busy and unorganized, with no appropriate signage to display to customers (Amber Huffstickler, personal communication, November 30, 2010). The revenue generated as a result is insufficient for sustaining the project and is in need of improvement. By keeping the produce neat and oriented in a way that is visually pleasing to customers is a simple way to attract more people. The same can be said for the area around the booth; a messy area near the vendor will distract customers from the produce and turn them away. Once the general layout of the booth is finished, it will be necessary to focus attention on the booth's signage. In order to attract customers, the booth should draw attention to the fact that it is not just an ordinary vendor. The signage should display that the produce was grown by the youth in their community. Residents of the community are more likely to buy produce from the children that are living in their own communities. Display the information in a readable and inviting manner which will complement the atmosphere of the booths external presentation. Interchangeable message board signs are durable and have a variety of uses. This type of signage is recommended for the YouthGROW vendor booth, as well as, the farmers market in general. This improvement requires staff time and effort to create signage and maintain the organization within the booth. Performing these tasks will promote a better mood at the booth and attract more customers. To utilize this strategy the REC must complete the following tasks:

1. Arrange products in a clean, organized manner as to reduce the cluttering of the booth
2. Keep produce washed and clean at all times
3. Maintain a clean and organized area around and behind the exterior of the booth
4. Acquire a sturdy sign (message board sign recommended) to display pertinent booth information (produce grown by community youth) in an organized and aesthetically pleasing manner

Performing these tasks will foster sales and sustainability for the YouthGROW booth. Figure 9, below, illustrates the timeframe in which to implement the different strategies pertaining to improvement of the YouthGROW vendor booth.

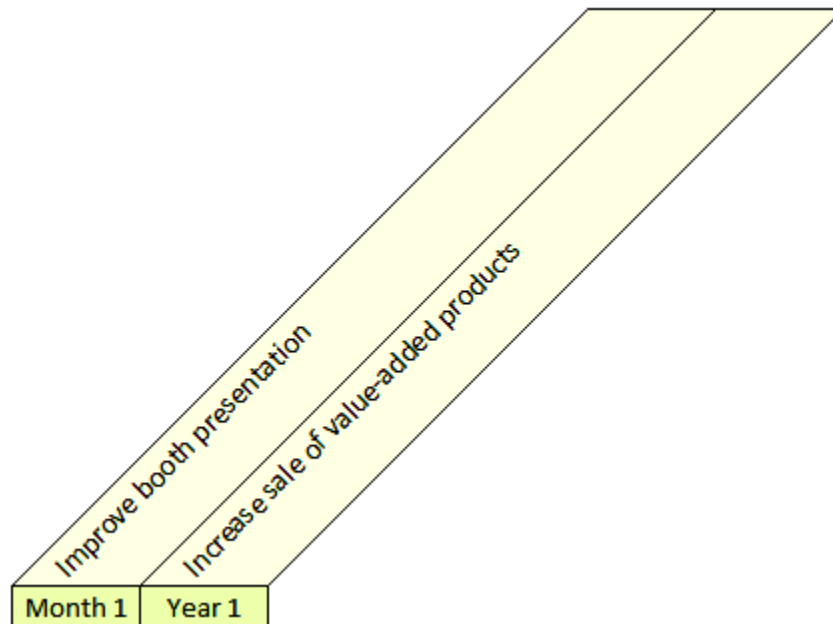


Figure 10: Timeline for Improving the YouthGROW Vendor Booth

Finding Eight: Additional Revenue Can Be Generated Through the Farmers' Markets

Since its founding, the REC has built its farmers markets up to be a benchmark in the local Worcester communities, providing fresh and healthy produce to those who need it most. Although they have made significant progress in operating these markets, improvements can still be implemented. Currently, the REC operates two markets on Saturdays, with around 20 total vendors in attendance. Farm Fresh Rhode Island (Providence, RI), in contrast, has utilized various strategies to build and expand their farmers markets through the state of Rhode Island. The organization currently operates eight markets in Providence, Pawtucket and Woonsocket. Just three years ago, however, the organization was in a very similar situation as the REC, with nearly 80% of income as grants and contributions and only 20% generated within the organization. By examining the strategies which Farm Fresh used to move their farmers markets forward, we have identified potential new practices which the REC could use for improvement. Our findings regarding the REC farmers markets are outlined as follows.

The REC Food Justice Program could improve their farmers markets through the following methods:

❖ *Diversifying market locations and times*

Offering communities a wide range of market locations and times in markets has proven a successful method for Farm Fresh Rhode Island in expanding the organizations customer base. The current status of the REC Food Justice Programs farmers markets could be improved. The organization offers two markets:

1. Great Brook Valley Farmers Market: Saturdays from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.
2. Main South Farmers Market: Saturdays from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

These markets are both operated during the morning hours, and both take place on a Saturday. Therefore the current status of the markets is undiversified. This strategy requires strong relationships with other local organizations which can provide space for new market locations. When choosing a new market location it is important to choose scenic and productive areas. For example, acquiring space in a busy area near a park or river is a great way to improve both the aesthetics and overall atmosphere of the market. In order to generate revenue, as well as stay consistent with the program mission, market locations must also be diversified to target both low-income and wealthy communities. Once locations for markets are established, market research is necessary for identifying appropriate days and times of operation. Accomplishing these goals requires a large amount of resources and time. Networking with other organizations within the community, market research, staff time and physical market materials are not currently available to the REC. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following tasks:

1. Develop relationships with community organizations that can provide the REC with space for new markets.
2. Consider proximity to well-traveled areas, parks, rivers and lakes when choosing new market locations.
3. Request use of space for the farmers' markets from local organizations or private supporters (See

4. Appendix N – Sample Use of Privately Owned Space Request Letter**Error! Reference source not found.**)
5. Request use of space for the farmers’ markets from the city of Worcester (See Appendix O – Sample Use of City Space Request).
6. Research and identify a location for a high-end farmers market to increase revenue stream.
7. Identify and confirm use of space for the farmers’ markets.
8. Conduct market research of target communities to identify the most appropriate days and times for each specific market location.
9. Build relationships with local businesses to acquire necessary materials (tents, tables etc.) through corporate sponsorship.

❖ *Offering additional products at the markets*

Once the organization has improved the diversity in its markets, it can begin to increase the diversity in what is sold at the markets. Obtaining vendors who sell value added-products at the markets is a great way to increase community interest. Research must be conducted in order to locate famers in the area who produce goods other than just fruits and vegetables. Items such as honey, syrups, eggs, dairy, meats, flowers, breads, coffee, chocolate, jams, pickles and soap are all successful products at farmers markets. It is also recommended that prepared foods, such as salads and sandwiches, be introduced to the markets. This strategy requires that the organization dedicate significant staff time to locating potential vendors. After identifying these vendors, the new variety of products will introduce and sustain a flux of new customers. In order to utilize this strategy the REC must complete the following tasks:

1. Conduct research into local farms to identify potential vendors who can provide value-added artisanal products (honey, syrups, eggs, dairy, meats, flowers, breads, coffee, chocolate, jams, pickles, soap) at the REC farmers markets.
2. Investigate local farms, as well as businesses, to identify potential vendors of prepared foods (salads, sandwiches) to be sold at the farmers markets.

3. Conduct market research regarding the target community of each farmers' market to identify the most appropriate venue for each potential vendor.

❖ *Obtaining more vendors*

The way that the markets make the majority of their money is through the fees vendors are required to pay to participate. Obtaining more vendors, therefore, is an effective method to generating more revenue for the organization. The Main South Farmers Market attracts an average of 15 vendors each week, while the Great Brook Valley Farmers Market attracts an average of four vendors weekly. These vendors bring fruits, vegetables, eggs, bread, pastries, jam and honey for customers. Offering additional products, mentioned above, is also an effective method of acquiring more vendors at the markets. Performing research into farmers and producers in the area is necessary to identify new potential vendors. Further research is necessary for determining season prices for the vendors. These prices depend on size and popularity of the market, time, day and location. Other considerations when obtaining new vendors is the required space and materials needed. Obtaining and maintaining vendors at the farmers market will provide a sustainable method of generating revenue for the organization. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following tasks:

1. Carry out the tasks from the previous strategy to obtain more vendors (and value-added products) at the markets (See Appendix O – Sample Use of City Space Request

Dexter Miller
Boston Parks and Recreation
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Third Floor
Roxbury, MA 02118

Dear Dexter Miller:

I am writing to request a permit from the Boston Park and Recreation Commission for the use of park space at Dudley Town Commons, Roxbury (Blue Hill Ave. and Dudley Street). For the past several years you have granted The Food Project use of this space for our Farmers' Market held from June until late October. We have obtained approval from the Dudley Town Commons Advisory Committee (contact individual: Liza Veras) to operate the Market on this site on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 7:30 (this includes setup and take down- actual mkt. operation is from 4-7pm) and have been included in their Park use plan.

Last year was another successful year for our Farmers' Market with the inclusion of another farmer, Drumlin Farm, which added variety and vitality to the market operation. The successful use of this park space has been evident to all in the community and is reflected in the number of residents we serve. In the summer of 1999, we provided fresh vegetables and fruits to a total of 1700 customers at our Thursday market. We look forward to offering high quality locally grown vegetables and fruits to Roxbury residents at the same site again this year.

Produce for sale at the Market comes from The Food Project's Summer Youth Program where fifty teens from Roxbury and greater Boston grow vegetables on farms inside and outside the city. This year in addition to produce, customers will have access to nutrition information as well as organic gardening information.

Nearby businesses have expressed their support for the Market and say they see increased business activity during its operation. We hope to continue this mutually beneficial relationship in the community.

We look forward to working with the Parks Department to make the Market a success in 2000. We welcome your questions and guidance about the use of this space and as we get closer, I will send over some flyers and information for your office.

Sincerely,

Sara Coblyn
Market Manager

2. Appendix P – Example of a Vendor Application Form).
3. Conduct research of farms in the area to identify potential new vendors.
4. Determine appropriate vendor fees for each new market based on the market day, time and location.

❖ *Securing a permanent indoors location for a wintertime market*

Securing a permanent indoors location for a wintertime farmers market is a long-term strategy that would add a revenue stream for the organization during the normally stagnant winter months. Although the organization operates two summertime markets, it does not currently utilize a wintertime market. This strategy requires a vast amount of resources from the organization. Research and networking efforts are needed to identify possible locations for the market. Once a location is successfully acquired, more research is necessary to find vendors willing to participate in a wintertime market. Word of mouth and advertising efforts would then be needed to bring customers out to the market. A benefit of a wintertime market is that there are no others like it in the area and therefore would enjoy little competition. Operating a wintertime, indoors market will allow Worcester community members to enjoy healthy, organic produce during the winter season. To utilize this strategy, the REC must complete the following tasks:

1. Build relationships with local businesses and organizations in an effort to identify potential venues for a wintertime farmers market.
2. Complete the tasks outlined in the previous strategies in order to locate the ideal location and time of the market, as well as, to find the necessary amount of vendors to participate.
3. Create a proposed layout for the wintertime indoor farmers' market that is portrayed to customers similar to the annual plant sale (See Appendix Q – Sample Flyer for Displaying Farmers' Market Layout).
4. Begin a marketing campaign through the most successful channels found. These may include, but are not limited to, local radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, and word of mouth.
5. Evaluation of the pilot season of the market will then be necessary to make changes in layout, day, time and operation to better serve the needs of the community.

Implementing these strategies will, over time, greatly benefit the productivity and effectiveness of the REC Food Justice Programs farmers markets. We have organized these strategies into a timeline, which is shown in figure 10 (below).

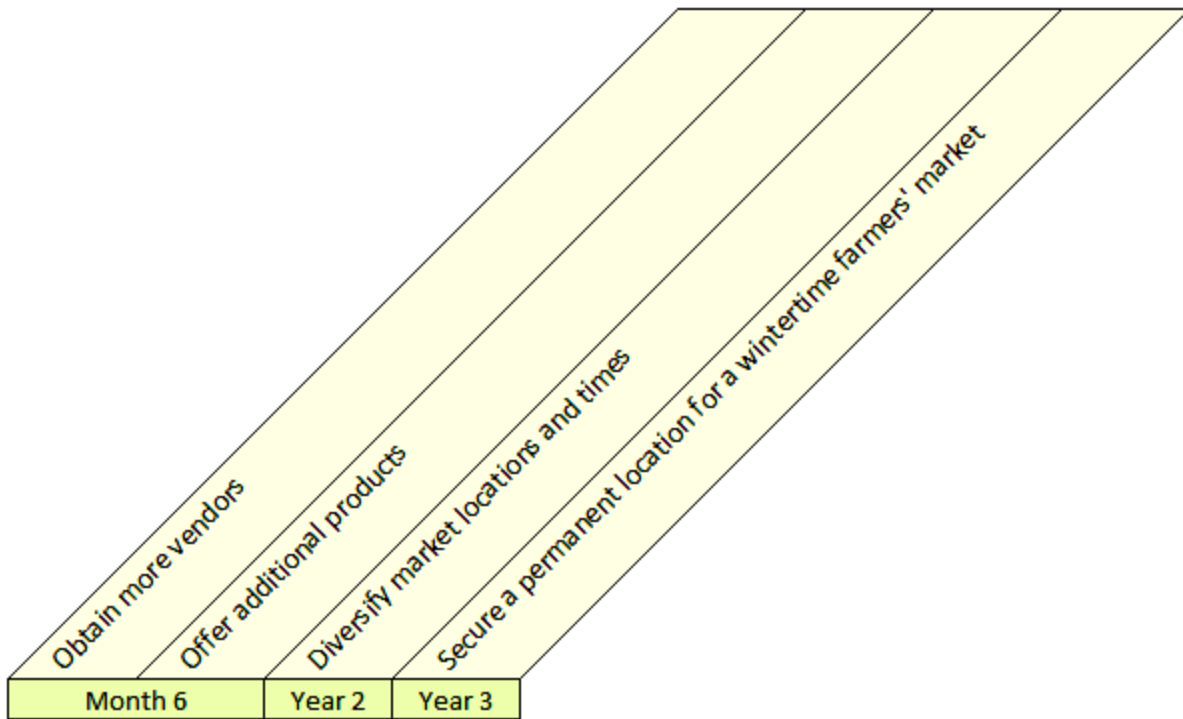


Figure 11: Timeline for Improving the Farmers' Markets

Considerations

The recommendations that we are presenting can offer direction toward self-sustainability to an urban agriculture non-profit organization. Through the exploration of strategies that organizations that are similar to the REC have utilized to promote organizational sustainability, we uncovered many successful options and methods. These strategies have been successful for other organizations; however, all recommended strategies may not be feasible or productive for the REC. During the recommended 3-year implementation plan, the REC must consistently utilize market research practices (See *Conducting Market Research*) to evaluate the strategies. This will provide the REC with the information necessary to determine the validity and feasibility pertaining to each of our recommendations. It is difficult to foresee issues that may arise during the utilization of each strategy, and therefore, it is imperative to follow the process of developing a strategic marketing plan (See *Developing a Business Plan*). This process provides the foundation for the internal and external analysis, which will illuminate strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and threats and opportunities for the venture, respectively. It is vital to note that our recommendations are unaccompanied by numerical proof or suggestion. These

recommendations are solely ideas provided by staff members of similar organizations or developed through educated reasoning. The collected data includes numerous organizations which operate in different cities with varying target consumers. These factors contribute to and support the fact the REC must conduct an individual, organization-specific feasibility study regarding each strategy to determine if the venture is worth pursuing. This study is the primary tool to assess the appropriateness and prospective effectiveness of a new or improved venture⁶. The REC, and any successors of our project, must evaluate each strategy while considering all negligible details and using the appropriate criterion. The criterion for evaluation that our project team developed may not be the most appropriate benchmarks to analyze these strategies. Therefore, we recommend that the REC meticulously examine the methodology and findings associated with our work to develop a complete understanding of the logistics of this project. In this manner, the organization will be better equipped and more knowledgeable regarding the background of the project, which directly relates to the organization's present state. This process will greatly aid the REC in evaluating each strategy to determine which implementations are appropriate in the correct instances.

⁶ Reference [SCORE: Business for non-profits](#) for a detailed description of a feasibility study. This publication also includes instructions for conducting a feasibility study and guidance to draw conclusions following the study.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The goal of this project was to develop a set of recommendations for the REC Food Justice Program, which when implemented, will offer direction toward organizational sustainability. Throughout our time working towards this goal, we developed conclusions formulated through the exploration of similar organizations and the REC itself. We concluded that many non-profit similar to the REC Food Justice Program found themselves in a similar financial situation. While in this volatile state, similar organizations created and adopted various strategies and methods that improved organization sustainability by diversifying organizational funding. Following these steps, organizations diminished the pressure applied through financial instability, which allowed staff members and supporters to better concentrate and accomplish the organization's mission. Organizations accounted these methods as the driving factor that contributed to organizational sustainable development. First, we identified these practices by conducting personal interviews with staff from similar organizations. Next, we were able to initially evaluate the feasibility and appropriateness of each strategy. This analytical method provided the foundation to organize our data into findings. In order for the REC to utilize the recommendations following our departure from this project, we have organized them into a time-structured and action-oriented list. We have also provided the necessary attachments, references, and resources for the REC to continue to progress as an organization. After completing our data collection, we determined that including these instructions and resources was vital to the success of our project.

