

Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Final Performance Report

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your LFPP award objectives. As stated in the LFPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future LFPP or Farmers Market Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by LFPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to LFPP staff to avoid delays:

LFPP Phone: 202-720-2731; Email: USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-720-0300

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact LFPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30 2014-March 31 st 2016
Authorized Representative Name:	David Johnson
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Recipient Organization Name:	International Rescue Committee, Inc.
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	New Roots Food Hub Engagement Initiative
Grant Agreement Number: <i>(e.g. 14-LFPPX-XX-XXXX)</i>	14-LFPPX-AZ-0008
Year Grant was Awarded:	2014
Project City/State:	Phoenix, AZ
Total Awarded Budget:	\$100,000

LFPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

Yes Different individual: Name: Caleb Stephens; Email: Caleb.Stephens@rescue.org; Phone: 602.761.9205

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by LFPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.

i. Goal/Objective 1: Establish the New Roots Food Hub as an IRC-operated social enterprise

a. Progress Made: IRC Phoenix is excited to have increased the capacity of the New Roots Food Hub to operate as a social-enterprise. The Food Hub has built on an existing relationship with New Roots farmers, including the Gila Farm Cooperative, to expand sales into new markets and improve the quality of product that is aggregated and distributed. By adding infrastructure capacity and formalizing operations of the Food Hub, IRC has been able to build out the “point of scale” in a new venue and tap into more accessible sales channels for producers and consumers. The New Roots Food Hub sources and markets product from participating small farmers, aggregates product for mid-sized outlets, and has *operated a leased refrigerated truck* to make deliveries. The IRC has utilized the Food Hub as a hands-on training resource for small-scale, refugee farmers who wish to develop their own capacity to serve retail, CSA, and restaurant markets. The IRC New Roots Food Hub has played a critical role in helping incubator farmers to be successful by adding aggregation and delivery capacity that they cannot achieve alone. This capacity has allowed farmers and the IRC to connect with small retail outlets throughout urban Phoenix that currently lack fresh fruits and vegetables. IRC’s New Roots Food Hub links socially disadvantaged farmers with low-income refugee and immigrant communities through a “*New Roots Food Hub Engagement Initiative*” that creates a healthier, more economically viable local food system. IRC’s New Roots Food Hub unifies three food system stakeholders (farmers, retailers and consumers) through a social enterprise that:

- Establishes continuous cold storage, aggregation and distribution for producers through the New Roots Food Hub;
- Links corner store owners and small farmers to increase sales revenue and consumption of locally grown, fresh, produce;
- Incentivizes low-income consumers to invest federal food program resources (SNAP, WIC) in locally-grown foods.

b. Impact on Community: The IRC Healthy Corner Store Initiative has not only benefited the New Roots farmers, but has really provided an incentive for low-income shoppers to get more fresh produce for their families. At one corner store, ABC Mart, that serves primarily Southeast Asian refugees and immigrants; there is a line of customers waiting to purchase different fruit and vegetable varieties before the store opens on Wednesdays when the produce arrives. People fill their shopping baskets with an assortment of specialty produce that is impossible to find in regular grocery stores, but crucial to their food traditions. Not only are these customers able to access fresh culturally appropriate produce, but they also use the corner store as a community center.

It becomes a social event where community members can gather together to catch up, share resources, and even cooking tips. These corner stores are not just about making profit, but are really important focal points of the local community.

ii. Goal/Objective 2: Increase farmer's income through the use of the New Roots Food Hub

a. Progress Made: In a survey conducted by IRC staff at the start of the grant, 88% of participating farmers said additional marketing training would be the most helpful service the New Roots Farm Program could provide to them. Therefore, the New Roots Food Hub Engagement Initiative has had a strong training and technical assistance component to equip farmers with the necessary tools and resources needed for the farmers to be successful. Training including planning for market, post-harvest handling, pack and grade standards, aggregation and purchasing procedures, customer service skills, best practices for farmers' market stands, and how to write basic invoices for sales, which was provided by IRC staff in partnership with UA Cooperative Extension and local farmers. Thirty refugee and local small farmers benefitted from technical assistance, marketing training, aggregation services, access to new markets and continuous refrigeration, and food hub administration, coordination, and bookkeeping made possible by this grant. The IRC successfully aggregated and distributed produce on a weekly basis through the Gila Farm Cooperative Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project. By aggregating produce and distributing to CSA drop-off locations, the New Roots Food Hub has continued to provide a market outlet to small farmers in our network. Additionally, IRC procured use of a refrigerated truck leased which ensured produce distribution in excellent condition. This asset was very useful during the Phoenix summer, when excessive heat has proven a challenge for small farmers to get their produce to market. The IRC has put considerable effort into training farmers on the operations of the Food Hub. In collaboration with the California Center for Cooperative Development, IRC offered a training for 17 farmers to discuss competitive pricing, post-harvest handling, aggregation and distribution for the CSA, serving corner stores and pop-up stands, contract growing for restaurants, and accessing new markets. Furthermore, thanks to the acquisition of the refrigerated truck, the Food Hub has been able to increase CSA sales. During this grant period, the Food Hub sold \$24,811 in local produce.

