

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

<b>Report Date Range:</b> <i>(e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)</i>	September 30, 2014-September 29, 2015
<b>Authorized Representative Name:</b>	Jenny Silverman
<b>Authorized Representative Phone:</b>	617-272-5917
<b>Authorized Representative Email:</b>	Silverman.jen@gmail.com
<b>Recipient Organization Name:</b>	Dorchester Community Food Co-op
<b>Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:</b>	Local Farms to Low Income Urban Communities: A New Model of the Urban Food Co-op
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<b>Project City/State:</b>	Boston, MA
<b>Total Awarded Budget:</b>	\$25,000

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

Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).

Different individual: Name: \_\_\_\_\_; Email: \_\_\_\_\_; Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Outline of Issue

Many inner city neighborhoods in urban centers of the U.S. have limited access to grocery stores with a wide variety of healthy foods. Boston is no exception to this rule. Dorchester is Boston's largest neighborhood, and is home to many low to moderate income individuals and families, predominantly people of color. Residents are African American, White, Asian and Latino, both native born and immigrants from many parts of the world, including the Caribbean, Cape Verde, Vietnam, Africa and Europe. Dorchester has high rates of food related illnesses, such as diabetes and obesity, which are often associated with poverty and lack of healthy food access. In addition to health disparities, many of Dorchester's small business districts suffer from years of economic disinvestment.

The Dorchester Community Food Co-op (DCFC) is addressing food access issues by adapting the traditional food co-op model to meet the cultural and economic needs of our neighborhood. Our mission is to create a co-op that will provide affordable healthy food and economic opportunity for the residents of Dorchester. The DCFC received a planning grant from the Local Food Promotion Program to support the planning and organizing for a community and worker-owned cooperative grocery store that will have strong ties with local farms, stock culturally appropriate healthy foods, and create a workforce of worker-owners drawn primarily from Dorchester and the surrounding community.

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**Our Local Food Promotion Program proposal had 5 main objectives:**

1. Develop Affordable Pricing Strategies for Implementation
2. Identify Priorities for Culturally Appropriate Product Lines
3. Evaluate the Feasibility and Pilot a Farmer-Owner Membership Component
4. Develop a Pool of Potential Worker-Owners
5. Hire a General Manager to Lead the Implementation Phase of Store Development

**Summary of work in each objective area**

**Goal/Objective 1: Develop Affordable Pricing Strategies for Implementation**

We set out to learn more about how to make the food in the co-op affordable in four areas:

- a) Create needs based affordable pricing programs
- b) Reduce the cost of quality food for all members
- c) Potential products and services that will help subsidize the cost of the basic food groups
- d) Potential for joint purchasing to reduce food cost

**Progress Made:**

The DCFC set up a committee made up of Board members and community volunteers to research affordability plans currently in use across the region. Visits were made to 5 Food Co-ops in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and Maine. In addition, phone interviews were held with 11 other co-ops in the region. At each Co-op, we talked to Board and staff about whether they had specific programs for low income shoppers, community engagement models, how the co-ops interact with the different segments of their communities across income and racial boundaries, and education programs to make the co-ops more inclusive. The DCFC also attended several regional meetings of food co-ops and spoke with other co-ops across the country, including the New Orleans Food Co-op, Mandela Food Co-op and Rainbow Grocer in the Bay Area (CA) and Mariposa Food Co-op in Philadelphia

We met with the executive director of the ICA Group about a model for affordable food co-ops being developed by their organization, and with the Massachusetts Farm to School Program to learn about affordable local procurement. We spoke with representatives from Associated Buyers, one of the large natural food distributors, about their “Farm to Freezer” line now being developed. We also learned about the joint purchasing programs available through the National Cooperative Grocers Association.

We met with nutritionists at community health centers to learn about “veggie prescription” programs that have been effectively used at farmers markets. We visited both urban farms in Boston as well as farms in the region to discuss direct purchasing of local produce. More recently we have been in conversation with Red Tomato, a non-profit that does aggregate purchasing and distribution of local produce.

**Findings:**

- 1) Most co-ops in the region are beginning to address food access issues, and are implementing some form of needs based programs. Eligibility for these programs is usually determined by participation in other food or economic assistance programs, like SNAP or housing assistance programs.
- 2) We amassed a list of best practices from regional co-ops, and can now begin to assess which programs are appropriate for our own community. Some of the highlights of this list include:
  - Consumers who are eligible for SNAP benefits often receive an additional discount on Co-op purchases to supplement their SNAP benefits. Some co-ops limit the additional discount program to SNAP customers who are members of the co-op.

