

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Growing, Distributing and Learning about Fresh Produce: Community-Based Solutions for Nutrition and Sustainable Urban Food Systems*

- **Year Complete:** 2015
- **Local Government:** Sarasota County, FL
- **Local Foundation:** Gulf Coast Community Foundation

Project Purpose

To enhance access to, awareness about, and sustainable production of fresh produce through integrated community garden improvements, mobile produce delivery, and nutrition education.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

Community Gardens:

- Ideally, input regarding garden components should be solicited prior to the project development and grant application.
- Permitting fees, and costs for supporting infrastructure should be included up front in the proposal.
- Solar-powered equipment provided a sustainable energy source. However, there are associated longer term costs which complicate the consideration of these technologies.
- The contractors involved based their cost estimates on similar projects. However, additional parts and permit fees applied on this project. In hindsight, staff should request that all necessary parts, materials, permit fees, etc. be included in the quote. Informing the contractors up front that if it's not included in the quote, it won't be funded, would help to eliminate unexpected costs.

Mobile Farm Market:

- The truck interior was designed to carry additional pallets of produce to replenish the stock. It was learned that you can accommodate the same amount of produce by adding shelves in that space. These lessons were shared with colleagues, particularly the Greater Chicago Food Depository and the Toledo Northwestern Food Bank who have their own version of Sprout.
- The original program plan was to provide paper vouchers with a \$5 face value to agencies that, in turn, provided them to clients. This tactic caused confusion about costs when there were none, and clients lost the vouchers or showed up without them. The revised strategy was to have clients

sign in and voluntarily provide information on how many adults and children live in the household. Data on clients, produce, time and locations were collected and reported weekly.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

Be sure to provide as much information as possible up front for contractors to prepare their bids, so they can proof their numbers for incidentals, and save time (and money) on the back end. Inform the contractors up front that if it's not included in the quote, it won't be funded. This helps to eliminate unexpected costs. Also, it would have been beneficial to have some cushion built into the grant amount to allow flexibility for these types of unforeseen circumstances.

Additional Information and Resources

The Gulf Coast Community Foundation continues its work on many fronts in the Sarasota area. More information about their ongoing efforts to assist hungry families in their community can be found [here](#).