It is our expectation that the work which we have completed will be continued in the future. Although the work which we completed will aid the REC in identifying best practices and the methods needed to implement them, this project will also have farther reaching implications. Future projects in this area will take the work which we have done and develop business models and figures to represent each of the proposed recommendations. This will give the organization not only a detailed list of best practices, but the financial models to project them into the future. In the future when other organizations are in a similar situation as the REC currently is, they too will be able to utilize this report to move their own organization in a more sustainable direction. This project will have implications beyond the short term benefits it provides to the REC Food Justice Program.

The completion of these recommendations will greatly benefit the REC by defining viable revenue generating strategies for the program. This will allow the organization to make informed decisions regarding future opportunities to decrease grant dependency, so the organization can better concentrate on and accomplish its program mission. The completion of the project will have indirect benefits, as well. If the Food Justice Program can be successfully sustained, the organization can continue to aid Worcester communities by alleviating the issues of troubled youth, hunger, urban blight and pollution. Without the restraint of dependency on grant funding, the REC can even better work towards fixing these issues through their urban farms and famers programs. Developing a list of recommendations for the REC Food Justice program will promote self-sustainability and, in effect, ensure that the benefits that the organization provides are received by the Worcester community.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide for Conducting Market Research

The project team identified market research as a key component in determining the feasibility of each potential strategy. Before conducting this research, we conducted a literature review regarding market research. The project team also developed a semi-standardized interview guide (shown below) to be used when interviewing experts on the subject of market research.

- 1) What are the key components of a successful marketing plan?
- 2) How is a marketing plan developed?
- 3) Would you be able to help us develop some better marketing strategies that are project-specific?
- 4) Give background description on all REC programs and what they do currently for organization and advertising
- 5) What are possible marketing strategies that could be applied to?
 - a. Plant sale
 - b. YouthGROW booth
 - c. Farmer's Market
- 6) How do you conduct market research?
 - a. What are the key components involved?
 - b. Are there different models or methods?
 - i. If so, please discuss in further detail the differences in nature and purpose of each
 - c. Do you have any materials or references that you could recommend to us given our specific project problem and goal?
- 7) What is the difference between a marketing plan and business plan?

Appendix B – Business Plan Example from a Non-profit Organization

The document, below, is an example of a business plan taken from a website that offers business plan software. Of the many business plans that were featured on that website, this one was chosen as an example for the REC to use as a guiding template, because the organization was the most similar to the REC Food Justice Program. This also shows that non-profits can move in a sustainable direction business-like and professional when approaching their work and that by developing a business plan they can help foster a better future for themselves.

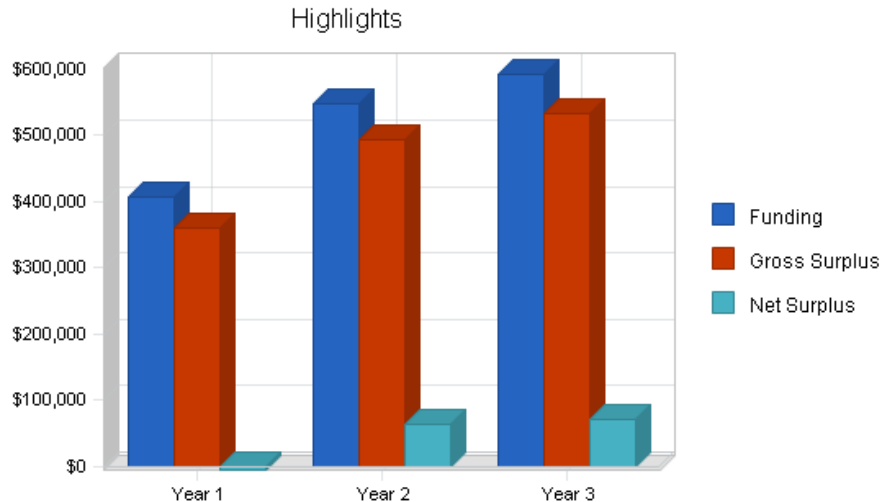
Executive Summary

Helping Hand is a tax-exempt not-for-profit food bank that serves all of Johnson County, Washington. Helping Hand's goal is to alleviate hunger in Johnson County by soliciting, collecting, growing, and packaging food for distribution through a network of service agencies and programs that serve our target population groups. Our services include food box programs, emergency food programs, and a youth farm that provides opportunities for self-sufficiency activities for "at risk" youth. Helping Hand receives support from the county, charitable organizations and corporate sponsorship.

Approximately 20% of Johnson County residents qualify for assistance from Helping Hand. Our client base is low-income people, mainly families, who need emergency help to put food on the table. Nearly half of those served by the program are children. Helping Hand operates a warehouse facility where we store donated or rescued food for distribution. The program actively solicits food from local food growers, retailers, wholesalers, and processors. In addition, Helping Hand collect food donations from restaurants for immediate distribution to service programs.

It is estimated that the number of children who need services from Helping Hand will increase during the next five years. Johnson County is growing and a number of new families are entering the area to look for employment. A number of programs exist to help transition these new families into the county. Helping Hand is an important resource to these programs because we can respond quickly with the one of the most important resources these families need. Food!

Our services improve the ability of families to care for children and achieve goals of self-sufficiency. Helping Hand's services, now, are a small investment in comparison to cost of ignoring the problem of hunger in the county and the influence it has on a number of health and crime issues.



1.1 Mission

The mission of Helping Hands is to alleviate hunger in Johnson County by soliciting, collecting, growing, and packaging food for distribution through a network of agencies and programs, as well as provide opportunities for self sufficiency. Our services include food box programs, emergency shelters, congregate meal sites, residential treatment services, and children's programs.

1.2 Objectives

This new initiative is designed to create a food bank that will serve all of Johnson County, Washington. Our objectives are:

- Establish donation network of local growers, retailers, wholesalers, and processors in Johnson County.
- Establish youth farm that will employ "at risk" youth.
- Collect over four million pounds of food the first year of operation. Increase collection amount by 20% each year.
- Effectively distribute the food to low-income families that make up over 20% of Johnson County.
- Acquire \$200,000 of start-up funding through corporate, private charities and government financial support.
- Raise an additional \$100,000 in fundraising activity.

Organization Summary

Helping Hand is a food bank serving Johnson County, Washington. The program's focus is to identify and utilize resources for food in the county in order to eliminate hunger among low-income individuals and families in the area.

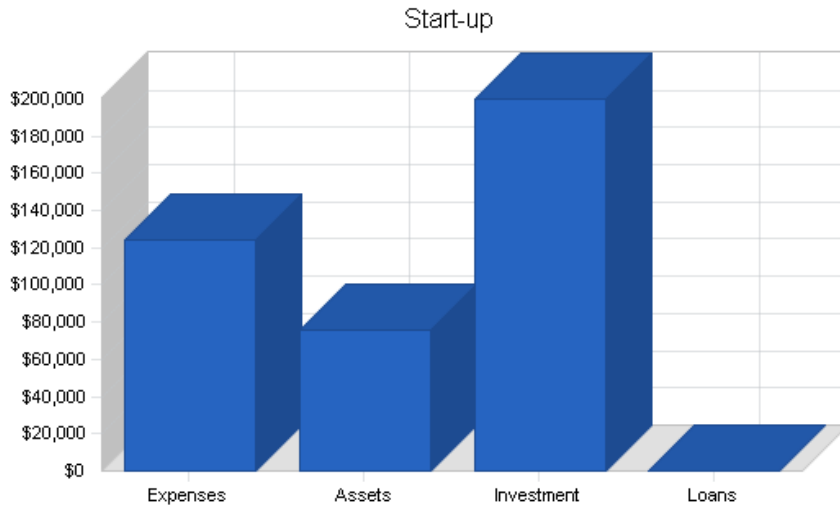
The program performs the following:

1. Solicits and distributes food to community programs.

2. Operates a youth farm program for "at-risk" young people.

2.1 Start-up Summary

Helping Hand's start-up cost is \$200,000. A significant portion of the cost is donated trucks and collection vehicles for food, as well as a storage facility. The remainder are the expenses normally associated with opening an office. The program is funded by contributions from ten corporate sponsors, a grant from a private philanthropic trust, and Johnson County. The assumptions are shown in the following table and chart.



Start-up Funding

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Start-up Expenses to Fund | \$124,000 |
| Start-up Assets to Fund | \$76,000 |
| Total Funding Required | \$200,000 |
| Assets | |
| Non-cash Assets from Start-up | \$7,000 |
| Cash Requirements from Start-up | \$69,000 |
| Additional Cash Raised | \$0 |
| Cash Balance on Starting Date | \$69,000 |
| Total Assets | \$76,000 |

Liabilities and Capital

Liabilities

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Current Borrowing | \$0 |
| Long-term Liabilities | \$0 |
| Accounts Payable (Outstanding Bills) | \$0 |
| Other Current Liabilities (interest-free) | \$0 |
| Total Liabilities | \$0 |
| Capital | |
| Planned Investment | |
| Corporate Sponsorship | \$100,000 |
| Philanthropic Trust | \$50,000 |
| Jefferson County | \$50,000 |
| Additional Investment Requirement | \$0 |
| Total Planned Investment | \$200,000 |
| Loss at Start-up (Start-up Expenses) | (\$124,000) |
| Total Capital | \$76,000 |
| Total Capital and Liabilities | \$76,000 |
| Total Funding | \$200,000 |

Start-up

Requirements

Start-up Expenses

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Legal | \$700 |
| Stationery etc. | \$500 |
| Brochures | \$800 |
| Food Collection Supplies | \$10,000 |
| Insurance | \$1,000 |
| Rent | \$1,000 |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| Trucks and Vehicles | \$50,000 |
| Warehouse Equipment | \$40,000 |
| Harvesting/Farm Equipment | \$20,000 |
| Total Start-up Expenses | \$124,000 |
| Start-up Assets | |
| Cash Required | \$69,000 |
| Start-up Inventory | \$0 |
| Other Current Assets | \$0 |
| Long-term Assets | \$7,000 |
| Total Assets | \$76,000 |
| Total Requirements | \$200,000 |

2.2 Legal Entity

Helping Hand is a Washington nonprofit corporation.

Services

Approximately 20% of Johnson County residents qualify for assistance from Helping Hand. Low-income people, mostly families, who need emergency help to put food on the table will be helped by this new program. Nearly half of the people we serve are children and nearly one-fifth are senior citizens. In the families we serve, there is at least one working person.

Helping Hand collects food at its centralized facility in the city of Monroe and distributes the food to nonprofit social service agencies and programs in the county. The majority of the food we distribute is in the form of emergency boxes. Individuals or families can receive up to 15 boxes a year. Each box contains a 3-5 day supply of high-quality food. The remaining resources are dedicated to providing food to residential treatment facilities, dinner programs, youth service centers, foster homes, children's program and more.

Market Analysis Summary

The population base for Johnson County is 600,000. Approximately 20% of the county's population can be characterized as low-income. This represents 120,000 residents that are potentially in need of services from Helping Hand.

This group can be broken down into three segments:

- Seniors (30,000);
- Individual Adults (35,000);

- Children (55,000).

Children represent 45% of the county residents in need of Helping Hand services. The program has identified children and their families as its primary target customers. It is projected that the number of low-income children will increase in Johnson County by 20% over the next four years. By 2006, children will represent 52% of Helping Hand's client base. With effective intervention, the debilitating effects of hunger can be eliminated. Consequently, the families will be better able to be successfully providing for its children.

4.1 Market Segmentation

Service Geographics

Helping Hand serves the Johnson County area with a total population in excess of 600,000 people. Over 50% of the county's population lives in Monroe. The remaining bulk of county's population resides in Lewisville, Drain, Fremont, and Lakespurs.

Service Demographics

It is estimated that 20% of the county's residents are low-income. Of the county's 120,000 low income residents, 25% are seniors, 30% are individual adults, and 45% are children. Family groupings represent over 64% of low income residents in Johnson County. Over 90% of these families has at least one family member working full-time. This is why children and their families are the focus of the program.

Service Psychographics

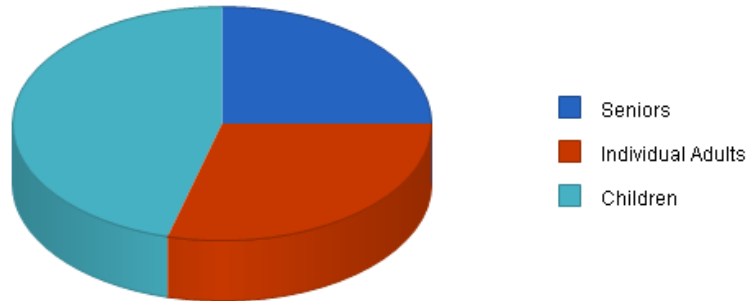
One of the most typical profiles of families interested in this type of program can be described by the following:

- At least one parent/guardian works full-time.
- The average family size is five, with three or four children.
- The family has made contact with one or more social service agency or program in the last 12 months.
- The families are most receptive to receiving food assistance through social service programs that are working with the families in other concerns.

Service Behaviors

Helping Hand has established that the most effective method to distribute food is through the network of existing social service programs and agencies serving the target population groups. There are 25 programs and agencies that provide services to low-income seniors, adults and children. On average, clients visit one or more of these programs or agencies on a weekly basis. In addition, these programs have an excellent volunteer base that can be mobilized to distribute food.

Market Analysis (Pie)



Market Analysis

| | | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | |
|---------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| Potential Customers | Growth | | | | | | CAGR |
| Seniors | 7% | 30,000 | 32,100 | 34,347 | 36,751 | 39,324 | 7.00% |
| Individual Adults | 8% | 35,000 | 37,800 | 40,824 | 44,090 | 47,617 | 8.00% |
| Children | 15% | 55,000 | 63,250 | 72,738 | 83,649 | 96,196 | 15.00% |
| Total | 11.15% | 120,000 | 133,150 | 147,909 | 164,490 | 183,137 | 11.15% |

4.2 Target Market Segment Strategy

The primary target population group for Helping Hand is children (from birth to 16 years of age) and their families. This group has been identified as the fastest growing segment of the population that need food bank services. The impact of food assistance is most critical during the first five years of a child's life. Children ages birth to five years of age represents 50% of the children served by the program.

Strategy and Implementation Summary

Helping Hand will focus on establishing an effective collection network with local growers, retailers, wholesalers, and processors. Another primary goal will be the creation of a youth farm that will employ "at risk" youth. The program will also start a fundraising campaign with area retail markets, banks and credit unions in order to raise an additional \$100,000.

Helping Hand will advertise its services to the target populations groups through the agencies that serve these groups on a daily basis.

5.1 Marketing Strategy

Helping Hand's marketing program will focus on increasing its visibility in the community. Participating food retail stores will carry information about Helping Hand and how stores like this one are helping the community. Award plaques will be distributed to stores each year and the program will find additional methods to raise the profile of stores that assist the program.

Program brochures will be distributed by local social service programs and agencies that serve the target population groups. In addition, these programs and agencies will serve as advocates of using Helping Hand in response to the need for emergency food.

5.2 Fundraising Strategy

Helping Hand will immediately start a Fall Fundraising campaign that will focus on using the local banks and credit unions to collect donations to fight hunger. Typically, food drives are started in October and November. Helping Hand will place donation bins in participating banks and credit union. In addition, customers in local retail food stores can donate money to Helping Hand at the checkout stand.

5.2.1 Funding Forecast

Helping Hand's monthly revenues for the 2002-2003 calendar year will fluctuate based on the seasons. During Fall the program will have its major fundraiser. The summer months are anticipated to be weak food collection months.

The following are Helping Hand's fundraising and food collection programs:

Food Collection (FC)

Participating retailers, wholesalers, and processors will donate food stuffs. These contributors will contribute donations of a monthly basis.

Fill the Bucket (FtB)

Each Fall, Helping Hand will run a fundraiser through local banks and credit union. Small containers that will look like the larger Helping Hand food bins will sit at the counter of each teller.

Food Rescue Express (FRE)

Helping Hand will collect donated food from local restaurants to be immediately distributed to programs in the area that will in turn distribute the food to their clients.