- Some co-ops have community-member “worker” programs, and participants receive food discounts for their work.
- Co-ops create a list of basic food items which are sold to all with very low margins. These work best when they are well-advertised and well-marked in the store.
- Stores have “specials” that are ongoing, well-advertised and marked in the store.
- Partnerships with health center practitioners and local food pantries provide information to health center patients and low-income residents about how to shop at the co-op on a budget. Some co-ops have tours of the store led by nutritionists.
- Stocking fewer brand options to cut down on store overhead, reducing prices overall.
- Truckload sales with big discounts. Ability of co-op members to order in bulk.
- Displaying price comparisons to traditional stores to show price competitiveness.

3) We talked to a range of both well-established stores with long histories, and fairly new stores. Some of the co-ops did not address affordability issues until after opening, and now have to backtrack to work with board and staff to develop programs. We have the advantage of addressing this from the start.

4) Having the store General Manager, Staff and Board fully committed to addressing affordability issues on an ongoing basis is essential.

5) Lower margins (i.e. lower prices) will work if the sales volumes can be high enough.

### **Challenges**

1) Gaining access to joint purchasing programs will be difficult for a new start-up like the DCFC without a credit history, and with smaller gross sales. We need a strategy to overcome this limitation.

2) There are non-profit distributors that we can work with to obtain produce (in season) from local farms at competitive prices. However, the variety of this produce will be limited, and we will need to identify year round produce distributors to bolster this “direct from local farm” opportunity.

3) As a small store, participating in the WIC program will be very challenging because of the extensive shelf space required for all the WIC products.

4) We need to establish a number of programs and/or products that can create higher revenue to offset the losses on discounted items and subsidize the affordability programs. These have yet to be identified.

### **Goal/Objective 2: Identify Priorities for Culturally Appropriate Product Lines**

Like many food co-ops across the country, we would like to focus on fresh local produce and minimally processed foods, grown with minimal pesticides and other chemicals, and with few additives. We also know that we live in a very diverse community that has specific cultural food norms and traditions. For the store to be a success, we need to balance the product selection in the new store to appeal to these different needs, while maintaining a fairly priced selection for our neighborhood.

### **Progress Made**

1) We created a “**Corner Store Survey**” to investigate what food items are currently available in the areas closest to the new co-op location. We visited the 20 corner stores in closest proximity to the new Co-op site and recorded the food available in those locations.

2) The DCFC developed a “**Food Product Survey**” to ascertain community members’ shopping patterns and products that they are seeking. The survey was drafted and pilot tested, and then administered during the summer of 2015 online, and in hardcopy both at our Community Supported Cafe and by

door-knocking in neighborhoods near the store site. 168 surveys were completed, and surveys completed by residents outside Boston were omitted for a final sample size of n=152. 143 respondents provided open ended answers to a question about racial identity. Only two clear categories emerged with 31% of respondents identifying as African American/Black and 36% of respondents identifying as Caucasian/White. The remaining 33% of respondents identified other races or as two or more races. 56% percent of respondents were DCFC members.

3) We conducted two in depth **Focus Groups** (one at a Community Garden and one at a community health center) to have in-depth conversation about food preferences, current shopping habits and the kinds of food residents would like to see at the new Co-op. 22 residents attended the 2 group sessions, and all of the focus group participants were people of color.

### **Findings**

1. The **Corner Store Survey** confirmed our assumption that these stores are not adequate by themselves to supply a healthy diet. While 70% of the corner stores had some vegetables, they were mostly limited to onions, potatoes and garlic. A handful also had tomatoes and peppers, and there were no fresh greens in any of the corner stores. 70% of the stores also had a limited number of fruits-- mostly apples and bananas, and a few stores had tropical fruits such as coconuts, plantains, avocados and lemons/limes. 70% of the stores had a good variety of frozen vegetables, such as beans, broccoli, peas and corn. Only 35% of stores had minimally processed grains (only brown rice), and only 40% of the stores had some low sodium canned foods. 80% of the stores had some form of unprocessed or low-processed nuts/seeds, but available in very small packages (i.e. 1 serving size package at high price) Only a few stores had whole wheat bread (25%) or pasta (5%).