In addition to the Gila Farm Cooperative CSA, IRC Phoenix runs two pop-up farm stands located at Mountain Park Health Clinic in Maryvale and Phoenician Palms Apartments in Glendale which have been building up a customer base by offering ten to twelve varieties of produce from seven New Roots farmers every week. The Mountain Park Market accepts WIC, FMNP checks, and EBT cards to better serve the clients of the clinic, while the Phoenician Palms Market accepts EBT cards. Both markets, however, utilize the Fresh Fund match incentive to subsidize the price of the produce for the New Roots farmers. In fact, while one of our initial goals was to eventually hand over these responsibilities to farmers, our experience has shown us that IRC staff is key and will need to continue to function in an administrative capacity in order for food hub and CSA operations to succeed. Training and Technical Assistance to corner store owners has also

been a part of this initiative. The IRC received a grant from Vitalyst Health Foundation (formerly St. Luke's Health Initiatives) to pilot a healthy corner store initiative in Phoenix and has funded support to corner store owners in converting their facilities to accommodate fresh fruits and vegetables. As a part of the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, IRC staff has been able to conduct outreach to store owners; create and seek financing for upgrades, including refrigeration; and train retailers on how to order produce from the New Roots Food Hub and other small farmers.

b. Impact on Community: In addition to the training and one-on-one technical assistance described above, the IRC brings a suite of financial products to farmers and corner store owners through its Micro-Business and IDA Programs. Through Micro-Business and IDA, IRC can provide low-interest financing as well as match business-owner's savings that they invest in establishing or expanding their businesses [LFPP Funds were not used to provide financing]. These 'healthy food financing' tools are an important component to building the local value chain and promoting ownership of assets beyond the New Roots Food Hub.

iii. Goal/Objective 3: Increase consumption of fresh, local foods among low-income consumers in Phoenix 'food deserts'

a. Progress Made: In order to build a vibrant marketplace in a low-income neighborhood, the supply of fresh, culturally desirable food must be available at an affordable cost to the consumer and at a just price point for the producer. The New Roots Food Hub has overcome this "affordability" barrier and arrived at a fair price point by promoting the use of federal food benefits such as SNAP and WIC and topping up the use of such benefits through an incentive program called the Fresh Fund. When customers use their SNAP or WIC at participating retailers, the Fresh Fund matches their purchases up to \$10. So, if a customer invests \$10 in SNAP, they can buy \$20 in fresh produce. By purchasing more fresh produce, the Food Hub and farmer move more product, and the overall local economy benefits (economic multiplier of \$1.73 when food benefits are spent in the local economy versus at an extractive retailer). IRC calls this the "triple bounce" because a \$1 incentive has three positive impacts: increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, increased sales for farmers, and increased local economic activity. IRC has operated the Fresh Fund in San Diego since 2008 and has found that it results in 20 times the national average for SNAP use at farmers' markets. IRC Phoenix has been excited to pilot the Fresh Fund as a part of the New Roots Food Hub as the program generates not only additional clientele for participating retailers, but more importantly, shifts purchasing patterns towards healthier, fresh, locally grown foods. To work out the logistics of the new venue, and create "proof of concept" for retailers that are considering remodels to accommodate fresh foods the IRC has hosted pop-up farm stands outside of target corner stores. The "pop-up" have been staffed by IRC and serve as a venue to introduce the match program to customers and retailers. Through the matching incentive program, Fresh Fund, IRC Phoenix has

provided 1,979 low-income shoppers access to healthy food. Additionally, \$30,275 in Fresh Fund has been distributed in five corner stores, two farm stands, and one mobile market.

b. Impact on Community: The Gila Farm Cooperative CSA program, Healthy Corner Store Initiative, farm stands, and Fresh Fund incentive are all strategies to change people's overall eating habits. The numbers of customers reached and matched funds indicate the interest among low-income shoppers to consume fresh produce and the IRC Phoenix program makes produce accessible to these many diverse populations.

