Community Food Projects

Indicators of Success

Fiscal Year 2011

Executive Summary

Provided by the Community Food Security Coalition with funding from a National Institute for Food and Agriculture Community Food Project grant

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Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program: Indicators of Success

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP) is a program that funds low-income community, non-profit organizations to develop projects using a proactive approach to combating food insecurity. Funded projects develop comprehensive, community solutions to food access issues, which increase the self-reliance of the community over their food systems.

The CFPCGP grew out of a philosophy promoting proactive approaches to hunger rather than relying only on food distribution, charity models of increasing food access for low-income people.

Community food security (CFS) is the basis for the community food project program and is defined as a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and builds social capital, economic equity, and promotes environmental stewardship.

To access the collective impacts generated by this program, the Community Food Security Coalition has compiled the data from the Community Food Project Indicators of Success (IOS) and from the Participant Impact Survey (PS) to show the compiled results from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, funded projects and to showcase the vital work taken on by the grantees and their local community members.

I personally want to thank all the grantees for their contributions to the “Community Food Projects Indicators of Success Report” and to thank the Community Food Security Coalition for their work in compiling the results and to share this compelling story of the importance of sustainable food systems that build upon community and individual assets.

I encourage all grantees and future grantees through the use of this important evaluation tool to continue to tell the compelling story of the important work taken on in the communities by building stronger relationships between farmers and consumers, with the consumer gaining greater knowledge and appreciation of their local food source.

I wish you continued success,

Dr. Jane M. Clary, National Program Leader, Nutrition/Extension Community Food Projects, Institute of Food Safety & Nutrition
A Letter From the Community Food Security Coalition

Each year I have the opportunity to work with Community Food Project grantees around the country as they develop and implement evaluations of their dynamic programs. It is deeply rewarding to learn about the innovative and integrated efforts that communities utilize to come together and improve their food systems. The data in this report is just a slice of the impactful work that is happening in these community food projects.

To learn more in depth information about Community Food Project grantees, you can visit the Food Security Learning Center’s CFP Database hosted by WhyHunger at http://www.whyhunger.org/cfp.

I would like to extend a hearty thank you to the organizations that worked hard to collect this data and ask their community members for feedback and input. (A list of contributing organizations can be found in the appendix.)

Additionally, thank you to the following organizations that provided and gave permission to use the photographs throughout this report:

- Adelante Mujeres, Forest Grove, OR. Photos courtesy Shawn Linehan.
- Chiricahua Community Health Centers, Inc., Elfrida, AZ.
- Common Good City Farm, Alexandria, VA.
- The Food Trust, Philadelphia, PA.
- Fresh Thinking Project, Pine Belt Mental Healthcare Resources, Hattiesburg, MS.
- Healthy Communities Coalition of Lyon and Storey Counties, Dayton, NV. Photos courtesy Wendy Madison

Congratulations on another year of moving us toward a more sustainable and just food system.

In solidarity,

Jeanette Abi-Nader
Community Food Security Coalition
Evaluation Program Director

Our First Garden Vegetables
Executive Summary

Introduction and Methods

The USDA-funded National Institute of Agriculture (NIFA) Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP) was designed to meet the food needs of low-income people; to increase the self-reliance of communities in meeting their own food needs; and to promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues. Since its inception in 1996, around 400 grants programs have been awarded in 48 states through CFPCGP. (CFPCGP was formerly administered through CSREES).

To assess the collective impacts of this program, the web-based Community Food Projects Indicators of Success (IOS) was developed to track and monitor the important and common outputs and outcomes across the diverse and dynamic CFPs. (The CFP IOS was based on the Common Output Tracking Form (COTF) originally developed in 2005.) The CFP IOS reflects a focus on outcomes (e.g., economic and social equity, healthy food access) of CFP grantees and includes a participant survey component, or the Participant Impact Survey (PS), which measures the self-reported knowledge, attitude and behavior changes of project participants.

The CFP IOS is requested of CFP grantees in addition to their annual required CRIS (Current Research Information Systems) report and financial documents. Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) administers the CFP IOS as part of CFSC’s Training and Capacity Building CFP grant. Together, these reporting vehicles collect data that demonstrate the combined impact of Community Food Projects towards increasing community food security across the country.

Fiscal year 2011 marked the seventh year that grantees were asked to submit data on their program activities and outcomes. Of the 56 grantees funded for fiscal year 2011, 43 completed the IOS providing a response rate of 77%. Over the seven-year reporting period, around 400 grantees were funded through the CFPCGP. Of these, 268 Community Food Projects completed the form – providing annual response rates ranging from 37% to 79% and a response rate overall of 67%. These data were statistically weighted to represent the results of 100% of the active grantees operating between FY2005 and FY2011.