2. The **Food Product Survey** asked about the most important factors people want the future cooperative store to have. Results indicated the most important factors for a market to have, in declining order of importance, are affordable prices, a convenient location, quality products, cleanliness, organic/natural products, and food from the respondent's culture. The top ten most frequently reported products the respondents wanted to see in a local, community grocery store are: fresh produce, organics, better quality meat, seafood, bulk products, fresh spices, non-GMOs, prepared foods, natural cleaning products, fresh juices and smoothies, and natural body and hair care. The open-ended question asking respondents which products they wanted by culture did not yield any clear patterns; different respondents included African, Asian, Cape Verdean, Caribbean, Haitian, and Latin/Hispanic products. The vast majority of respondents reported they spend most grocery dollars at a supermarket (62%) or at a natural foods store (23%). A majority of respondents (65%) drive to buy groceries; 16% walk, 8% take a bus, and 5% take the subway.

3. **Focus Group** participants expressed an interest in finding greens, bulk foods, grains, foods from different cultures and natural and organic foods at the new co-op. Residents expressed concerns about the price of food in general, and acknowledged the challenge of finding natural food items at affordable prices. There was a great deal of interested in having more access to fresh produce of all kinds, including African, Asian, and Caribbean products. Health care products were also popular. Residents at the Community Garden survey group made the connection between the new co-op and gardening, and stressed the importance of education, food demos and sampling, and making healthy eating "trendy".

### **Conclusions**

Information we gathered from the surveys and focus groups confirmed the concerns residents have about the overall cost of the food, and the importance of the co-op maintaining fairly priced and affordable product lines. On the other hand, residents also expressed the desire to have organic food

available in the co-op, and to have products that reflect the cultures represented in the community. Meeting price needs *and* providing organic food will be one of our biggest challenges. The corner store survey confirmed that the most accessible stores do not stock enough items on their own to support a healthy diet. And our survey demonstrated that 35% of respondents either walk or need to take public transportation to do their food shopping, confirming the need for a local store with healthier options.

As we move to the implementation stage of the co-op, we will need to stock the store with 1) products not readily available in the neighborhood, 2) meet the cultural needs of the community, and 3) have a mix of both organic and conventional produce to give consumers options at different price points.

### **Goal/Objective 3: Evaluate the feasibility and pilot a farmer-owner member model**

As a multi-stakeholder co-op (with two classes of owners: workers and consumers), we became interested in adding farmers into our ownership model. We thought that adding a producer class would guarantee that the co-op would be meeting the needs of all stakeholders in the food system.

#### **Progress Made:**

Over the past year we engaged in conversations with a range of local farmers, both small and mid-sized, urban and more rural, for profit and non-profit. In addition to phone conversations, we went out and visited 3 farms. We also talked with advisors in the Food Co-op world, and spent time with our Board examining the pros and cons of this new model. We consulted with lawyers about changes to our articles of incorporation that would accommodate this structural change.

#### **Findings**

1. The farmers did not show interest in having an ownership stake in the Co-op. As small producers, they already face the risks and challenges of ownership of their farms. It did not seem apparent to them how ownership in the Co-op would benefit them. They were all very excited about becoming suppliers for the Co-op and were more than willing to explore other ways to work in partnership with us.
2. Food Co-op Professionals advised us against developing this third class of owners. We are already breaking ground by becoming one of a small number of multi-stakeholder Food Co-ops that includes workers as owners (see next section), and these advisors felt that adding a third class of farmers would add unnecessary complexity to our governance and ownership model.
3. We began to shift our conversations with producers away from the ownership question, and toward other avenues of creating priority relationships with local farms. Many farmers did express interest in exploring procurement contracts that would give them a guaranteed buyer and therefore minimize their financial risks. For the farms that were situated in the city itself, forming a relationship with a co-op that is only a few miles away from their farms was particularly appealing. Some producers indicated they would like to extend their reach to customers who are not presently participating in their CSAs. They also saw the opportunity to have ongoing conversations with coop members about the types of crops they want to have grown, and plan their planting in advance to match the specific demand of co-op shoppers.

#### **Impact:**

Based on the advice of professionals in the field, as well as lack of interest among local farmers, we have decided not to pursue the farmer-owner component of the model. We are, however, committed to including the farmer perspective in our procurement plans, and will work with farmer advocates and local farmers themselves on a “fair-trade” model. Recent meetings with Red Tomato, a local farm aggregate buyer and distributor, have helped us think about how to develop our capacity to balance our

price needs with meeting farmers' needs as well. Over the coming year, deepening these relationships, and developing them into a supply chain, is a top priority. We will continue to explore how to incorporate local farmers into the "face-to-face" shopping experience for the co-op customers. There is an incredible opportunity for co-op members and urban producers to have direct and open dialogue about the food that is being grown right in their own city. The CSA and farmers' markets provide this experience on a more limited basis, and the opportunity to expand this into a grocery store setting, reaching a more diverse set of shoppers, will be of benefit to deepening consumers' understanding of the work involved in growing local food. We will expand the education program to include in-store demos, farm visits, and "meet your farmer" days at the Food Co-op.