2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2014). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: N/A
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: – 7 corner store owners, 30 farmers sold to the CSA, the farm stands, and corner stores
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: N/A
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 1 - Downtown PHX Public Market,
 - v. Number of new markets established: 13 – Corner Stores: U-Bate African & Caribbean Market , Best Farmers Market, Divine International Market, ABC Mart, Ebenezer International; Mobile Market: Fresh Express; Farm Stands: Mountain Park Market, Phoenician Palms Market; Farmers Markets: Troon North Scottsdale Farmers Market, AZ Capitol Market, Downtown Glendale Farmers Market; Restaurants: Pane Bianco, Cuff
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$24,811 in CSA sales and \$4,985 in farm stand sales*These numbers do not include sales to corner stores, Fresh Express or restaurants
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 30
3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how?

IRC Phoenix has worked with five corner stores throughout Phoenix and Glendale, serving primarily low-income refugee and immigrant populations including Southeast Asian, East African, Central African, Middle Eastern, and Hispanic. There are currently three African Caribbean stores, one Middle Eastern store, and one Southeast Asian store that are able to offer their customers specialty crops that are culturally appropriate for the populations they serve. Furthermore, by pairing refugee farmers with ethnically and culturally relevant market outlets – corner stores and farm stands – they have brought specialty products to immigrant and refugee families who would otherwise struggle to find the foods of their home countries. Additionally, in an effort to reach a wider demographic and provide even more populations with fresh fruits and vegetables, IRC Phoenix began a partnership with Fresh Express, a mobile produce market. Fresh Express makes 4-5 stops at schools, senior centers and other key community gathering places in underserved neighborhoods three days a week. Fresh Express provides fresh produce to people with limited transportation and access to grocery stores at an affordable price. New Roots farmers have sold their produce to Fresh Express as well, providing an added market outlet. IRC Phoenix also runs two pop up farm stands located at the Mountain Park Health Clinic in Maryvale and Phoenician Palms Apartments in Glendale. The Mountain Park Market is located at the entrance of a large

health clinic, primarily serving the Hispanic population. The Phoenician Palms Market is located in an apartment complex where a variety of refugees reside including Middle Eastern, East African, and South Asian populations. Due to the location of the two markets, IRC Phoenix is able to serve a high number of customers who may not normally be able to afford fresh fruits and vegetables.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.

i. Who are your community partners?

IRC Phoenix worked with a number of local community partners throughout this grant period including: Maricopa County Department of Public Health SNAP Ed and Food Systems staff, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Vitalyst (formerly St. Luke's Health Initiatives), Rehoboth CDC, Maricopa County Food System Coalition, Healthy Local Food Systems Working Group, Fresh Express, Gregory's Fresh Market, Mountain Park Health Clinic, and Pane Bianco.

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

In collaboration with **Maricopa County Department of Public Health, SNAP Education staff and University of Arizona Cooperative Extension**, IRC engaged in outreach to SNAP customers, refugee populations, community college students and other community members to inform the public about the IRC Food Hub and Healthy Corner Store Initiative, as well as the Mountain Park and Phoenician Palms farm stands. The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and Maricopa County Department of Public Health SNAP Ed staff collaborated with IRC Phoenix to provide nutrition education and health resource information at the Mountain Park farm stand as well as nutrition education classes for refugees and other low-income populations. Additionally, UA Cooperative Extension worked with IRC Staff offered on-farm trainings to New Roots farmers to prepare them to sell their produce to the corner stores and other retailers. Utilizing the contact information of interested participants from a healthy corner store focus group administered by Maricopa County Department of Public Health, IRC Phoenix and MCDPH staffs met with many corner store owners and had discussions on how to convert their stores to be more healthy. Additionally, Phoenix continues to play a role in a number of local community initiatives with similar goals to continue engagement. Phoenix staff regular attends meetings and works with community partners within the **Maricopa County Healthy Food Systems Coalition, the Healthy Local Food Systems Working Group**, as well as **the Food Assessment Coordination Team**. In January 2016, USDA Deputy Undersecretary Dr. Wilson came to visit Best Farmers Market, one of the stores participating in the IRC Phoenix Healthy Corner Store Initiative. During the visit Dr. Wilson learned about the Fresh Fund incentive and met the store owners, former Iraqi refugees, as well as one of our New Roots farmers, also an Iraqi refugee. This visit provided additional exposure for the program and has led to communications with other organizations wishing to pursue similar programs in other states. **Vitalyst Health Foundation** funds part of the IRC Healthy Corner Store Initiative and offers significant support in bolstering IRC's networks related to health and food access. In addition to monetary support, Vitalyst has done considerable outreach and advocacy on IRC's behalf for the corner store conversion project. Vitalyst and IRC are currently collaborating to create a promotional video for the project. As this project progresses, Vitalyst will continue to play an advocacy and networking role, including conducting quarterly meetings to discuss successes and challenges related to the project. **Fresh**