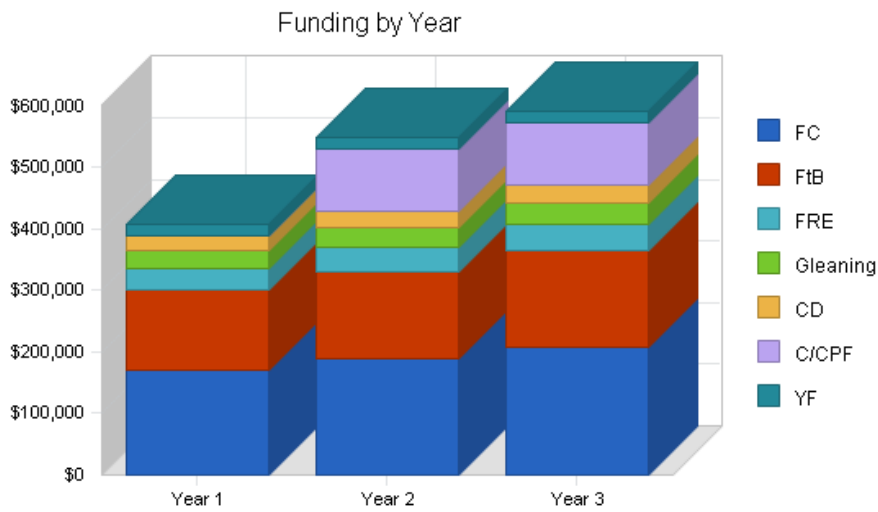
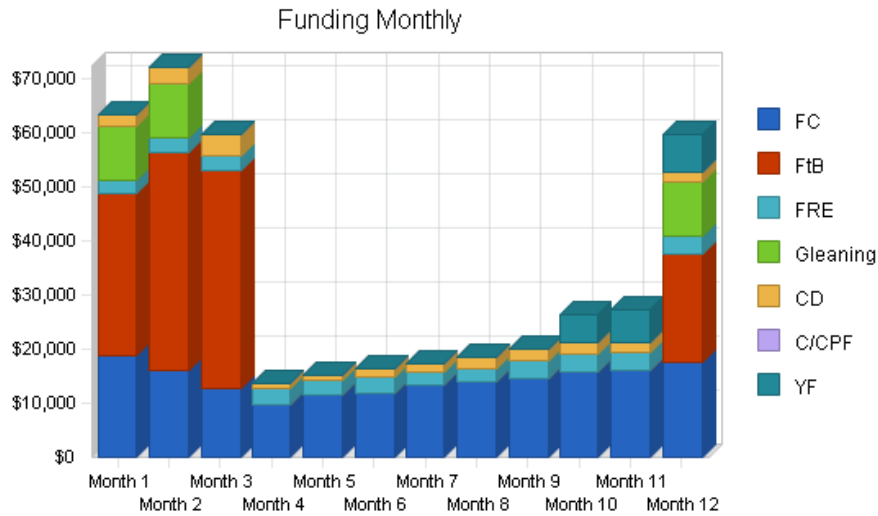
Gleaning

Harvest leftovers and unsold produce from farmers' fields will be collected by Helping Hand. Every year thousands of pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables are left to rot or get tilled under the field. Gleaning reduces waste while feeding people. Helping Hand actually recruits gleaning crews from the local support program.

Youth Farm (YF)

The youth farm utilizes kids in diversion program or local program serving "at risk" kids to provide a learning environment that turn these kids life around. The produce is sold by the youth farm crew members at a on-site produce stand. All proceeds are used to support Helping Hand programs.

Editor's Note: To maximize the chart size for the Funding Monthly and Funding By Year charts below the fundraising categories above have been abbreviated within the Funding Forecast table. Charitable/Corporate Program Funding will use C/CPF as an acronym in the table and charts.



Funding Forecast

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Funding | | | |
| FC | \$171,770 | \$188,947 | \$207,842 |
| FtB | \$130,000 | \$143,000 | \$157,300 |
| FRE | \$34,590 | \$38,049 | \$41,854 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Gleaning | \$30,000 | \$33,000 | \$36,300 |
| CD | \$24,000 | \$26,400 | \$29,040 |
| C/CPF | \$0 | \$100,000 | \$100,000 |
| YF | \$18,000 | \$18,900 | \$19,845 |
| Total Funding | \$408,360 | \$548,296 | \$592,181 |
| Direct Cost of Funding | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
| FC | \$19,356 | \$21,000 | \$23,400 |
| FtB | \$6,647 | \$7,300 | \$8,100 |
| FRE | \$3,331 | \$5,200 | \$5,800 |
| Gleaning | \$4,800 | \$5,400 | \$6,000 |
| CD | \$4,627 | \$5,100 | \$5,600 |
| YF | \$8,970 | \$9,800 | \$10,800 |
| Subtotal Cost of Funding | \$47,730 | \$53,800 | \$59,700 |

Management Summary

Helping Hand's management team consist of a board of directors and an executive director. The program will consist of five service coordinators.

6.1 Personnel Plan

The following table summarizes the program's personnel expenditures for the first three years.

The staff will consist of five coordinators:

- Volunteer coordinator;
- Food solicitation coordinator;
- Distribution coordinator;
- Warehouse coordinator;
- Youth farm coordinator.

The detailed monthly personnel plan for the first year is included in the appendix.

Personnel Plan

Year 1 Year 2 Year 3

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Volunteer Coordinator | \$21,600 | \$21,600 | \$21,600 |
| Food Solicitation Coordinator | \$21,600 | \$21,600 | \$21,600 |
| Distribution Coordinator | \$21,600 | \$21,600 | \$21,600 |
| Warehouse Coordinator | \$21,600 | \$21,600 | \$21,600 |
| Youth Farm Coordinator | \$21,600 | \$21,600 | \$21,600 |
| Executive Director | \$24,000 | \$24,000 | \$24,000 |
| Total People | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Total Payroll | \$132,000 | \$132,000 | \$132,000 |

Financial Plan

Helping Hand is funded from a variety of sources, public and private. We anticipate that funding will increase by 15% over the next three years. The executive director and the board of directors will be responsible for reviewing the program expenditures and making adjustment to assure the program solvency.

7.1 Important Assumptions

The financial plan depends on important assumptions, most of which are shown in the following table.

The key underlying assumptions are:

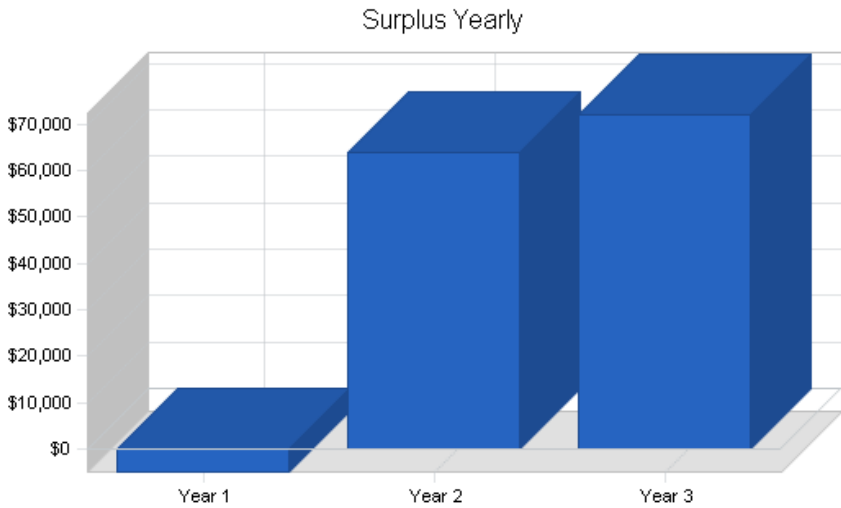
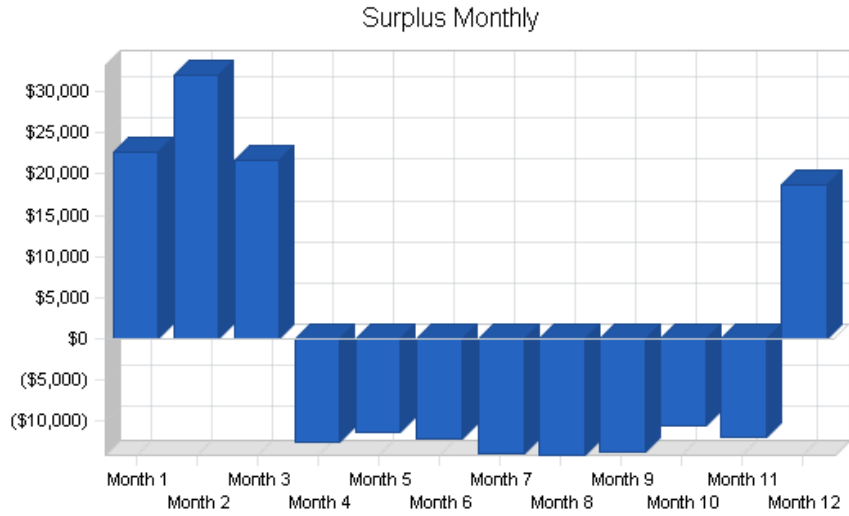
- We assume a slow-growth economy, without major recession.
- We assume population growth in the county that will contribute to additional low-income clients.
- We assume, of course, that there are no unforeseen changes in funding availability.
- We assume a continued need for emergency food services in the county.

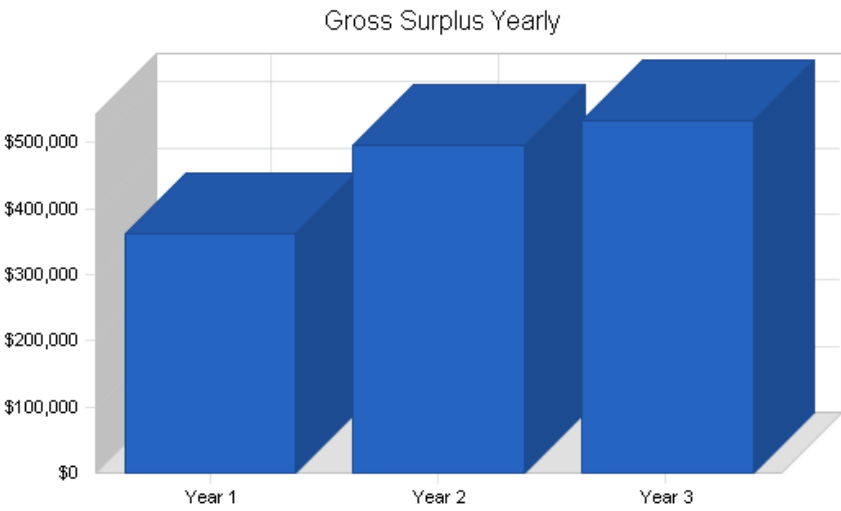
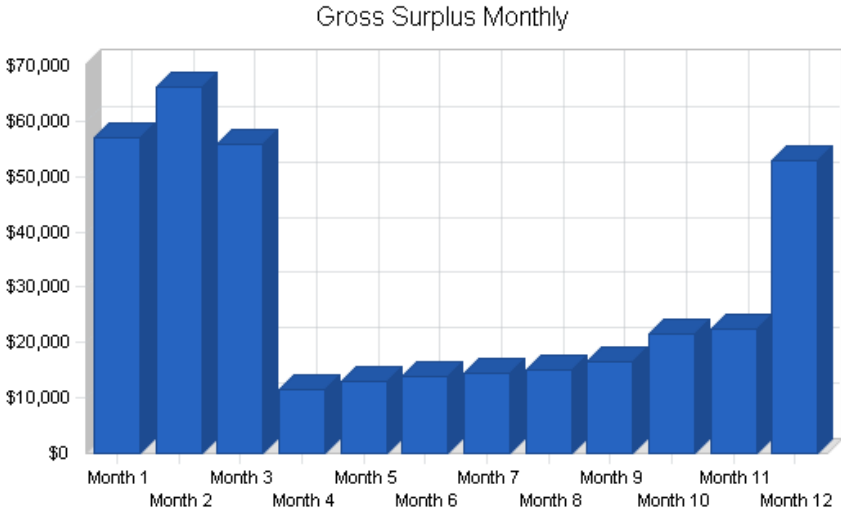
General Assumptions

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Plan Month | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Current Interest Rate | 10.00% | 10.00% | 10.00% |
| Long-term Interest Rate | 10.00% | 10.00% | 10.00% |
| Tax Rate | 0.00% | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 |

7.2 Projected Surplus or Deficit

Helping Hand's Projected Surplus and Deficit is shown on the following table. The detailed monthly projections are included in the appendix.





Surplus and Deficit

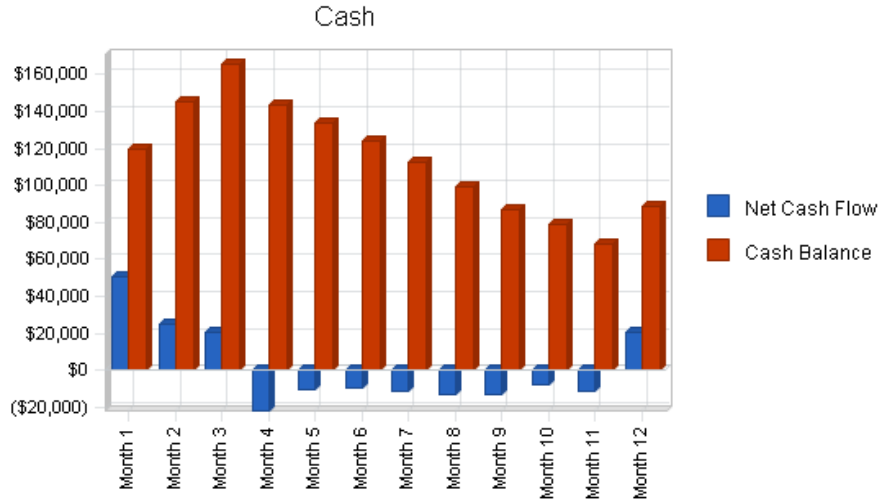
| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Funding | \$408,360 | \$548,296 | \$592,181 |
| Direct Cost | \$47,730 | \$53,800 | \$59,700 |
| Other Costs of Funding | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Direct Cost | \$47,730 | \$53,800 | \$59,700 |
| Gross Surplus | \$360,630 | \$494,496 | \$532,481 |
| Gross Surplus % | 88.31% | 90.19% | 89.92% |

Expenses

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Payroll | \$132,000 | \$132,000 | \$132,000 |
| Sales and Marketing Costs | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Depreciation | \$840 | \$840 | \$840 |
| Rent | \$12,000 | \$12,000 | \$12,000 |
| Utilities | \$2,400 | \$2,400 | \$2,400 |
| Insurance | \$3,600 | \$3,600 | \$3,600 |
| Payroll Taxes | \$19,800 | \$19,800 | \$19,800 |
| Food Distribution | \$195,000 | \$260,000 | \$290,000 |
| Total Operating Expenses | \$365,640 | \$430,640 | \$460,640 |
| Surplus Before Interest and Taxes | (\$5,010) | \$63,856 | \$71,841 |
| EBITDA | (\$4,170) | \$64,696 | \$72,681 |
| Interest Expense | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Taxes Incurred | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Net Surplus | (\$5,010) | \$63,856 | \$71,841 |
| Net Surplus/Funding | -1.23% | 11.65% | 12.13% |

7.3 Projected Cash Flow

Helping Hand's cash flow is represented as funding dollars and collected food and monetary donations. The monthly cash flow is shown in the illustration, with one bar representing the cash flow per month, and the other the monthly cash balance. The annual cash flow figures are included here and the more important detailed monthly numbers are included in the appendix.



Pro Forma Cash Flow

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Cash Received | | | |
| Cash from Operations | | | |
| Cash Funding | \$408,360 | \$548,296 | \$592,181 |
| Subtotal Cash from Operations | \$408,360 | \$548,296 | \$592,181 |
| Additional Cash Received | | | |
| Sales Tax, VAT, HST/GST Received | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Current Borrowing | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Other Liabilities (interest-free) | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Long-term Liabilities | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Sales of Other Current Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Sales of Long-term Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Investment Received | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Subtotal Cash Received | \$408,360 | \$548,296 | \$592,181 |
| Expenditures | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
| Expenditures from Operations | | | |
| Cash Spending | \$132,000 | \$132,000 | \$132,000 |

| | | | |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Bill Payments | \$257,132 | \$354,348 | \$385,465 |
| Subtotal Spent on Operations | \$389,132 | \$486,348 | \$517,465 |
| Additional Cash Spent | | | |
| Sales Tax, VAT, HST/GST Paid Out | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Principal Repayment of Current Borrowing | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Other Liabilities Principal Repayment | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Long-term Liabilities Principal Repayment | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Purchase Other Current Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Purchase Long-term Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Dividends | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Subtotal Cash Spent | \$389,132 | \$486,348 | \$517,465 |
| Net Cash Flow | \$19,228 | \$61,948 | \$74,716 |
| Cash Balance | \$88,228 | \$150,176 | \$224,892 |

7.4 Projected Balance Sheet

The following table represents the Project Balance Sheet for Helping Hand.