#### **Goal/Objective 4: Develop a Pool of Potential Worker-Owners**

Because the new grocery store will be a multi-stakeholder co-op, with both community-owners and worker-owners, we need to begin developing a pool of potential worker-owners who can be involved in the store planning and development even before we are ready to hire for the permanent co-op jobs. Funds from the LFPP grant were used to begin to identify, recruit and train potential worker-owners.

#### **Progress Made:**

We organized two "Worker-Owner 101" training sessions, led by Stacy Cordeiro of the Boston Center for Community Organizing (BCCO). The goal of these workshops was to introduce community members to the concept of worker-co-ops, how they work, and the benefits and responsibilities of the worker-owners. The workshops also presented information about finances, capital accounts, patronage rebates, and governance issues. Twenty people attended the two workshops, and attendees at both workshops expressed interest in continuing to participate in ongoing work to ensure that the viewpoints of the future workers are incorporated into the planning and development of the new business.

#### **Impact**

1. A committee of community and co-op members who will represent the future worker-owners is being established. The committee will review the DCFC bylaws with the interests of worker-owners in mind, using a case study developed by BCCO for DCFC's Co-op 101 sessions as a learning tool, and present its recommendations back to the Board for discussion and implementation. The committee will also participate with the Board in a discussion of the business plan as it is fine-tuned over the coming year.
2. There will be series of sessions for board and committee members leading to the development of a board-approved co-op policy document that will help DCFC establish a culture of open communication and conflict resolution, and promote the alignment of interests between worker and consumer owners.

#### **Goal/Objective 5: Hire a General Manager to lead the implementation phase of store development**

Hiring an experienced General Manager is one of the most important next steps in the development of the new grocery store. Our original plan was to begin this hiring process in the summer of 2015, but delays in the site negotiations and development have pushed the opening of the store back to late 2017 or early 2018. During the grant period we made significant progress in researching steps needed to hire a General Manager, but will not make the hire until later in 2016.

#### **Progress Made:**

1. The DCFC has gathered General Manager (GM) job descriptions from co-ops who have hired effective general managers. The job descriptions will be a valuable template for creating the DCFC GM job description.

2. With guidance from Jacqueline Hannah of the Food Coop Initiative and Bonnie Hudspeth from the Neighboring Food Coop Association, the DCFC has begun to outline both the timeline and best practices for hiring a co-op food store GM.

### **Findings**

1. The optimal time frame for hiring a General Manager is at least one year prior to opening the store. If budgets allow, hiring before that time frame is preferable.

2. There is a shortage of seasoned food co-op general managers. However, there is an opportunity to hire very well qualified people who have been assistant general managers and are looking for an opportunity to advance their career. Because there is a shortage of GMs the Co-op must be prepared to conduct a search for six months or more.

3. There have been successful hires from within the ranks of traditional grocery stores, but only when the GM has taken the time to understand co-op principals and can understand the culture of the particular co-op. The new GM will need not only to understand the grocery store business, but will also need to thoroughly understand the broader mission of the DCFC and its commitment to food justice and economic opportunity for the low income members of our community.

4. There is a small pool of co-op general managers that are people of color. While our search for a GM will be broad and deep, we will want to conduct a search in which all qualified candidates are aware of the opportunity at the co-op, and its particular role in Dorchester's diverse community.

5. "Policy Governance" is the prevailing governance structure for food co-ops which guides the relationship between the GM and the co-op Board of Directors. Policy Governance strikes a balance between recognizing the need of the GM to make crucial decisions in running the store and the need for the Board to ensure that the members' interests are met. Many GM candidates will request to review the DCFC Policy Governance (or any other type of documentation that outlines governance and performance goals.) Developing these policies will be a priority task over the next few months.

6. There is a unique opportunity to advertise at the Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) conference that will take place in Western Massachusetts in June 2016. The conference attracts food cooperative professionals from across the country, and will be an important source for candidates for our GM position. The co-op is now engaged in important fundraising work to make it possible to hire the GM by fall of 2016.

### **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).**

The Co-op has not yet opened its retail grocery store, so the full financial impact of the project is not yet actualized. The jobs created are still in the development phase of the project. The more significant job creation will take place upon the store opening—in late 2017 or early 2018.