Express and **Gregory's Fresh Market** are both mobile farmers market that target low-income populations. Fresh Express already utilizes IRC Phoenix's Fresh Fund incentive and Gregory's Fresh Market is in the process of joining the program. These markets are also marketing outlets for New Roots farmers. The positive partnership with the restaurant **Pane Bianco** has been used as a teaching tool for farmers in making restaurant sales. The staff has been very supportive in allowing New Roots farmers to learn about the process at a slower pace. Farmers can then use this knowledge to make sales on their own to other restaurants in the future. IRC Phoenix continually seeks out new partnerships and opportunities for our farmers. IRC Phoenix also worked with **Rehoboth CDC** on food access and neighborhood revitalization specifically in the Canyon Corridor neighborhood, one of three target areas for this project at the beginning of the grant period. With considerable experience working with small business and community organizations in Canyon Corridor, Rehoboth connected IRC to new stores and community partners and has helped propel the project forward.

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

N/A

6. Have you publicized any results yet?

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

Through our partner Vitalyst Health Foundation we were able to publish a rebuttle article to some press that came out regarding healthy cornerstore conversions. This involves our food hub and we were able to publish results of our work with cornerstore conversions and healthy food sales.

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2016/05/22/my-turn-winning-war-against-food-deserts-desert/84035064/>

- ii. To whom did you publicize the results?

Results were published with AZ Central which is a local newspaper in Phoenix, Arizona.

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

AZ Central has a readership of thousands on their online publications and is widely read throughout Maricopa County and the state of Arizona.

*Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).

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

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

Most of the feedback has been word of mouth through the corner store owners and pop-up stand customers. The participating stores have received a lot of positive feedback throughout the program. The store owners say their customers are extremely grateful for the Fresh Fund incentive as it allows them to purchase more fruits and vegetables for their families than they would normally be able to. In January 2016 IRC

Phoenix conducted a survey from past CSA subscribers to collect information for the Spring 2016 CSA season.

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

From the CSA survey in January 2016, 65% of respondents were interested in purchasing a Spring 2016 CSA subscription. IRC Phoenix also received these specific comments: "I've missed participating. Looking forward to what you've in store this year!", "Love you guys!", and "We love the food! The variety pushes our envelop from what we normally buy. Keep the recipes coming! ;-)".

8. Budget Summary:

- i. As part of the LFPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: Yes
- ii. Did the project generate any income?
 - a. If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?
\$29,796 was made from CSA and farm stand sales, all of this income went directly to the individual farmers or to Gila Farm Cooperative.

9. Lessons Learned:

- i. Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).

Many of the refugee farmers that the IRC works with are preliterate, have limited English language ability, and technical/computers skills. For this reason, we realized quickly it would be unrealistic to train and expect farmers to take over the operations and administration of the Food Hub and that staff would essentially need to continue carrying out the bulk of the administrative and technical work. We found that, for instance, rather than offering a training in bookkeeping using Quickbooks, a more reasonable and useful training for farmers was one in which we trained farmers in basic invoice preparation for their businesses, something very few of them were doing. The promotion of Fresh Fund has been imperative in correcting this price gap by subsidizing the consumer to afford local produce, yet this still proves to be a challenge. A major challenge has been finding mutually beneficial ways to serve both disadvantaged farmers and small business owners. The price point, as discussed above, is one of the most difficult pieces to find agreement on between these two stakeholders. Small farmers need to obtain the highest price for their produce, while small businesses want to pay the lowest price possible for produce making them hesitant to take the risk of paying more for produce and then having to turn around and charge more to their customers. In addition, because many of these stores did not initially sell fresh produce, they were concerned about investing in a perishable product without a very certain market. Another challenge had been the lack of funding for refrigeration. It is difficult to build a program around fresh produce when stores do not