Pro Forma Balance Sheet

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|--------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Assets | | | |
| Current Assets | | | |
| Cash | \$88,228 | \$150,176 | \$224,892 |
| Inventory | \$7,386 | \$8,326 | \$9,239 |
| Other Current Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Current Assets | \$95,614 | \$158,501 | \$234,131 |
| Long-term Assets | | | |
| Long-term Assets | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 |
| Accumulated Depreciation | \$840 | \$1,680 | \$2,520 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Cash Funding | \$63,134 | \$71,926 | \$59,644 | \$13,736 | \$15,110 | \$16,240 | \$17,134 | \$18,354 | \$19,932 | \$26,204 | \$27,238 | \$59,708 |
| Subtotal Cash from Operations | \$63,134 | \$71,926 | \$59,644 | \$13,736 | \$15,110 | \$16,240 | \$17,134 | \$18,354 | \$19,932 | \$26,204 | \$27,238 | \$59,708 |
| Additional Cash Received | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sales Tax, VAT, HST/GST Received | 0.00 % | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Current Borrowing | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Other Liabilities (interest-free) | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Long-term Liabilities | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Sales of Other Current Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Sales of Long-term Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| New Investment Received | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Subtotal Cash Received | \$63,134 | \$71,926 | \$59,644 | \$13,736 | \$15,110 | \$16,240 | \$17,134 | \$18,354 | \$19,932 | \$26,204 | \$27,238 | \$59,708 |
| Expenditures | Month 1 | Month 2 | Month 3 | Month 4 | Month 5 | Month 6 | Month 7 | Month 8 | Month 9 | Month 10 | Month 11 | Month 12 |
| Expenditures from Operations | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cash Spending | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 | \$11,000 |
| Bill | \$1,204 | \$35,861 | \$28,048 | \$24,625 | \$14,162 | \$14,601 | \$17,583 | \$20,547 | \$21,951 | \$22,95 | \$27,080 | \$28,52 |

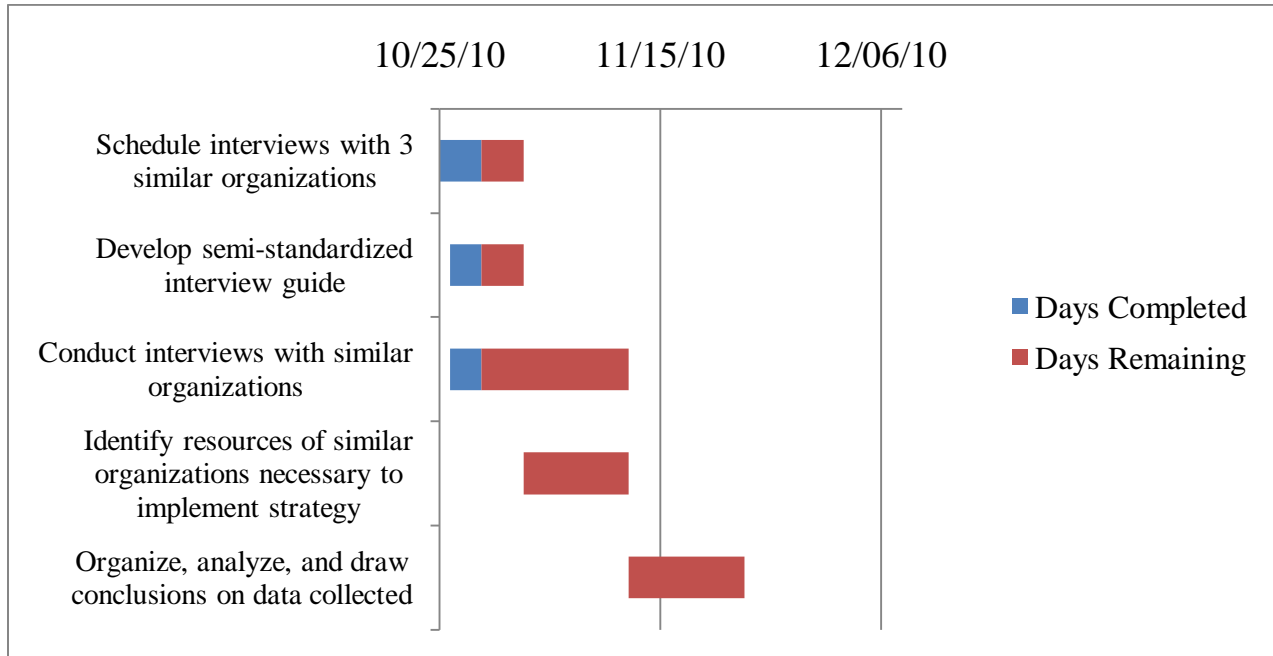
| | | Month 1 | Month 2 | Month 3 | Month 4 | Month 5 | Month 6 | Month 7 | Month 8 | Month 9 | Month 10 | Month 11 | Month 12 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| s | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Current Assets | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cash | \$69,000 | \$119,930 | \$144,994 | \$165,590 | \$143,701 | \$133,649 | \$124,288 | \$112,840 | \$99,647 | \$86,628 | \$78,881 | \$68,039 | \$88,228 |
| Inventory | \$0 | \$6,798 | \$6,182 | \$4,200 | \$3,097 | \$2,330 | \$2,442 | \$3,034 | \$3,564 | \$3,784 | \$5,064 | \$5,405 | \$7,386 |
| Other Current Assets | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Current Assets | \$69,000 | \$126,727 | \$151,176 | \$169,790 | \$146,798 | \$135,979 | \$126,730 | \$115,873 | \$103,211 | \$90,412 | \$83,946 | \$73,445 | \$95,614 |
| Long-term Assets | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Long-term Assets | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 | \$7,000 |
| Accumulated Depreciation | \$0 | \$70 | \$140 | \$210 | \$280 | \$350 | \$420 | \$490 | \$560 | \$630 | \$700 | \$770 | \$840 |
| Total Long-term Assets | \$7,000 | \$6,930 | \$6,860 | \$6,790 | \$6,720 | \$6,650 | \$6,580 | \$6,510 | \$6,440 | \$6,370 | \$6,300 | \$6,230 | \$6,160 |
| Total Assets | \$76,000 | \$133,657 | \$158,036 | \$176,580 | \$153,518 | \$142,629 | \$133,310 | \$122,383 | \$109,651 | \$96,782 | \$90,246 | \$79,675 | \$101,774 |
| Liabilities and Capital | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Current Liabilities | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Accounts Payable | \$0 | \$34,923 | \$27,216 | \$24,154 | \$13,678 | \$14,018 | \$16,899 | \$19,816 | \$21,190 | \$22,049 | \$26,133 | \$27,458 | \$30,784 |
| Current Borrowing | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Other Current Liabilities | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Subtotal Current Liabilities | \$0 | \$34,923 | \$27,216 | \$24,154 | \$13,678 | \$14,018 | \$16,899 | \$19,816 | \$21,190 | \$22,049 | \$26,133 | \$27,458 | \$30,784 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Long-term Liabilities | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Total Liabilities | \$0 | \$34,923 | \$27,216 | \$24,154 | \$13,678 | \$14,018 | \$16,899 | \$19,816 | \$21,190 | \$22,049 | \$26,133 | \$27,458 | \$30,784 |
| Paid-in Capital | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 | \$200,000 |
| Accumulated Surplus/Deficit | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) | (\$124,000) |
| Surplus/Deficit | \$0 | \$22,734 | \$54,821 | \$76,426 | \$63,840 | \$52,611 | \$40,411 | \$26,567 | \$12,461 | (\$1,267) | (\$11,887) | (\$23,783) | (\$5,010) |
| Total Capital | \$76,000 | \$98,734 | \$130,821 | \$152,426 | \$139,840 | \$128,611 | \$116,411 | \$102,567 | \$88,461 | \$74,733 | \$64,113 | \$52,217 | \$70,990 |
| Total Liabilities and Capital | \$76,000 | \$133,657 | \$158,036 | \$176,580 | \$153,518 | \$142,629 | \$133,310 | \$122,383 | \$109,651 | \$96,782 | \$90,246 | \$79,675 | \$101,774 |
| Net Worth | \$76,000 | \$98,734 | \$130,821 | \$152,426 | \$139,840 | \$128,611 | \$116,411 | \$102,567 | \$88,461 | \$74,733 | \$64,113 | \$52,217 | \$70,990 |

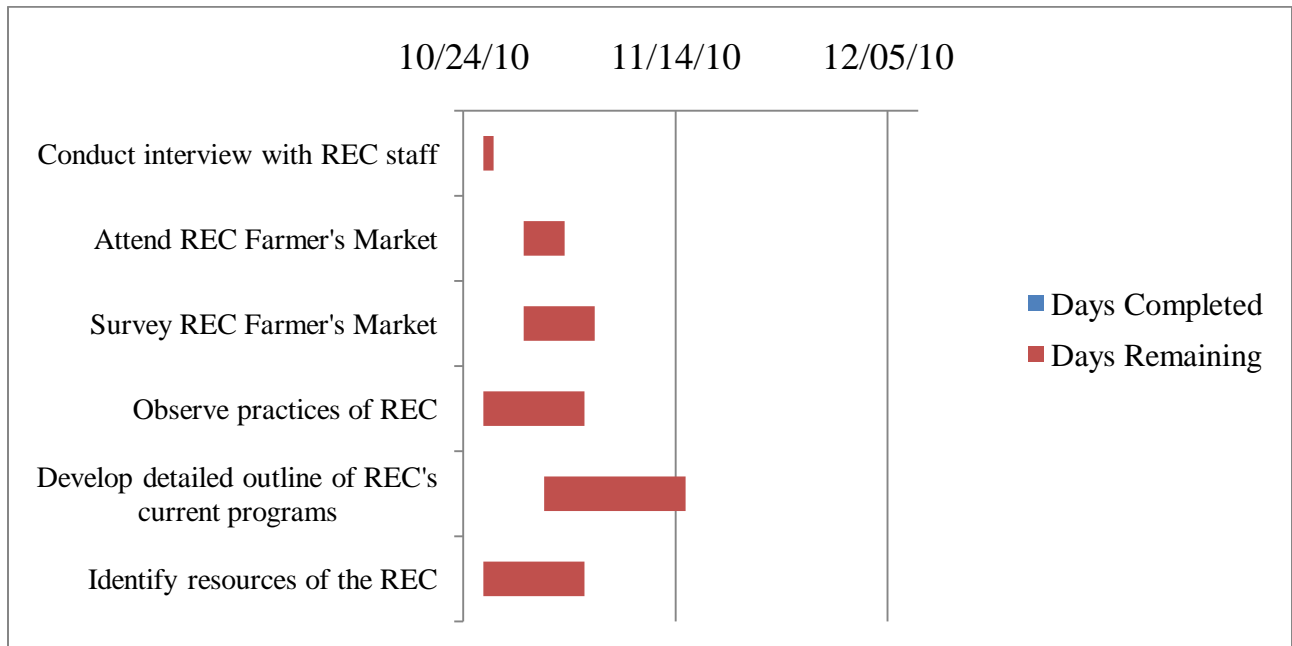
Appendix C – Project Management Tools

Due to the time constraints of the project, it was essential to utilize project management tools to ensure that the project goal was attained. Gantt charts for each objective (shown below) outlined the time allocated for completing each task. This method was effective in keeping the project team on schedule to complete the project goal on a day-to-day basis.

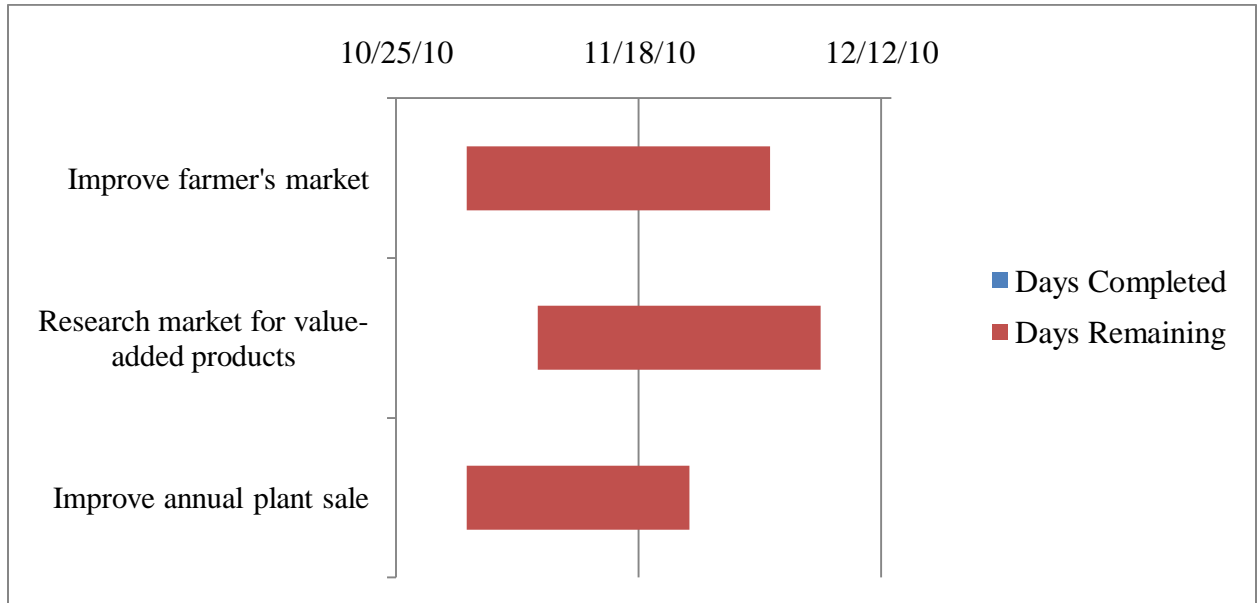
Exploring Successful Revenue-Generating Strategies of Similar Organizations



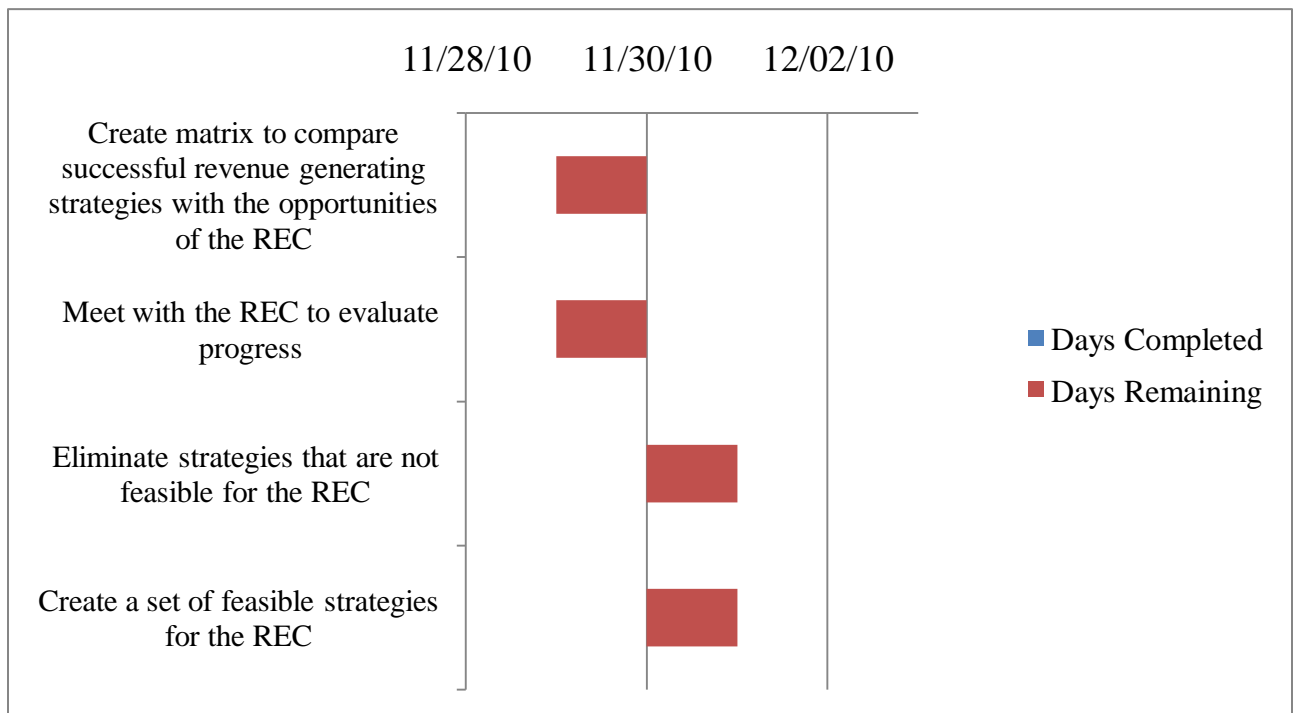
Identifying Opportunities for the REC Food Justice Program