CFP Indicators of Success Report Structure

This report provides a summary of the FY2011 grantee IOS reporting and PS survey results, as well as estimates for the entire seven years of data that have been collected on CFP activities. It is structured according to the fields of Whole Measures for Community Food Systems (WM CFS) (http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html#wm), a value-based planning and evaluation tool developed by and for CFP grantees. The fields include Healthy People, Strong Communities, Thriving Local Economies, Vibrant Farms and Gardens, Sustainable Ecosystems and Justice and Fairness. Together, these value based practices reflect a vision for whole communities seen through the lens of community food system development. Whole Measures CFS was developed as a CFP project and included input from over one hundred Community Food Projects.
The Activities of Community Food Projects

CFP grantees were involved in a myriad of activities to support community food security, the most common being training and capacity building, entrepreneurial food and agricultural activities and youth/school gardening and agricultural projects. Nutrition and health education, community gardens and food access and outreach were additional types of activities pursued by more than 40% of the USDA sponsored food projects during the 2011 fiscal year. Youth/school projects, the promotion of local food purchases and entrepreneurial food and agricultural activities have been the most common activities of CFPs since FY2005.

HEALTHY PEOPLE

In a nation simultaneously challenged with hunger and obesity, the importance of healthy food for all is evident. In FY2011, the active CFPs are estimated to have generated and handled 1.5 million pounds of food including fruits and vegetables, meats, dairy items, eggs and honey.

Figure 1: Methods Used to Generate and Handle Food (in Pounds), FY2011

The number of people and organizations involved in and affected by these Community Food Projects during FY2011 was significant. Nearly 181,000 Americans were provided food as a result of the programs and about 54,000 were K-12 students or youth attending summer programs. Customers and food recipients varied in age, race and ethnicity and most resided in low-income areas. Almost 20,000 Americans receiving food from the CFPs were involved in USDA Food Assistance programs:

- 1,900 were Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) participants
- 9,600 were Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps) recipients
- 3,200 were elderly meal recipients
- 5,500 were Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program recipients

Nearly 9 in 10 CFP participants reported that they were healthier, provided healthier food for their families, and had increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables as a result of participating in
the project. Significant increases in participant knowledge and attitudes related to healthful eating and local food systems were also found.

**Figure 2**: Being Healthier and Eating More Fruits and Vegetables, FY2011

- **Extent participation has helped me to be healthier**
  - A great deal: 53%
  - A good amount: 38%
  - Not too much: 8%
  - Not at all: 1%

- **Extent participation has helped me to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables**
  - A great deal: 56%
  - A good amount: 32%
  - Not too much: 9%
  - Not at all: 2%

**STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Creating self-reliant communities involves facilitating positive change for the existing local food system. During FY2011, the USDA-funded CFPs organized about 2,300 people and partnered with 280 organizations to strengthen community infrastructure. The CFPs and their partners conducted more than 200 community food assessments, formed more than 20 food policy councils and networks and implemented about 30 policies aimed at increasing community food security across the nation.

An important component to building strong communities includes building power for community members to have a voice and leadership in policies affecting their community. More than 8 in 10 CFP participants felt they could make a greater difference in their community as a result of participating in CFP programs. Similar numbers of participants reported learning more about working collaboratively, developing stronger leadership skills and feeling more confident as leaders in their communities.
THORBING LOCAL ECONOMIES

Increasing economic benefits to low-wealth communities and residents through increased jobs, micro-businesses and extended customer bases for local foods are important components of community food security.

- **Jobs and Businesses**: As a result of CFPs, about 100 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs were created and 155 micro-businesses were started or strengthened. Farmers and agricultural workers produced almost 60 value-added food products.

- **Farmers’ Market**: CFPs started almost 80 farmers’ markets in FY2011 which generated $1.3 million in sales.

More than 70% of farmers participating in the programs reported increased confidence in their job skills and ability to run a small business or microenterprise. Six of ten farmers reported increasing the size of their local markets and increasing their customer base as a result of the CFP grant.
Community Food Projects Indicators of Success

VIBRANT FARMS AND GARDENS

CFP work in FY2011 involved 1,100 farmers and the farming of 250 acres of land. In terms of community and urban gardens, CFPs are estimated to have worked with almost 8,500 gardeners and operated 580 gardens with over 2,200 gardens plots. CFPs worked locally and nationally to approve eight policy initiatives that supported small and mid-scale farms.

More than 80% of farmers reported gaining new farming and gardening skills and three-fourths reported diversifying their farm products. More than one-half of farmers reported increased income from farming or now being able to make a living in agriculture due to the USDA program.