have the basic infrastructure to keep perishable products. The intention at the outset of the grant was that storeowners would take out low-interest loans from IRC's Microenterprise department to purchase cold storage. However, most storeowners are very reticent to take on such an investment, given the low-margin businesses they operate. Without a guaranteed increase in sales, they do not see this as a smart business decision. This finding led us to do the pilot project in which we equipped two stores with refrigerators with funding from Vitalyst Health Foundation. Once a few stores were successfully selling produce, we used their example as a model for new stores. While this was successful, we found that stores using refrigerators specifically for produce were able to keep their produce on the shelves longer and sell higher quantities. Produce refrigerators are much more expensive, however, so more funding to purchase these specific refrigerators would lead to a more sustainable program. Refrigeration is absolutely necessary to operate a healthy corner store over the long term; and in particular, to enable stores to sell refugee farmers' produce which is for the most part highly perishable. The attitude of the storeowner largely facilitates or impedes the success of a healthy store conversion. Storeowners must be fully invested in the project for it to be successful. Owners that already have a good rapport with their customers are the ones who will succeed in this program. Ultimately, it is the storeowners who are the most important spokespeople for the project. It is beneficial to pair farmers and storeowners who share the same culture/ethnic cuisine. While storeowners may be hesitant to pay a high price for local produce, they are much more likely to pay the price for a specialty product that they cannot get elsewhere (at least, not fresh) and that they know customers will buy. This is one of the strongest pieces of our program – we have farmers growing specialty products from their home countries that no other farmer in Phoenix grows, and we are connecting these products with the appropriate populations of shoppers. A healthy corner store program probably cannot depend *solely* with small-scale, local produce, simply because the difference between what a farmer expects to receive and what a store expects to pay is too great.

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

The beginning of this grant experienced a delay in staff recruitment. This was because of cyclical turnover and was resolved with new staff coming onboard in November 2014. Slower staff recruitment did affect the initial momentum in achieving grant outcomes but measurable strides were made to achieve outcomes as scheduled. During the first period of the grant and given the innovative nature of this project, IRC Phoenix found it was necessary to pour significant time and resources into outreach and publicity in order to educate the community about the Food Hub. Through this initial legwork, the IRC built a model that provided a framework for recruiting future stores, farmers and customers. During this grant period, the IRC hosted twenty-four pop-up farm stands, rather than just three pop up stands originally planned for, in two neighborhoods with low food access to educate community members about the forthcoming availability of fresh produce in their local convenience stores. The IRC performed outreach to over fifty stores in various low-income neighborhoods throughout Phoenix and by the end of the grant period we have five stores participating in the healthy corner store initiative. While the number of stores is lower than the anticipated goal of twenty, the number of low-income shoppers reached and the amount of Fresh Fund distributed far surpassed

the initial goal set at the beginning of the grant. Additionally, the IRC was successful in equipping two of the corner stores with refrigerators as a pilot conversion project. The goal of the pilot was to demonstrate the necessity of refrigeration in order to sell highly perishable food, as well as to show the existing demand for fresh produce among low-income shoppers.

- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:

While one of our initial goals was to eventually hand over these responsibilities to farmers, our experience has shown us that IRC staff is key and will need to continue to function in an administrative capacity in order for food hub and CSA operations to succeed. The administration and technical operations management of running the food hub, especially of the CSA, was key to the success of farmers' businesses, as this work would be very difficult for them to manage given limited English language ability, technical expertise, and newly developing knowledge of US market standards.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project's work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you'd like to share about the future of your project.

IRC Phoenix will continue to support the five corner stores participating in the Healthy Corner Store Initiative as well as the mobile market Fresh Express subsidized with Fresh Fund. Additionally, IRC will add a second mobile market, Gregory's Fresh Market, next month to the program. The Mountain Park Market will also continue to run on a weekly basis throughout the summer. The Spring 2016 CSA season ends in mid-June, with the new season beginning in the Fall. In the future, we are hoping to further expand other marketing opportunities, particularly restaurants and larger retailers. The CSA, in particular, has provided a continuously reliable market outlet for our farmers to sell their produce. Refugee farmers benefitted from the technical assistance, marketing training, and access to new markets and continuous refrigeration made possible by this grant. The greatest benefit clients received was the in the administration and technical operations management of running the food hub, especially of the CSA, which would be very difficult for them to manage given limited English language ability, technical expertise, computer and numeracy skills, and developing knowledge of US market standards.

- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?

To continue the healthy corner store project it would be beneficial to create a baseline survey of the area where a potential corner store is located. The pop-up stands in front of the corner stores were valuable in getting the program information out to the community, but further research regarding food preferences and spending trends would

create a better understanding of the needs of the community. Maricopa County Dept. of Public Health conducted a focus group for corner store owners in low-income areas using a third-party that benefitted the IRC program in terms of outreach. Additionally, IRC and MCDPH are in discussions with researchers from Arizona State University to conduct surveys of corner stores, before and after their healthy conversions. Moving forward it is important to conduct an initial survey at each potential store and an evaluation at each store after it has been converted to better understand the progress of the program and obtain results.