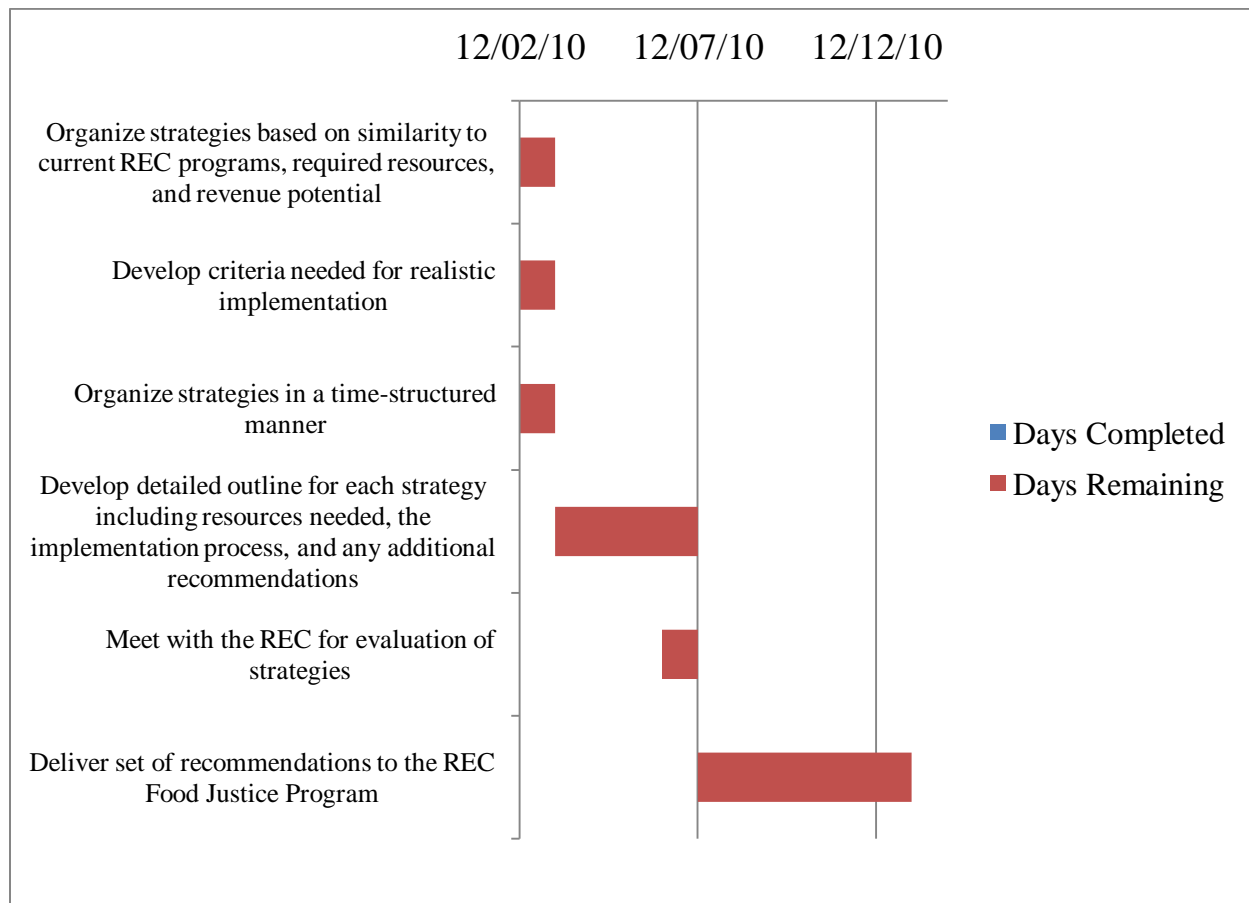
Evaluate improvements to current REC programs and practices



Compare information to identify compatible strategies for the REC



Develop a set of time-structured, action-oriented recommendations for the REC



Appendix D – Semi-Standardized Interview Guide for Exploring Similar Organizations

The semi-standardized interview guide (shown below) was an important tool used in the data collection process. This method provided consistency and objectivity when comparing the logistics of successful revenue-generating strategies utilized by similar organizations. The questions pertained to all aspects of the organization being examined, and then focused on the most successful strategies, specifically. The information collected through the interview process was imperative to completing the project goal.

- 1) What are your organization's most successful programs? Why?
- 2) **(If Farmer's Market)** Describe your organization's farmer's market in more detail.
 - a. What are the required resources to organize and run your farmer's market?
 - i. Manpower?
 - ii. Equipment ?

- iii. Supplies?
- iv. Knowledge/skills?
- v. Planning?
- b. Do you have farmer's markets in multiple locations?
 - i. If so, what is the target demographic of each location?
 - ii. What are your reasons for having multiple farmer's market locations?
- c. Which days are the best to run a farmer's market?
- d. What is the most attractive element of your farmer's market?
 - i. What makes it worthwhile for people to attend?
 - ii. What makes it worthwhile for vendors to attend?
- 3) **(If Plant Sale)** Describe your organization's plant sale in more detail.
 - e. What is the layout of the plant sale?
 - i. Are there different sections of plants?
 - ii. Is there music?
 - iii. Are there any other specific layout details that are important to make the plant sale more successful?
 - f. What are the resources required to organize and run your plant sale?
 - i. Manpower?
 - ii. Equipment ?
 - iii. Supplies?
 - iv. Knowledge/skills?
 - v. Planning?
 - g. How do you attract people to attend the plant sale?
 - h. Do other vendors attend? If so, how do you attract vendors to attend?
 - i. Is this program self-sufficient? If no, how is this event/program funded?
 - j. How much revenue do you generate annually through the plant sale?
- 4) **(If City Farm)**
 - a. How many total acres and number of farms/gardens does your organization currently run and/or maintain?
 - b. What are the resources required to maintain all the city and community farms/gardens?

- i. Manpower?
 - ii. Equipment ?
 - iii. Supplies?
 - iv. Knowledge/skills?
 - c. Where are these urban farms located?
 - i. How does your organization acquire this land?
 - d. What is the primary use of the food produced in the city farm (e.g. for sale at farmer's market)?
 - i. How much volume (estimate) is produced weekly by all the organization's city farms? Annually?
 - e. Why is this program important to your organization (e.g. food justice, revenue-generating)?
- 5) **(If Education Program)** Describe your youth/education program in more detail?
 - a. Why is this program/service important to your organization?
 - b. Are there any fees associated with either the youth or education programs?
 - i. How is the program funded?
- 6) **(If Other Program)** Describe the logistics of this program in more detail.
 - a. Why is this program important to your organization?
 - b. Does this program generate revenue for your organization?
 - i. If so, is this program still very consistent with your program mission?
 - c. How is this program funded?
- 7) Give an overview of your current budget including income (grants, revenue) and expenses.
 - a. What percentage of your annual budget is revenue generated by the organization?
- 8) Would you be willing to provide us with any of the following materials?
 - a. Previous materials for a grant application?
 - b. Previous plans or strategies for improving current programs or developing new programs?
- 9) Since you have been with your organization, has the organization ever struggled with financial instability?
- 10) What do you think are the main reasons that your organization is self-sustainable?

- 11) If your organization was not financially sustainable, would it be more difficult for your organization to accomplish your program mission?

Appendix E – Information Regarding Practices of Similar Organizations

By meticulously examining organizations that are similar to the REC Food Justice Program, elements of success emerged. These elements provided a cornucopia of successful strategies that other organizations have implemented, which the REC could potentially utilize. Throughout this examination, we conducted semi-standardized interviews (through personal and phone communication) with multiple personnel of non-profit organizations that are specifically centered on urban agriculture and food justice. This inquiry provided direction toward the means to developing and implementing a successful financial strategy to obtain a higher degree of organizational financial stability. This section will explore the logistics of revenue-generating strategies that have been successful for organizations similar to the REC Food Justice Program.

Southside Community Land Trust (Providence, RI)

Southside Community Land Trust, an organization located in Providence, Rhode Island, is an organization very similar to the REC Food Justice Program. The organization began in 1981, and has been dedicated to providing access to land, education, and resources to develop sustainable ways to grow food to create community food systems where access to healthy, locally produced food is available to all (Southside Community Land Trust, 2010). The program currently operates on an annual budget of approximately \$500,000; however, nearly 40% of these funds are generated through private donations and revenue of the programs. It was also noted by Susan Sakash, the development director of the Southside Community Land Trust, that without this percentage of private donations and revenue, the organization would have a more difficult time accomplishing its mission and struggle financially (Susan Sakash, personal communication, November 2, 2010).

The programs of the Southside Community Land Trust are geared toward food access, but not specifically toward a low-income target demographic (Richard Pederson, personal communication, November 9, 2010); however, the organization's programs are very similar to those of the REC, and provided insightful information. These programs include City Farm,

education, and the Urban Edge Farm. We explored each program deeply to obtain the necessary information to make appropriate recommendations to the REC, and our findings are explained (below).

The City Farm program includes developing and maintaining community gardens, vending at local farmers markets, and organizing the annual “Rare and Unusual Plant Sale”. This program generates a significant (75%) amount of revenue for the organization. The community gardens (14 in total), located throughout the Greater Providence area, accomplish the mission of the organization by providing the education and organization to build healthier, sustainable communities. This portion of the program is predominantly funded by public grants, and does not generate any revenue, but is still vital to the organization due to the numerous benefits to the community that it provides. The program also includes the cultivation and sale of urban agricultural products. Produce is grown on a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre city farm that is maintained by Richard Pederson, the City Farm steward. Richard began working with the organization as a farm VISTA approximately nine years ago, and became a full-time employee of the organization three years later. Community members and students of local schools and universities, with direction from Richard, volunteer time to work on the city farm, as well. The produce grown at the city farm is then sold at local farmers markets. Although the organization does not organize and run these farmers markets as the REC does, important information was uncovered regarding booth presentation, market location and volunteer organization. City Farm participates in three farmers market locations (high-income, mixed-income, and low-income). The organization accomplishes its mission of providing food access to all residents in proximity to the city farm by participating in these three economically different locations. There are 40, 10 and 4 vendors at the high-income, mixed-income, and low-income markets, respectively. This amount of vendors creates competition for sales of produce. The City Farm booth is successful despite its competitors, for various reasons: reasonable and labeled pricing, aesthetically-pleasing and organized presentation, and friendly and helpful booth managers. The success of the City Farm farmers market booth is primarily due to the reputation of the organization and the personal connections that its volunteers and employees have made with the community (Richard Pederson, personal communication, November 9, 2010). The last portion of the City Farm program is the annual “Rare and Unusual Plant Sale”. This two-day (Saturday and Sunday) plant sale is a community event that has been organized for the past 18 years. This plant sale attracts mostly mixed-income,

middle-class consumers, and is considered a fundraiser for the organization. This sale accomplishes the mission of the organization by increasing community relations and educating consumers in the field of urban agriculture. About ten years ago, 200 people attended and the Southside Community Land Trust profited \$5,000; however, it has progressed rapidly and presently attracts over 2,000 attendees and raises approximately \$50,000. This statistics raised an important question: what steps have been taken to induce this exponential revenue growth? This event requires careful planning and organization in order to be successful. First, about a month before the sale, which takes place in March, the City Farm steward must grow approximately 20,000 plants in 4-inch pots. These plants include herbs, annual vegetables and berries, and unusual perennials. Organization is vital to running the event smoothly, which includes organizing the location and responsibilities of volunteers, scheduling entertainment acts and marketing the event to the target consumer. The organization has developed a plant sale committee of 50 dedicated, professional volunteers that help specifically with this event. To retain these volunteers annually, the organization provides food and drink to the volunteers in exchange for time and labor. There is a well-defined, mapped-out setup of the event, and volunteers are assigned to specific locations and responsibilities. For instance, 18 volunteers are allocated to cashiering and delivering products to the buyer's vehicle. Other duties of volunteers include soliciting memberships and providing advanced knowledge of urban agriculture. A map of the event is given to each attendee to enhance the organization of the event, as well. Volunteer musicians rotate hourly, and provide entertainment throughout the event. This creates a festival-like feeling that adds ambience to the atmosphere. Extensive marketing of the event continues to increase attendance and community awareness. These marketing tactics include hiring a local artist to design posters and flyers, scheduling radio advertisement, sending a newsletter to all members of the organization and previous attendees, and utilizing social media (e.g. Facebook). Richard conducts market research annually by inventorying the plants grown and comparing it to which types of plants were sold. This research provides important information that can be used to alter which types of plants are sold in future years. This scrupulous inquiry contributes to the progressive annual growth of this event. The revenue generated through these various practices funds all the expenses (other than the expenses of the community gardens) needed to operate them. The dedication of the volunteers and employees of the Southside Community Land Trust's City Farm Program, in addition to careful planning and organization, has directly influenced the

program's movement toward complete sustainability (Richard Pederson, personal communication, November 9, 2010).

The education program of the Southside Community Land Trust is funded exclusively through private donations (approximately \$125,000) and does not generate revenue; nonetheless, it is still important to explore this program to uncover successful practices. The Youth Garden Club, a subprogram of the education program, involves partnering with local elementary schools to organize an after-school and summer gardening program for students. The curriculum synthesizes math, science and culture exposure with enjoyable, hands-on experiences. 300 elementary school students are typically participate in the program each year. The program culminates with an end-of-the-year block party known as City Fest. This event give the youth participants the opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments by sharing the produced they have grown with family and friends. The event also includes music and games. This program is sustainable due to widespread collaboration with partnering organizations. Active participants in this program also include Providence Public Schools, Greater Providence YMCA, and the Swearer Center at Brown University. Although this program does not generate revenue, the organization has developed practices that aid in sustaining the program.

The Urban Edge Farm is another program offered by the Southside Community Land Trust, and although it has been successful in the past, the organization is struggling to find grants that will support it. The organization leases a 50 acre portion of land from the state of Rhode Island, which is then divided amongst seven farm businesses. These farms business have the opportunity to utilize the resources provided by the Southside Community Land Trust including gardening education materials and supplies. After cultivating produce, the farmers participate in farmers markets, which are organized by Farm Fresh, a partnering non-profit organization located in the Providence area. This program accomplishes the organization's mission by providing the necessary land, resources, and education for community members to grow and distribute locally-grown produce. Despite the current unstable financial state of this program, there are important aspects of it that could be adopted by other non-profit organizations that are working with urban agriculture to increase food access in communities.

Analysis of these findings illuminates practices that have successfully moved the Southside Community Land Trust in a more sustainable financial direction. This movement has,

in turn, empowered the organization to better accomplish all aspects of its mission by offering fulfilling goods and services. The City Farm program is the organization's main source of revenue generation, and the following strategies have contributed to the program's success:

❖ City Farm

- Employing a dedicated, knowledgeable steward to maintain the city farm
- Instating a systematic planning process for growing produce to meet or exceed expected yields
- Establishing a solid foundation of volunteers through community outreach

❖ Farmers Markets

- Partnering with other organizations to relieve strain on staff members, increase the benefits to the community, and combine resources
- Participating in multiple markets that target different economic backgrounds
- Improving booth presentation by utilizing aesthetically-pleasing signs and labels, pricing produce reasonably, and having friendly, knowledgeable booth managers
- Creating personal connections with the consumers

❖ "Rare and Unusual Plant Sale"

- Planning and scheduling plant seeding so plants are ready for the event
- Developing an organized layout that is portrayed to customers through a handout
- Outlining the responsibilities of each volunteer to ensure all duties are covered
- Developing a plant sale committee that volunteers and markets for the event
- Utilizing various marketing strategies to reach the target consumer
- Providing musical entertainment set the mood for the event
- Conducting market research to continually improve the sale based on consumer desires

❖ Education Program

- Partnering with local elementary and secondary schools

- Developing an event that brings family and friends of youth participants together
- Collaborating with partnering organizations
- ❖ Urban Edge Farm
 - Dividing land amongst farmers to foster the cultivation and sale of locally-grown produce
 - Partnering with other non-profit organizations

Cultivating Community (Portland, ME)

Cultivating Community is a non-profit organization with a similar mission to the REC – “to strengthen communities by growing food, preparing youth leaders and new farmers, and promoting social and environmental justice,” (Cultivating Community, 2010). They have been fulfilling this mission by offering youth, refugee farmers and community development programs to the greater Portland, Maine community since 2000. Sustainable agriculture drives the farmer training, youth development, and food access programs to create community food security, empower young people and new Americans, and model a way of sustaining ourselves in a way that is in harmony with what our world itself can sustain. However, in order for this organization to provide the programs that help fulfill their mission it must utilize several different revenue-generating strategies.

Cultivating Community’s youth programming plays an integral role in fulfilling the organization’s mission. In an effort to strengthen the community, Cultivating Community offers youth the chance to take part in all aspects of the growing cycle through their participation in the Youth Growers, Community Culinary Crew, and Grow Internship programs. Youth Growers is a four-week youth summer educational program that offers youth a hands-on approach to connect to their community and learn about its food system. Each summer youth ages 14-17 participate in workshops and exercises that foster leadership and teamwork skills. Youth are rewarded for their efforts on the farm and in the community by receiving a \$640 stipend after the completion of the program. Most of the produce that is planted and harvested by the Youth Growers goes to a low-income community-supported agriculture (CSA) for 50 community elders supported by city grants. Other produce generates revenue through the sale of tickets to Twilight Dinners – “a

series of 7 dinners a summer featuring guest chefs from Portland using primarily product from the farm--including the meat we raise. The culminating meal in that series, the 20 Mile Meal, brings twenty chefs together to use ingredients from within 20 miles of the farm, and we use produce, eggs, pork, duck and goat meat raised on the farms for that“(Alida Payson, personal communication, November 16, 2010). Youth participate in presenting the dinners and 20 Mile Meal, hosting, speaking publicly about their experiences, designing dishes, and sometimes cooking.