Figure 6: Farmers, Gardeners and Farmland, FY2011

Figure 7: Gaining New Farming and/or Gardening Skills and Make a Living in Agriculture, FY2011

Extent participation has helped me to gain new farming and/or gardening skills

- A great deal: 52%
- A good amount: 34%
- Not too much: 9%
- Not at all: 5%

Extent participation has helped me to make a living in agriculture

- A great deal: 24%
- A good amount: 31%
- Not too much: 25%
- Not at all: 20%
SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEMS

The preservation and use of agricultural land for farming and gardening is essential for community food reliance but also can serve a broader purpose - protection of the environment. About 4 acres of land were preserved through CFPs. Also, over 240 agricultural structures were built in FY2011 with USDA funding. To increase and sustain the demand for local agriculture, 225 restaurants/distributors/stores and 190 schools began buying local produce as part of the CFP work. In addition, 210 businesses were modified or renovated to include local, healthy foods.

Most farmers participating in the program reported increased knowledge and improved attitudes related to sustainable agriculture and the environment. Eight in ten farmers reported increased use of sustainable or organic farming practices and improvement in food distribution.

Figure 8: Local Food Buyers, FY2011

Figure 9: Feeling a Stronger Connection to the Natural Environment, FY2011

JUSTICE AND FAIRNESS

The underlying foundation of community food security relates to the promotion of justice and fairness in communities and the food system. The indicators for Justice and Fairness are inter-woven throughout the five fields described above. Some examples of how justice and fairness has been promoted and increased in each field are:

- Increased health and local food consumption by communities of color and low income communities (Healthy People)
- Increased leadership among people of color in food policy councils (Strong Communities)
- Increased jobs and micro-business opportunities for people of color and individuals with low-incomes (Thriving Local Economies)
• Three-quarters of farms increased their economic stability through diversifying products, increasing customers, and/or increasing their local market through involvement with the CFP (Vibrant Farms and Gardens)
• Increased number of businesses were modified to include local, healthy foods (Sustainable Ecosystems)

Community Food Projects that understand the connection between food insecurity, race, class and privilege are better equipped to implement activities that confront and change these dynamics. For example, more than three-quarters of community food project participants who were interviewed about social justice issues cited significant increases in their knowledge and behaviors related to dismantling race, class and privilege barriers in the food system.

Figure 10: Taking Action to Reduce the Effects of Race, Class and Privilege, FY2011

Extent participation has helped me to take action that reduces the effects of race, class and privilege in my community

- A great deal 37%
- A good amount 39%
- Not too much 19%
- Not at all 5%
Conclusion

Although this report captures a subset of the work completed by USDA funded food projects, the progress made across all grantees is substantial. People are learning about the food system and taking on new leadership roles, acres of new land are being farmed and protected, healthy food is being delivered to residents in underserved areas and in schools and jobs and micro-businesses are being created. Systems change also is occurring through advocacy and new policy initiatives (see Figure 11). Adding to these successes is the fact that many of the CFP promoted practices work together to produce synergistic affect in communities. These system-wide findings demonstrate the important and integral role of Community Food Projects toward creating food security in communities across America.

Figure 11: Community Food Security at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole Measures (WM) Field</th>
<th>Indicator of Success</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2005-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy People</strong></td>
<td>Pounds of food generated and handled</td>
<td>1.5 million</td>
<td>21.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- pounds produced</td>
<td>847,000</td>
<td>6.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- pounds donated</td>
<td>76,000</td>
<td>883,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- pounds sold</td>
<td>573,000</td>
<td>6.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customers and food recipients</td>
<td>181,000</td>
<td>2.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- FMNP participants</td>
<td>1,900</td>
<td>112,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- SNAP recipients</td>
<td>9,600</td>
<td>110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- SFMNP meal recipients</td>
<td>3,300</td>
<td>61,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- WIC Program recipients</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>58,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- school or summer youth meal recipients</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>1.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong Communities</strong></td>
<td>Food policy councils/networks formed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizations represented on the councils or networks</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individuals on the council(s) or network(s) and participants assuming new or enhanced leadership roles in the community*</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>6,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- those who are people of color*</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approved policies</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- people affected by policies</td>
<td>3.3 million</td>
<td>42.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community food assessments completed</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- people affected by assessments</td>
<td>28.7 million</td>
<td>51.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thriving Local Economies</strong></td>
<td>FTE jobs created</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Micro-enterprise opportunities/micro-businesses started or supported</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Farmers’ markets started*</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- sales of farmers’ markets*</td>
<td>$1.3 million</td>
<td>$3.0 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New and/or value-added products developed</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-- sales of products*</td>
<td>$53,000</td>
<td>$61,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Tracking of this indicator began in 2010.
### Whole Measures (WM) Field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of Success</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2005-2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers participating</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>14,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- those participating in farmers’ markets*</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardeners participating</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>36,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of land farmed or gardened</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>58,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardens operated</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>3,900</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of policies approved that support small- and mid-scale farmers *</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of land preserved</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants/distributors/stores buying local</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools buying local produce</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>2,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses renovated/modified to include local, healthy food*</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structures built*</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community kitchens built</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pounds of food generated and handled</td>
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Community Fo
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Definitions

Community Food Assessment. A community food assessment is a collaborative and participatory process to systematically examine a broad range of community food assets and resources, so as to inform on local issues that need attention and change actions to make the community more food secure.