The Community Culinary Crew is a continuation of the Youth Growers program offered to youth participants from September 1st to December 1st. Youth receive a stipend to harvest produce from Cultivating Community’s farms and then learn cooking and preservation techniques. Cultivating Community teams up with local chefs who teach the youth how to make and market jams, pickles and preserves. The way in which Cultivating Community obtains the necessary operational space for the program is both innovative and creative. The pickles, jams and sauces produced from the program are bartered with a cafe in exchange for time in their kitchen and with their staff. To share their work with the community, the youth will throw a harvest food event. Alumni of the Youth Growers program can continue to participate in the work of the Cultivating Community through their Grow Internship program. Experienced youth will work together and with Cultivating Community staff to tackle projects pertaining to farming, teaching others and marketing new enterprises at farmers’ markets. Cultivating Community partners with many local schools and universities. Collectively, they offer garden installation, technical assistance to teachers and staff, program delivery and more. As part of a fundraiser Cultivating Community partnered with a school and created an herbal salve. (Alida Payson, personal communication, November 16, 2010). These youth programs accomplish the organization’s mission, while obtaining the resources to grow produce.

The New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP) assists immigrant and refugee farmers in building their own successful farm businesses. Through classroom and field-based training, program participants, learn what it takes to operate a successful farm business and how to do it. Fresh Start Farms is a farmer’s collective comprised of participants in the NASAP program. The growers’ have complete control over their own operation and sell their produce to restaurants and grocers, at farmer’s markets and through the Community Supported Agriculture

(CSA) Program. All the money raised by the sale of their produce goes directly to the farmer. In this way, Cultivating Community is fulfilling their mission to strengthen the community by empowering the people of the community with a means to provide for themselves.

Garden School is a series of eight classes that teaches the necessary skills and knowledge to grow organic vegetables. They are priced at \$10 per class or \$70 for the entire series.

Analysis of this information clarifies the specific practices that Cultivating Community utilizes to achieve organizational sustainability. By outlining the strategies used, we will be prepared to analyze the feasibility of each strategy in regards to its implementation by the REC Food Justice Program.

- ❖ Youth Programs
 - Developing fundraiser (Twilight Dinners)
 - Partnering with local chefs to develop value-added products
 - Bartering using products (value-added) for services with other organizations
 - Partnering with local schools
- ❖ Educational Programs
 - Developing a model, especially for grants, of how a program can foster participant sustainability.
- ❖ Garden School
 - Offering a gardening school program to generate revenue
- ❖ General
 - Locating key private funders

Farm Fresh (Providence, RI)

Farm Fresh Rhode Island is a certified 501c3 non-profit organization which is dedicated to improving the overall food system in the Northeast region of the United States. Since its founding in 2004 in Pawtucket, RI, the organization has envisioned New England as abundant with diverse farms and rich soils, with locally produced foods at every dinner table. In an effort to make this vision a reality, Farm Fresh is constantly working towards their mission of developing a local food system that values the environment, health and quality of life of farmers

and eaters. Preserving RI farmland, building healthier communities, increasing access to fresh food, improving the impact of food production and distribution and strengthening community based businesses are the core objectives of the organization (Farm Fresh Rhode Island, 2010). Similar to many other non-profit organizations, Farm Fresh is able to accomplish these goals through the execution of successful programs. Farmers markets, as well as, the Fresh Bucks, Market Basket, Market Mobile and Harvest Kitchen programs are the major projects that Farm Fresh organizes. Although these programs are currently sustainable, this was not always the case. In 2007 the organization was comprised of nearly 80% grants and public donations and only 20% private funds, which was exactly where the REC Food Justice Program was at the beginning of the study. In just three years Farm Fresh was able to even out this ratio to roughly 60:40 and in effect has become much more sustainable (Farm Fresh Rhode Island, 2010). The following sections will detail each of the Farm Fresh programs in order to gain a better idea of viable strategies for the REC Food Justice Program.

An essential tool for all non-profits in the business of providing healthy, locally grown produce is the use of farmers markets. Markets are the most direct way to increase resident's exposure to fresh, healthy food, which is one of the core objectives of many of these types of non-profits. Throughout Providence, Pawtucket and Woonsocket, RI, Farm Fresh organizes and manages eight local farmers markets. Seven of the markets are operated during the summer in various temporary locations. The last market is operated during the winter, in a permanent structure obtained by the organization. Despite market season or location, Farm Fresh sets specific standards for the vendors that attend their markets, in order to stay in line with their organizational mission. The products sold at the markets are divided into three categories: farm products, artisanal products and prepared foods. Farm products include such items as produce, honey, syrups, eggs, dairy meats and flowers. Farm Fresh requires that all these products being brought to the markets be sourced from farms in RI, MA or CT. Additionally, 60% of the products sold must be grown on the vendors own farm. In doing so, the organization ensures that its mission is not compromised by selling non-local products. Similarly, for artisanal products (breads, coffee, chocolate, jams, pickles, soap), Farm Fresh requires that they must be crafted within the states of RI, MA or CT. Additionally, the ingredients used to make these products must be available from farms in New England. Lastly, prepared foods (salads, sandwiches etc.) must be prepared in a certified kitchen and furthermore, at least one item must be made with

ingredients grown in RI, MA or CT. The farmers markets organized by Farm Fresh successfully relate back to the program mission in this way. Examination of each type of farmers market used by the organization aided in the assessment of viable strategies for the REC.

Farm Fresh operates seven farmers markets each week during the summer months. These markets begin operation as early as June and run through the month of October. Although the majority of the markets are held within the city of Providence, Farm Fresh also operates a market in both Pawtucket and Woonsocket. These market locations and times are as follows:

- ❖ Slater Mills Farmers Market/Pawtucket – Sunday's, 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM
- ❖ Armory Farmers Market/Providence – Thursdays, 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM
- ❖ Broad St. Farmers Market/Providence – Saturdays, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
- ❖ Brown University Famers Market/Providence – Wednesdays, 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- ❖ Downtown Farmers Market/Providence – Fridays, 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM
- ❖ Hope St. Farmers Market/Providence – Saturdays, 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM
- ❖ Woonsocket Farmers Market/Woonsocket – Tuesdays, 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Upon observing these market locations it was found that four of the locations were within walking distance of rivers (Slater Mill, Brown University, Downtown Providence, and Woonsocket) while one other location was within a public park (Armory). Additionally, many of the markets are located within close proximity to local restaurants and shops. These location choices improve the markets by giving them both an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere, as well as, a separate activity for customer to engage in during, or after, their shopping at the markets. Furthermore, in an effort to stay consistent with the program mission while concurrently generating a sufficient amount of revenue, Farm Fresh diversifies its market locations in order to target both low-income communities, as well as, wealthier communities (Sheri Griffin, personal communication, November 15, 2010).

The Farm Fresh farmers markets are operated very similarly to many of the other markets located in the Northeast. The organization uses donated land as the space for their farmers market each week. For instance every Saturday the Habitat for Humanity, located on Broad St in Providence, allows Farm Fresh to organize and run a farmers market on their property. The cost of organizing the markets, however, is the responsibility of Farm Fresh. Similar to the REC,

operational costs include buying and maintaining tents and other materials, staffing market managers, advertising and the transportation costs associated with setup each week. These expenses are offset by the revenue that is generated through the markets. Although the organization itself does not sell produce at the markets, it is sustained through the fees that the vendors at the market are required to pay each season. According to Sheri Griffin, the Program Director at Farm Fresh Rhode Island, vendor fees can range from \$100 to upwards of \$840 a season, depending on the specific market and time of the week. Without these vendor fees, the farmers markets would not be sustainable (Sheri Griffin, personal communication, November 15, 2010). With upwards of fifty vendors each season, Farm Fresh is able to generate a considerable amount of revenue in order to cover the costs associated with the markets and other programs.

During the cold months between November and May, Farm Fresh also runs a wintertime farmers market. This market is located on Main St in Pawtucket. The market is open Saturdays (10:00 AM – 1:00 PM) and also recently (2010 season) on Wednesdays (4:00 PM – 7:00 PM). The main difference between this market, as compared to the summertime markets, is that it is located within a permanent structure rented by the organization. Although it was not purpose built it allows for the successful operation of a market during the winter months. For this particular market the vendor fees can be paid per week or per season. Wednesday season rates are \$560 while Saturday rates are \$840 per season. This increased price over the other markets can be attributed to the fact that the indoor market location attracts significantly more customers and vendors than any one market during the summer (Sheri Griffin, personal communication, November 15, 2010). Figures 1.1 and 1.2 outline the specific layout of the indoor farmers markets for each day of operation. Like the other markets, the wintertime farmers market accepts food stamps and SNAP coupons and also offers a \$5 bonus for using EBT cards. Recycling and composting centers are also available at the market for free, however, donations are encouraged.

As in any organization or business, advertising is essential to marketing events and products. Farm Fresh is no different and utilizes various types of advertising to get word out for their farmers markets, as well as, other important programs. Farm Fresh creates their own flyers, posters and handouts which are printed and distributed at their farmers markets, festivals and events. The organization also works with local community outreach programs, such as health clinics, to distribute advertisements. The organization has also been able to put advertisements

into local articles and papers for free which has been a cheap source of good advertising. Another method which the organization uses is radio advertisements which are played through Rhode Island's local National Public Radio (NPR) station. These methods have been seen as very successful for getting the Farm Fresh name out to the residents of Rhode Island (Sheri Griffin, personal communication, November 15, 2010). Farm Fresh has also used word of mouth to spread the word to residents and farmers about their farmers markets and have found this to be successful as well.

The Farm Fresh organization also organizes and runs programs to help fulfill their mission. One of these programs is the Harvest Kitchen program. This program is fairly new and is in its pilot stage currently. Since January there have been two sessions completed successfully. The program consists of a 15-week culinary and job readiness training within the Division of Juvenile Corrections. During the program, the troubled youth develop a line of value-added products using ingredients from local farmers. The training consists of:

- ❖ Orientation to Food Service Industry
- ❖ Basic Methods of Cooking and Food Preservation Techniques
- ❖ Weights & Measurements
- ❖ Herbs & Spices
- ❖ Kitchen Brigade and its philosophy
- ❖ Food ordering and kitchen preparation
- ❖ Sales and Marketing of the food products
- ❖ Basic Nutrition Fundamentals
- ❖ Knife Skills & Identification
- ❖ Safety & First Aid

Currently, the program has developed a line of applesauce, as well as, various dried fruits. The products are sold at the farmers markets presently, however, in the future the products plan to be sold at local stores and to local wholesale customers (schools, hospitals and cafeterias). The program uses rented kitchen space to serve as production space for the youth. The program has already proven to provide the youth with good relationships with employers who provide internships to graduates of the Harvest Kitchen program (Farm Fresh Rhode Island,

2010). The program is currently not sustainable because it is in the pilot program but has proved to be successful thus far.

Another program offered by Farm Fresh is the Market Basket program. This program uses a CSA-like model for operation. Customers who wish to participate in the program are required to pay Farm Fresh \$215 up front. This gets you a basket filled with fresh local produce that you pick up every week, for ten weeks, from the market of your choice. Farm Fresh limits the number of baskets to twenty per each market. Unlike a traditional CSA model, the Market Basket program takes produce from all of the different vendors, such that a full basket is more guaranteed for the customer. Each week, Farm Fresh directly buys produce from all the different vendors and assembles a basket for the specific customer to pick up (Sheri Griffin, personal communication, November 15, 2010). In this way the organization accomplishes their mission by connecting the grower and eater more effectively to allow for more local food brought into the community.

One of the other important programs that the organization runs is the Fresh Bucks program. This is a currency that Farm Fresh created which is accepted at all the farmers markets that Farm Fresh operates. Customers who use EBT or credit cards at the markets will be able to purchase the currency for use at the farm stands. EBT card users are allowed to purchase farm products and artisanal products with the Fresh Bucks; however, only credit/debit card users can purchase prepared foods with the currency. Credit card users are charged a \$1 transaction fee to cover the processing charges that Farm Fresh incurs. In doing this program, the organization is able to incent customer who use credit/debit or EBT cards to still shop at the market.

Successful strategies to obtain organizational sustainability are evident within the Farm Fresh organization. We outlined each strategy (including what program it pertains to), and how or why it is effective. This explanation aided in determining which strategies were appropriate for the REC Food Justice Program.

❖ Farmers Markets

- Creating regulations for products that are sold at the markets
 - Ensure the completion of mission goals

- Choosing diversity in market locations and times
 - A diverse set of locations and times for markets allows for a larger customer base
- Develop more locations for markets
- Choosing scenic, productive areas for markets
 - Placing the markets near a river or busy downtown area or park will increase the aesthetics and excitement of the market
 - Will attract a larger customer base
- Inviting entertainment and civic groups to attend the markets
 - Improves overall atmosphere of the event, more excitement/activities to do
 - Would work well with a good market location
 - Possible way to generate small revenue stream through registration fees/table fees etc.
- Obtain more vendors
 - More vendors increases customers desire to attend market
 - Generate a much larger revenue stream
- Choosing appropriate vendors fees
 - Fees depend on day of the week, time of the year etc
- Secure a permanent, indoor location for a wintertime farmers market
 - If only one, or one in a handful, will attract a lot vendors as well as customers
 - Allows for higher vendor fees
- ❖ Advertising
 - Flyers, posters, handouts
 - Cheap, easy way to distribute information about markets and events
 - Can be distributed through local community centers
 - Work with community outreach programs
 - Health clinics
 - Schools
 - WIC/SNAP centers
 - Look into possibility of free advertising in local papers/articles

- Advertising through local (NPR) radio stations has proven to be successful
- ❖ Harvest Kitchen
 - Utilizing the youth within the Juvenile Corrections process to create new lines of value added products
 - Renting kitchen space to pilot the project
 - Selling the products at local markets, stores, schools, hospitals and cafeterias
 - Directly aiding the troubled youth, by teaching them valuable skills and networking them with employers
- ❖ Market Basket
 - Using CSA-like model to guarantee fresh produce to customers each week
 - Working with a variety of vendors to purchase food basket products
- ❖ Fresh Bucks
 - Invest in card reading machine for EBT/Credit/Debit customers
 - Distribute program currency to incent EBT customer to shop at the markets
- ❖ Annual Local Food Forum
 - Addresses questions related to changing demand and federal policy regarding nutrition and food security
 - Networking event
- ❖ Fresh Food Drive
 - Networking with local growers and soup kitchens to run food drives for the less-fortunate
 - Effectively brings food to those who need it most
- ❖ Local Food Guide
 - Creating a functional and easy to use website which displays where when and how to get to local farms, farmers markets and shops which sell locally grown food
 - Creating a database to list what food is available and where and when to get it
- ❖ Farmer Newsletter
 - Monthly new and info by email
- ❖ Farmers Market Manual
 - How-to guide to selling your food

- Mainly to support farmers sell food at the markets
- ❖ Annual Local Food Festival
 - Connecting with local restaurants and business
 - Food and snacks
 - Drinks
 - Live cooking
 - Partnering with artists to provide live entertainment at the event
 - Generating revenue through ticket sales
 - Using this event as a means for marketing/advertising for the markets and other programs offered

The Food Project (Lincoln, MA)

The Food Project, with offices located from Boston to Beverly in Eastern Massachusetts, was founded in 1991 to foster a thoughtful and productive community of youth and adults from diverse backgrounds who work together to build a sustainable food system. The organization focuses its work on producing healthy food for residents of the city and suburbs and providing youth leadership opportunities. Additionally, the organization strives to inspire and support others to initiate change in their own communities. This mission is accomplished through a series of programs. The youth program offers the youth of any background or demographic a chance for employment on a farm. Occurring during the summer (called the Summer Youth Program) from which the alums can continue to work during the school year. Youth internships, open to Summer Youth Program alumni, that are project-focused are offered during the summer or academic year. The organization also offers a one-year full-time staff position for an 18-24 year old person. Besides the youth program, The Food Project has a variety of community programs listed and detailed, below.

- ❖ Community Garden Support – through this program The Food Project provides funding and support to gardeners within the communities they operate in. This supplies the gardeners with things like soil tests, gardening tips, and garden space.
- ❖ Build-a-Garden – Community gardeners are provided with seeds, growing guide, transplants, workshop, and additional help and support.