Community Garden. A community garden is a garden where people share basic resources—land, water, and sunlight. Community gardens are the sites of a unique combination of activities such as food production, recreation, social and cultural exchange, and the development of open space, community spirit, skills, and competence.

Community or Incubator Kitchen/ Value-Added Production / Processing. A community kitchen is a shared use facility that enables growers and small business people to process their own agricultural or food products to add value prior to sale.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program. CSA is a mutual commitment between a nearby farmer and the people who eat the food that the farmer produces. The farm feeds the CSA members; the members support the farm and share the inherent risks and potential bounty.

Emergency Food Collection and Distribution. Collection and procurement of edible foods that are then distributed through food banks, food pantries, and congregate feeding programs. Including but not limited to, gleaning, farmer/grower donations, food drives, and institutional donations of prepared and perishable foods.

Entrepreneurial Food and Agricultural Activity. Any activity related to the marketing of food products. Examples of these could include a single farm stand (as opposed to a farmers’ market) and a value-added food product cottage industry.

Farm/ Grower Cooperative. A group of farmers who are working together to market their products. This group may or may not have articles of incorporation or other agreed upon guidelines or rules.

Farm to Cafeteria Project. Included in this category are Farm to School, Farm to College and Farm to Institution projects. Farm to Cafeteria projects link local farmers with nearby schools or institutions to increase consumption of fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables. Students and/or other community members learn about the origin of their food, while small and medium-sized farmers are able to avail themselves of a local market to supplement their income. One project may include single or multiple schools, school districts, or institutions depending on the structure of project activities.

Farmers’ Market. Organization that provides resources and a gathering place for farmers and consumers to exchange products.

Food Access and Outreach. Informational and educational activities and campaigns to inform low-income people of their potential eligibility for and benefits available from government nutrition assistance programs, including but not limited to, SNAP (food stamps), school lunch and breakfast, WIC, summer food, elderly meals, and farmers’ market nutrition programs.


**Food-buying Cooperative.** A group of people or organizations that purchases food together in bulk to receive discounted prices or increased access.

**Food Policy Council/ Network.** A Food Policy Council (FPC) is comprised of stakeholders from various segments of a state or local food system. Councils can be officially sanctioned through a government action (such as legislation or an Executive Order) or can be a grassroots effort. While this category is not limited to policy initiatives, many FPCs’ primary goal is to examine the operation of the local food system and provide ideas or recommendations for how it can be improved.

**Immigrant/ Migrant Farm Project.** A project that works with immigrant or migrant farm workers to support their ability to make a living in agriculture through providing additional social services or employment development support.

**Job Skills Training.** Training to support someone in developing the necessary skills to obtain and keep a job.

**Micro-enterprise/ Entrepreneur Skill Training.** Training to support someone in starting and maintaining a small-scale, food-related business venture. These projects are typically capitalized at under $35,000 with three or fewer employees initially.

**Planning Grants.** Many community food project activities include some degree of project planning. This activity is for proposals specified as planning grants. These activities often include some form of community assessment, business planning, and/or building collaborations and partnerships.

**Promoting Local Food Purchases.** An education, outreach, or public relations campaign that highlights the benefits of purchasing raw and value-added local foods and food products. This may encompass support for activities such as buy-local campaigns, community supported agriculture, farm-to-cafeteria efforts, and farmers’ markets.

**Restoration of Traditional Foods/ Agriculture.** Activities (other than immigrant farmer projects) that focus on supporting the use of traditional food and agriculture and rely on agricultural knowledge bases held by indigenous people.

**Training and Capacity Building.** Includes services to support a wide variety of projects and initiatives, through trainings and workshops, practical publications, mentoring, and other individualized assistance.

**Urban Agriculture.** Promoting or growing of agricultural products within an urban environment. While many of the other project activities (community gardening, youth agricultural project, immigrant/migrant farm project) may also include growing food in urban areas, this activity is aimed specifically at utilizing urban lands for the production of agricultural crops.

**Youth/ School Gardening or Agriculture Project.** Includes all youth activities related to community food systems, other than farm to school projects. These activities could include composting and vermiculture.