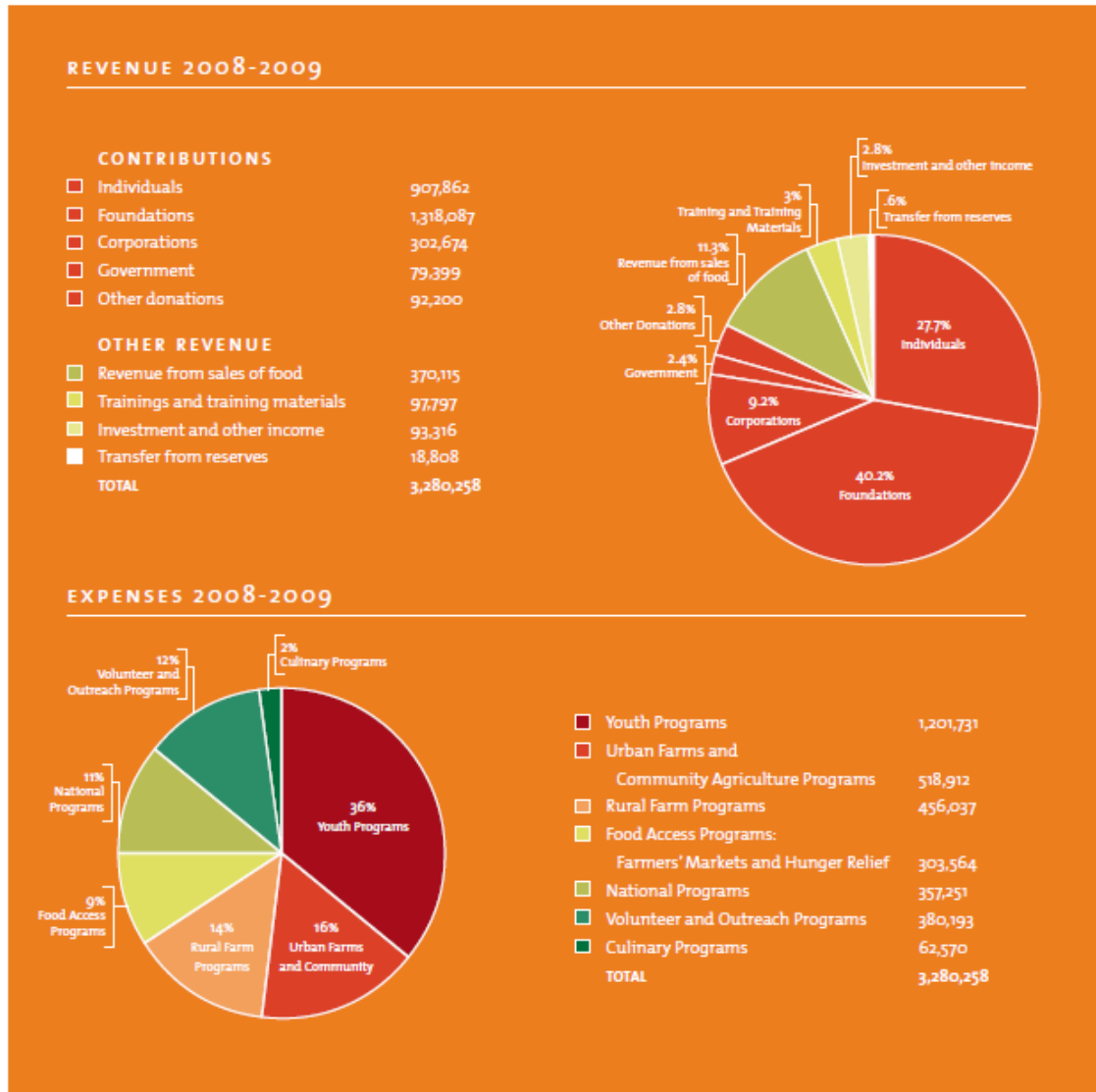
- ❖ Boston Bounty Bucks – This program matches every SNAP/EBT/WIC purchase up to a ten dollar total at the farmers’ markets.
- ❖ Annual City Farm Festival – The Food Project hosts this annual festival celebrating urban gardening with local crafts, food, art, and music.
- ❖ Urban Learning Farm - This demonstration and education farm was created for youth and adults in the community. Raised bed gardening is utilized here as a way to grow safely on urban soil, and maximize how much is grown. This farm is a space for a summer group program, gardening workshops, and school partnerships.

The Food Project is located in eastern Massachusetts with farms in: Beverly and Ipswich (a combined 9 acres), Boston (2.5 acres), Lincoln (31 acres), Lynn (1 acre). They grow nearly a quarter-million pounds of food without chemical pesticides between their farms. This food is then collected and then dispersed to farmers’ markets, their CSA program, and hunger relief organizations.

Sales of the produce at the farmers’ markets are one way The Food Project generates revenue. The Food Project organizes some of the farmers’ markets that they participate in, but not all, so this factor dictates logistics of the markets. Most of the markets are open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from June to October. The food comes mostly from the urban farm sites, while the remaining food is harvested on the farms located in Lincoln, Beverly, and Ipswich. Fresh fruit from local orchards, homegrown veggies from neighborhood gardeners, bread and baked goods from local bakeries, flowers grown on the farms maintained by The Food Project, and local honey from the Boston Honey Company are also offered at the markets. At each farmers’ market there is a Food Project staff member present to oversee the market, as well as some youth participants (excluding the academic year). The produce is transported to the market by van, which is also used to transport materials to help community members build their own raised garden beds. None of the farmers’ market locations are permanent structures solely for use by The Food Project. The locations are typically vacant areas that The Food Project can utilize for the farmers markets. Based on sales and any vendors’ fees the farmers’ markets are a valuable strategy used to generate revenue. Farmers’ markets are an effective way to distribute food, because it accomplishes the mission of providing access to fresh, healthy, and local food and produce to urban community members.

The community supported agriculture (CSA) program is another method to generate revenue. This program works on the concept that the consumer pays an upfront price for a set amount of produce on a weekly basis. The prices and pick-up locations vary depending on which program (programs are divided up by the different farms) the consumer signs up for. Every CSA member, however, receives 8-24 pounds of vegetables per week depending on the time of the growing season. This is a very acceptable way to generate funds, because it provides food to urban community members and is not resource intensive.

Combining funds from farmers' market sales, vendors' fees, and income from CSA programs only accounts for twenty percent of The Food Project's total earnings; the rest is all from donations/fund-raising. The Food Project currently employs six full time staff solely for this purpose. This sector raised approximately \$2.7 million in 2009 (Danielle Andrews, personal communication, November 18, 2010). A budget obtained from The Food Project's 2009 Annual Report, below, is to be used as a comparison of the distribution among funding sources between organizations.



The Food Project 2009 Budget Breakdown 1⁷

Analysis of this organization provides valuable strategies that can be utilized to generate revenue, while accomplishing the mission of the organization. It is important to highlight these strategies, so that each can be evaluated for its feasibility of utilization by the REC Food Justice Program. These strategies are listed, below.

- ❖ Building a fundraising staff team to apply for grants and acquire private donations
- ❖ Constructing a greenhouse
- ❖ Acquiring additional land to increase farm production

⁷ Data is represented in a modified cash basis, and based on unaudited financial statements. Indirect costs are allocated to program areas based on the size of each program.

- ❖ Incorporating community supported agriculture programs to generate revenue
- ❖ Offering additional products at the farmers' market stand, such as bread and honey

Appendix F – Example of Plant Sale Inventory to Conduct Market Research

Taking an inventory before and after the annual plant sale is extremely important when working to meet consumer wants and needs. This can be used to make the appropriate changes to the inventory for the following year. In the example of this inventory shown, below, appropriate changes may include:

- Decreasing the inventory or eliminating the offering of Sun Gold Heirloom Tomatoes
- Increasing the inventory of non-fruit/vegetable annual plant varieties by approximately 1,000 plants
- Increasing the inventory of hot pepper varieties by approximately 750 plants
- Decreasing the inventory or eliminating the offering of Sage

| Plant Type | Inventory | | Plants Sold |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Before | After | |
| Lacinato Kale | 500 | 300 | 200 |
| Collard Greens | 1000 | 150 | 850 |
| Red Russian Kale | 750 | 0 | 750 |
| Rainbow Swiss Chard | 500 | 0 | 500 |
| Sweet 100 Cherry Tomatoes | 1000 | 250 | 750 |
| Sun Gold Heirloom Tomatoes | 1500 | 1250 | 250 |
| Salad Greens | 1000 | 100 | 900 |
| Raspberries | 2500 | 0 | 2500 |
| Hot peppers | 2000 | 250 | 1750 |
| Non-fruit/vegetable Annual Variety | 3000 | 200 | 2800 |
| Fennel | 750 | 100 | 650 |
| Chives | 500 | 500 | 0 |
| Dill | 250 | 0 | 250 |
| Lavender | 750 | 50 | 700 |
| Thyme | 500 | 0 | 500 |
| Sage | 500 | 450 | 50 |
| Total | 17000 | 3600 | 13400 |

Appendix G – Example of Crop Field Plan

A crop field plan is absolutely crucial to the success of an urban farm. Below, shows an example of a field plan, in addition to step-by-step instructions to complete this process, which was developed by The Food Project.

A step-by-step procedure for filling out the crop plan for one vegetable follows; the sequence of steps is the same for all vegetables.

1. Calculate the Farmers' Market Distribution.
 - a. Determine the number of weeks that you hope to offer the vegetable at the market. Review the notes from your meeting with the Lincoln Grower to check for any special requirements for the vegetable (for example, the urban lots only grow summer squash early in the season). Enter this number in a column labeled "Number of Weeks".
 - b. Determine the quantity of the vegetable that you would like to offer each week at the market. Having the quantity in pounds will simplify your spreadsheet, since your yield data is also in pounds. Estimate the weight of crops that you would harvest by the head or bunch. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - c. Multiply these two numbers together to find the total yield needed. Add this number to a new column in the spreadsheet.
 - d. Divide this number by the average expected yield per row foot to find the number of feet that need to be planted in order to harvest the total yield. Add ten percent to this number to cover any problems you may have during the season due to weather or pests. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
2. Calculate the Urban Kitchen distribution.
 - a. Determine the number of weeks that you hope to offer the vegetable to the kitchen. Review the notes from your conversation with the Urban Kitchen coordinator to help you. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - b. Determine the quantity of each vegetable that you would like to offer to the kitchen each week. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - c. Multiply the two numbers to find the total yield needed. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - d. Divide the total yield by the average expected yield per row foot to find the number of feet that need to be planted in order to harvest the total yield. Add ten percent to this number to cover any problems that you may have during the season due to weather or pests. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.

3. Calculate the Enterprise distribution
 - a. Determine the number of weeks that you hope to offer the vegetable to the Enterprise programs. Review the notes from your conversations with the chef and other enterprise staff members to help you. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - b. Determine the quantity of the vegetable that you would like to offer each week. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - c. Multiply the two numbers to find the total yield needed. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - d. Divide the total yield by the average expected yield per row foot to find the number of feet that need to be planted in order to harvest the total yield. Add ten percent to this number to cover any problems you may have during the season due to weather or pests. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
4. Calculate the Total Distribution
 - a. Finally, add up all the row feet from the Farmers' Market Distribution, Urban Kitchen, and Enterprise Distributions. This is the total number of row feet you need to plant for that vegetable. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet. Although all the data in this spreadsheet is interesting for you, the total number of row feet per crop is essential for being able to develop the farm plan.
5. Calculate Bed Feet and 25 Bed Foot Sections of Vegetables
 - a. Divide the total number of row feet from the previous step by the number of rows per bed to arrive at the number of bed feet that will be planted for the vegetable. Enter this number in the next column of the spreadsheet.
 - b. Divide the bed feet by 25 to arrive at the number of 25 bed foot sections of that vegetable that you will need to plant. Enter this number in the final column of the spreadsheet. This number will help you as you create your field plan in the next step.

Appendix H – Plant Seeding Insight

Plant seeding is an integral objective for the overall success of almost any urban agriculture event or program (e.g. the annual plant sale or the farmers’ market vendor booth). Attached, below, is a resource developed by the Southside Community Land Trust (Three Key Hints for Starting Your Own Seeds) and The Food Project (Garden Planning Checklist), respectively.



American Community Gardening Association

Three Key Hints for Starting Your Own Seeds

By Don Boekelheide, Charlotte, North Carolina

Starting your own vegetable plants from seed makes a lot of sense for community gardeners. For the modest price of a seed packet, a community garden group can grow more than enough tomatoes or peppers for an average vacant lot-sized garden. That's not all – you also have a potential educational benefit if you can get kids involved in the process, and you can grow choice varieties – especially heirlooms – rarely available in garden centers. You can also time your growing so you've got top quality seedlings ready to go at the best time for your particular gardens.

To reap the rewards, though, you have to do things right. To thrive, our tiny crop, like all babies, needs tender loving care applied with common sense techniques. Doing it right doesn't, by the way, require spending a wheelbarrowful of money.

In the next issue of *Community Greening*, you'll find a longer article with more detailed information on starting seeds. In the meantime, keep these three key points in mind:

1. Timing is everything. You want your seedlings to be ready on planting day, which means paying attention to the calendar. For spring planting, determine your last frost date (Cooperative Extension agents and their Master Gardeners often have this information at their fingertips), and work backwards. Start warm weather crops like tomatoes and peppers roughly 6-8 six weeks before that date. For instance, if you can plant out on May 1, you can start your tomatoes indoors on about March 15. No sense in rushing – I've seen people start warm season crops far too early.

If you just have to grow something, start a cool season crop, like broccoli and lettuce. These can be planted outside 2-3 weeks before the last frost (and even earlier with row covers or in mild-climate areas), so you can start them earlier, 10-12 weeks before the last frost. Example: If your last frost date is May 1, you can start your spring broccoli in late February-early March.

Remember, not all plants are well suited to transplanting. Some, like beans, root crops (turnips, radish, beets...) and most melons (in my opinion), do better planted directly in the garden. And, once the ground is warm, it's sometimes easier to simply direct seed crops like cukes, leaf lettuce and okra.

2. Let there be light! The problem I see most frequently with indoor seedling projects is lack of light. Once veggie seeds have germinated, they want bright and ample light for 14-16 hours a day. A south-facing window isn't enough. The least expensive way to provide the needed light is with plain ordinary shoplights with regular fluorescent bulbs (no fancy 'grow lights' needed). You need to suspend the lights just above the growing baby leaves – just an inch or two, literally right down on top of them. Since you need to be able to move the lights up as the plants grow, you can suspend the lights from the ceiling or on a simple frame.



3. Getting it right. Getting started can be especially confusing. There are some excellent web-based how-to guides and a couple of excellent reference books – use them! I like Purdue University's guide at www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/ho14.pdf, and Whitney Farm's site at www.whitneyfarms.com. In print, I recommend *New Seed Starters Handbook* by Nancy Bubel (Rodale Press), and *Caring For Seedlings* by Shepherd Ogden (Brooklyn Botanical Garden).

Bonus hint – if you are new to all this, start small, with just a single plastic seedling tray or the equivalent, and pick easy plants, such as tomatoes. Let them be your (forgiving) teachers the first time around. Next season, you can go for broke, once you've learned the ropes.



Illustration by Natalia Moroz

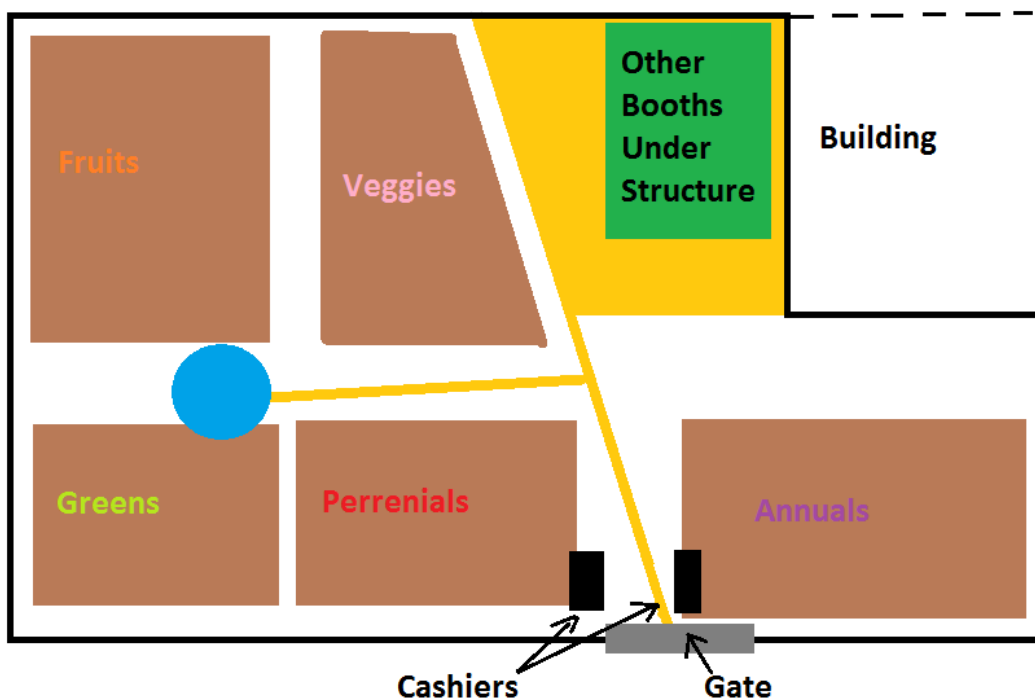
<http://www.absolutearts.com/portfolios/n/nataliamoroz>

Garden Planning Checklist

- Your soil has been tilled and amended as necessary and is soft and ready to work.
- Your beds and pathways are shaped.
- You have a garden plan so you know what to plant where.
- Your seeds and starts are ready.
- You have a way to water the plants once they are in the ground, and you have the labor to do it regularly.
- You have plans for 2 or 3 different planting dates. (This is to accommodate the weather, and because the variety of what you are going to plant will probably have a range of time in which it needs to go in the ground. For example, peas can go in the ground in March or April, whereas tomatoes can't go in until late May or June. To cover everything, you should have an early planting date in April, a middle one around the middle of May, and one at the end of May for the late stuff.)
- You have volunteers to help plant! Depending on the age of your students, you probably need one reasonably skilled or well informed adult for every 3 to 4 students.
- You have planting instructions for each of your volunteer helpers and you have gone over specific planting instructions with the kids.
- You have rain-proof labels so that you can find your plants again once they are in the ground.

OK. If you can answer yes to most of these questions, then you are ready to plant!!

Appendix I – Example of Plant Sale Layout Handout



Appendix J – Semi-Standardized Interview Guide for Obtaining Information on Target Market

- 1) Could you describe the general demographic of people living in the Main South community?
- 2) What are the most effective ways the CDC contacts and gains information from the community?
- 3) How does the community gain information from outside sources?
 - a) Do you need to gain trust before the community will utilize your sources of information?
- 4) How much interest from the community is shown in your programs?
- 5) What are the most effective ways to involve and sustain this involvement of the community in your programs?
- 6) What issues are most important to members of the community?
- 7) What locations do people of the community use to access food?
- 8) Are there any factors that make it difficult for the community to access healthy, organic food?
- 9) Are there any ways a farmers market could surpass those barriers to develop a niche market?
 - a) Type of food? Price? Location? Entertainment? Community organization?
- 10) Do you think people of the Main South community do or would utilize a low-income farmers market?
 - a) Why?
- 11) What do you think community members are looking for in a farmers market?
- 12) What do you think are the desired price points for these consumers?
- 13) When developing a marketing strategy for the farmers market, what would be important to advertise or make publicly available to the community?
 - a) Prices? WIC/SNAP accepted? Etc
- 14) Do you have any other additional information that you could provide us that you believe would be helpful when considering the needs and wants of the people of the Main South community?

Appendix K – Calculations for Estimating Crop Yield

Estimating crop yield is essential for meeting and exceeding the expected crop yield. This process is beneficial when attempting to maximize crop yield. An attachment, shown below, outlines the process of calculations used to predict expected farm yields.



Drought Options Calculator for Estimating Crop Yield

A calculation procedure to assist you to estimate your crop yield is available on Alberta Agriculture's "Ropin the Web" site > (1).

In estimating the yield of a crop, the producer would be counting the total number of viable kernels in a known area (foot²). These are then weighed, or a standard 1,000 kernel weight can be used. This can be extrapolated to an acreage level to give an estimate of potential crop yield.

Estimating Crop Yield

Yield (in kg/acre*) can be estimated using the following formula:

$$\text{Yield} = \text{Heads/ft}^2 \times \text{seeds/head} \times \text{'1,000 kernel weight'} \times 0.04356$$

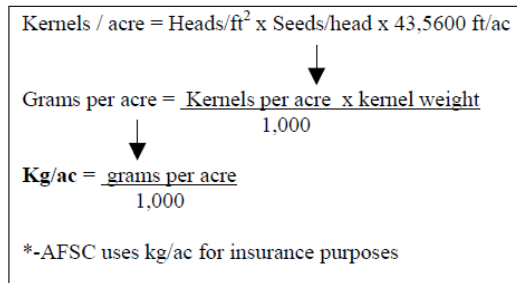
If you have questions or require further assistance on this topic, please call the AgInfo-Center at 1-866-882-7677

Using an HRS wheat example with estimates of 26 heads/ft², 24 seeds/head and the '1,000 kernel weight of 35 grams (from the table), the yield works out to:

$$\begin{aligned} &= 26 \text{ heads/ft}^2 \times 24 \text{ seeds/head} \times \\ &\quad \times 35 \times 0.04356 \\ &= 951.4 \text{ kg/acre} \end{aligned}$$

Given wheat at 27.215 kg/bu, the estimated yield would be about 35 bu./ac.

The logic for the calculation is provided below:



| Cereals | Desired plant population | | 1,000 kernel wt. (grams) | seeds / lb. (average) |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| | per square meter | per sq. foot (range) | | |
| Wheat | | | | |
| - Hard Red | 250 | 24 (16-30) | 31-38 | 12,000-14,600 |
| - CPS | 250 | 24 (18-30) | 39-50 | 10,800-12,000 |
| - Durum | 210 | 20 (16-24) | 41-45 | 10,000-11,000 |
| - Extra Strong | 210 | 22 (20-24) | 40-44 | 10,000-11,000 |
| - Soft White | 210 | 20 (18-25) | 34-36 | 12,600-14,200 |
| Barley 2 row | 210 | 22 (16-30) | 40-50 | 9,000-11,000 |
| Barley 6 row | 210 | 22 (16-30) | 30-45 | 10,000-15,000 |
| Oats | 250 | 24 (16-30) | 30-45 | 10,000-15,000 |
| Fall Rye | 250 | 24 (16-25) | 30-35 | 13,000-15,000 |
| Triticale | | | | |
| - spring | 310 | 30 (25-35) | 42-48 | 9,500-10,800 |
| - winter | 250 | 24 (18-30) | 43-46 | 9,900-10,600 |
| Corn | | | | |
| - sweet | 5 | 0.5 | 380 | 1,200 |
| - grain | 6.1 | 0.6 | 380 | 1,200 |
| - silage | 7.6 | 0.7 | 380 | 1,200 |

| Oilseeds | Desired plant population | | 1,000 kernel wt. (grams) | seeds / lb. (average) |
|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| | per square meter | per sq. foot (range) | | |
| Canola | | | | |
| - campestris | 73 - 178 | 7-17 | 2-3 | 151,000-227,000 |
| - napus | 73 - 178 | 7-17 | 3-4 | 113,000-151,000 |
| Flax | 425 | 40 | 5-7 | 75,700 |
| Special Crops | Desired plant population | | 1,000 kernel wt. (grams) | seeds / lb. (average) |
| | per square meter | per sq. foot (range) | | |
| Pea | 75 | 7 (7-9) | 125-300 | 1,500-3,600 |
| Bean | 25 | 2.4 (2.2-2.6) | 200-350 | 1,300-2,300 |
| Fababean | 45 | 4.3 (4.0-4.3) | 350-425 | 1,000-1,300 |
| Lentil | 105 - 147 | 12 (10-14) | 30-80 | 5,600-15,000 |
| Soybean | 50 | 5 | 100-200 | 2,300-4,500 |
| Buckwheat | 150 | 14 | 30 | 15,100 |
| Safflower | 50 | 4.8 | 35 | 12,600 |
| Sunflower | | | | |
| - confection | 4.5 | 0.4 | 175 | 2,600 |
| - oil | 6 | 0.6 | 126 | 3,600 |

Appendix L – Example of Crop Yield Documentation

Through meticulous documentation, an urban agriculture non-profit organization has the information necessary to evaluate current crop yield. This process will benefit the organization by highlighting the areas for improvement in regards to crop yield. An example spreadsheet, shown below, that was developed by The Food Project could be a useful tool for crop yield evaluation.

| Crop | West Cottage | | | | Total average yield (pounds/row ft) | 2000 yield (pounds/row ft) | Average yield (pounds/row ft) |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | bed feet | rows/bed | yield (pounds) | average yield (pounds/row ft) | | | |
| Beans, Bush Snap | 437 | 3 | 485.5 | 0.37 | 0.2 | 0.7 | 0.5 |
| Beans, Shell | 465 | 3 | 253.5 | 0.18 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| Beets | 186 | 5 | 301.5 | 0.32 | 0.3 | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| Blueberries | | | 0.5 | 0.50 | 0.3 | | 0.3 |
| Broccoli | 255 | 2 | 97 | 0.19 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Cabbage | 112 | 2 | 280 | 1.25 | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Carrots | 268 | 5 | 480 | 0.36 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Cauliflower | 48 | 2 | 18 | 0.19 | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Collards | 415 | 2 | 1553 | 1.87 | 1.9 | 1.0 | 1.4 |
| Celery | 25 | 3 | 122.75 | 1.64 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.7 |
| Celeriac | | | | | 0.6 | | 0.6 |
| Chard, Swiss | | | | | 0.6 | | 0.6 |
| Cucumber, slicing | 54 | 1 | 77.5 | 1.44 | 1.2 | 0.4 | 0.8 |
| Eggplant | 88 | 2 | 364.5 | 2.07 | 2.1 | 5.8 | 3.9 |
| Herbs, basil | 100 | 3 | 140 | 0.47 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 0.4 |
| Herbs, cilantro | 50 | 3 | 46 | 0.31 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| Herbs, dill | 10 | 3 | 7.5 | 0.25 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Herbs, parsley | 10 | 3 | 8.5 | 0.28 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Kale | 27 | 2 | 142 | 2.63 | 1.4 | | 1.4 |
| Leeks | | | | | 0.8 | | 0.8 |
| Lettuce | 174 | 3 | 288 | 0.55 | 0.5 | 0.4 | 0.5 |
| Mustard greens | 77 | 5 | 27.5 | 0.07 | 0.1 | | 0.1 |
| Okra | | | | | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.3 |
| Onions, bulb | 55 | 3 | 64.5 | 0.39 | 0.6 | | 0.6 |
| Onions, bunching | 35 | 3 | 21.5 | 0.20 | 0.2 | | 0.2 |
| Peas, shell | 35 | 2 | 8.5 | 0.12 | 0.1 | | 0.1 |
| Peas, snap | 75 | 2 | 21.5 | 0.14 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Peas, snow | 40 | 2 | 7 | 0.09 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Peppers, bell | 230 | 2 | 427 | 0.93 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.2 |
| Peppers, hot | 65 | 2 | 14.5 | 0.11 | 0.7 | 1.6 | 1.1 |
| Peppers, multi | 30 | 2 | 38.5 | 0.64 | 0.6 | 1.4 | 1.0 |
| Potato, red | | | | | 0.4 | | 0.4 |
| Potato, white | | | | | 0.5 | | 0.5 |
| Radish | 20 | 5 | 4 | 0.04 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Salad mix | 278 | 4 | 74 | 0.07 | 0.1 | 0.4 | 0.2 |
| Spinach | 160 | 4 | 34.25 | 0.05 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Squash, Magda | 90 | 1 | 479 | 5.32 | 5.3 | 2.0 | 3.7 |
| Squash, S (Patty pan) | 15 | 1 | 32.5 | 2.17 | 2.5 | | 2.5 |
| Squash, S (yellow) | 12 | 1 | 47 | 3.92 | 3.9 | 2.0 | 3.0 |
| Squash, S (Zucchini) | 27 | 1 | 90.75 | 3.36 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 |
| Strawberries | 136 | 1 | 285 | 2.10 | 2.1 | 0.4 | 1.2 |
| Tomatoes, cherry | 90 | 2 | 348.9 | 1.94 | 1.7 | 2.5 | 2.1 |
| Tomatoes, green | | | 122 | 122.00 | 61.0 | | 61.0 |
| Tomatoes, plum | 55 | 2 | 294 | 2.67 | 2.8 | 3.8 | 3.3 |
| Tomatoes, slicing | 200 | 2 | 924 | 2.31 | 1.9 | 4.0 | 2.9 |
| Turnip | 25 | 5 | 168 | 1.34 | 0.9 | 0.1 | 0.5 |
| Turnip greens | 77 | 5 | 5 | 0.01 | 0.0 | 0.5 | 0.3 |

Appendix M – Sample Letter for Requesting Volunteers and Community Gardeners

March 1, 2001

Dear Neighbors,

Happy Spring! Planting season is close upon us and we are looking for some gardeners to grow food at The Food Project's Langdon Street and West Cottage Street food lots. This season, we have many gardeners interested in growing food, and unfortunately, only a few beds available for neighbors. We ask that you carefully read through the following paperwork, and **call us as soon as possible** if you would like to grow food with us this year. Garden plots will be given out on a first-come, first-served basis.

We have outlined three criteria for gardening at The Food Project's food lots, which will allow the lot to be a safe and productive area for the neighborhood residents and The Food Project. To be considered for a space at the Langdon Street or West Cottage Street lot, gardeners must:

1. **Be able to see the land from their house.** This will allow us to be in partnership in protecting against any vandalism.
2. **Follow the guidelines set out by the neighbor coordinators and The Food Project.** We created these guidelines to protect the land and all the people who grow there. Each gardener will be asked to sign a letter of agreement regarding these regulations.
3. **Be willing to sell at the farmers' market (optional).** This year we welcome you to sell your vegetables at the Farmers' Market at Dudley Town Common every Tuesday and Thursday, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. The market is a good place for each gardener to make a little money and support the community. If you are interested and need assistance getting your produce to the market, please call us at the office in Dorchester (617) 442-1322.

Those neighbors that contact us first will receive a bed. However, we will also take into account if you have gardened with us before and how well you were able to follow the contract below. Please call _____ at the office, at (617) 442-1322 x13, and leave your name, address, phone number and that you want a bed at the Langdon St. or West Cottage St. land. We will call you to discuss the criteria and the guidelines. All beds will be assigned by April 1, 2001.

Amanda Cather
Urban Grower
555 Dudley Street
Dorchester, MA 02125
(617) 442-1322 x13
urbanag@thefoodproject.org

Appendix N – Sample Use of Privately Owned Space Request Letter

June 10, 1999

Joseph Kelly
City of Boston, Dept. of Transportation
City Hall, Rm. 721
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Kelly,

Thank you for speaking with me yesterday regarding the use of Parking Lot #27, Blue Hill Ave., Roxbury. I am following up with a written request to utilize this parking lot for our Farmers' Market, each Thursday afternoon (June-October), from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM.

In the past we have had difficulty accommodating customers who drive by the market, due to the high need for parking in this business area. I am unsure of the current use of Lot #27 during the high traffic hours, but assume that it provides customers with the parking they need to patron area businesses. These relationships with area businesses are extremely important to us and vital to the future use of park space in this area for our farmers' market. Throughout this process, we would hope to maintain these relationships.

We hope that sharing or full use of this lot would allow us to serve more customers and add to the overall patronage of all stores. We currently have a "Parking" sandwich board and cones that could be used to designate the parking area for market parking. If your department requires any other signage or structures, we would be more than glad to follow your guidelines. Thank you again for your time. I look forward to speaking with you soon regarding this request.

Regards,

Colleen O'Brien, Market Manager
The Food Project, P.O. Box 705, Lincoln, MA 01773
Phone: 617.442.1322 or Voicemail: 781.259.8621

Appendix O – Sample Use of City Space Request

Dexter Miller
Boston Parks and Recreation
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Third Floor
Roxbury, MA 02118

Dear Dexter Miller:

I am writing to request a permit from the Boston Park and Recreation Commission for the use of park space at Dudley Town Commons, Roxbury (Blue Hill Ave. and Dudley Street). For the past several years you have granted The Food Project use of this space for our Farmers' Market held from June until late October. We have obtained approval from the Dudley Town Commons Advisory Committee (contact individual: Liza Veras) to operate the Market on this site on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:30 to 7:30 (this includes setup and take down- actual mkt. operation is from 4-7pm) and have been included in their Park use plan.

Last year was another successful year for our Farmers' Market with the inclusion of another farmer, Drumlin Farm, which added variety and vitality to the market operation. The successful use of this park space has been evident to all in the community and is reflected in the number of residents we serve. In the summer of 1999, we provided fresh vegetables and fruits to a total of 1700 customers at our Thursday market. We look forward to offering high quality locally grown vegetables and fruits to Roxbury residents at the same site again this year.

Produce for sale at the Market comes from The Food Project's Summer Youth Program where fifty teens from Roxbury and greater Boston grow vegetables on farms inside and outside the city. This year in addition to produce, customers will have access to nutrition information as well as organic gardening information.

Nearby businesses have expressed their support for the Market and say they see increased business activity during its operation. We hope to continue this mutually beneficial relationship in the community.

We look forward to working with the Parks Department to make the Market a success in 2000. We welcome your questions and guidance about the use of this space and as we get closer, I will send over some flyers and information for your office.

Sincerely,

Sara Coblyn
Market Manager

Appendix P – Example of a Vendor Application Form

2000 Vendor Application & Guidelines

The Dudley Town Common Farmers' Market
Roxbury, MA

Application Due Date: April 20, 2000

Vendor Information

Name of Vendor:
Vendor Contact Person:
Name of Business/Farm/Garden (if applicable):
Mailing Address:

Work Phone: Home Phone:

Emergency Contact Name and Phone #:

Site Plans and Needs

Size of Market Stand / Area needed to sell:

Infrastructure Needs (i.e.. electricity, water):

Market Crops for 2000 Season

Expected Harvest Date

Intentions for Promotion, if any:

Information for Market Management in 2000

We want to make the market an exciting and profitable experience for every vendor who comes to Dudley Town Common, Roxbury. Please answer all the questions below. Applications are due April 20, 2000.

Can you attend for the full market season? Can you attend the first market, June 1?

Specify whether you will be attending the Tuesday or Thursday market or both.

Can we use your name and/or business name when advertising the market?

Are you selling at any other farmers' markets in the City?

What method do you use for pricing your produce/food items?

Do you have any obstacles for selling at the market (i.e., do not have a scale, table, cash box etc.)?

If you cannot be a continual vendor would you be interested in:

- Attending our "Celebration of local food and farming" event on August 17?
- Selling a certain amount of your product to The Food Project for resale?
If yes, would you be able to deliver to our Lincoln farm?

Thank you!
Sara Coblyn
Market Manager

Appendix Q – Sample Flyer for Displaying Farmers’ Market Layout



Saturday 11/20 Map

1005 Main St, Pawtucket, RI

Not to scale, but you give you a sense...

www.farmfresh.org/winter