- i. Number of direct jobs created: 1 (new Project manager hired. (3/4 FTE)  
Former Project Manager transitioned to Capital Coordinator position to direct the Capital Campaign (1/2 FTE))
- ii. Number of jobs retained: 1
- iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 1 Farmers' Market Coordinator--seasonal
- iv. Number of markets expanded: N/A
- v. Number of new markets established: N/A
- vi. Market sales increased by \$0 and increased by 0%. N/A (The store is not yet open)

- vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: Winter Farmers' Market participation: 8 farmers and producers
  - a. Percent Increase: N/A

**2. 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?**

Yes. Both the committee work and the worker-owner training sessions have successfully focused on involving more residents, particularly people of color. Our two focus groups were 100% people of color and predominantly low-income residents. Our survey respondents were 64% people of color. We were able to involve "Community Champions", youth of color working with the Dorchester Bay EDC to work with us on outreach and survey work.

Co-op membership grew from 365 to 417 during the grant period, and has continued to grow to 429 (as of this report date). Work done in the community during the grant period has energized community residents, and our most recent annual holiday party was attended by 50 members and supporters, 61% people of color. The number of attendees and diversity rates are higher than in past years.

**3. Who are your community partners?**

Community partners include the Boston Public Health Commission, Bowdoin St. Health Center, Codman Square Health Center, Dorchester Bay EDC, Dudley St. Neighborhood Initiative, the Food Project, the Nightingale Community Garden, Healthy Dorchester, the Sustainability Guild, the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition, and many other neighborhood associations and agencies in the community.

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

Staff members from Healthy Dorchester and the Boston Public Health Commission have participated in the affordability committee, researching affordability strategies, and contributing research and ideas about culturally appropriate product lines. The Bowdoin St. Health Center provided community outreach for our summer programming work, and hosted one of the focus Groups. The Nightingale Community Garden hosted the second focus group. Dorchester Bay EDC and the Boston Public Health Commission included the Co-op in a Partnerships in Community Health Grant, and community youth (supported through that grant) collected survey data, helped do outreach and staff co-op events. The Dudley St. Neighborhood Initiative and the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition participated in a panel at the Co-op Annual meeting on creating a cohesive food access system in Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan. The Codman Square Health Center is now taking over the administration of the Dorchester Winter Farmers' Market.

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

Our community partnerships have been developed over the last 4 ½ years of working on the creation of the co-op, and will continue beyond the grant period. The entire project is based on community involvement, both at the individual and the organizational level. Our partnerships with the health centers will continue after the store is open, with family practice physicians and nutritionists assisting their patients in accessing healthy food. We will work with community gardeners, exploring opportunities for them to sell some of their produce at the store. Urban farms, such as the Food Project, contribute to our understanding of local food production, and will be suppliers to the co-op when the store opens. And we will continue our work with Roxbury and Mattapan groups to coordinate the healthy food work in these three communities.

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

As part of the grant we used AORTA (Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance) to provide Board training on rooting our work in cultural and racial sensitivity and identifying leadership from the communities of color. Work with AORTA informed our survey and focus group design. Boston Center for Community Ownership conducted our worker-owner 101 training sessions, and will continue to work with us on developing a cohort of worker-owners to staff the store.

**5. Have you publicized any results yet? No—we have not yet publicized the results of our work.**

**6. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work? How did you collect the information?**

Yes. We have ongoing member and supporter meetings, all advertised and open to the public. We also meet with numerous neighborhood groups and agencies across Dorchester. We have monthly phone call advisory meetings facilitated by the Neighboring Food Co-op Association to mentor and provide guidance for our work. We also receive feedback from staff at the Food Co-op Initiative, and the Boston Center for Community Ownership.

**What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?**

Community members and organizations have been supportive of our development plans, and are eager to find more volunteer opportunities with the co-op. One of our challenges with limited staffing has been to provide the structure to organize more volunteers. Some of the LFPP activities helped provide that structure, and the Affordability Committee that we created was a successful engagement tool. Members and organizations alike have continued to stress the importance of ongoing outreach, and have encouraged us to invest more resources in this effort. Funds from the LFPP grant were used to support outreach staff, and we are currently seeking funding to continue that position. The BCCO staff have encouraged us to continue to involve the future worker-owners in the development plan, and have influenced our decision to implement the worker-owner committee described earlier. In addition, at our Annual Meeting in June, members told us that they wanted more forums to talk about food policy issues and to have policy makers/politicians involved.

**7. Budget Summary**

Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report:   
Did the project generate any income? No

**8. Lessons Learned**

1. We learned that many co-ops across the region are trying to address greater access for low income members of their communities through a variety of affordability programs. Many co-ops are coming to these issues after operating for many years, and have to overcome not just the prices themselves, but also the perception that the co-op food is too expensive. Addressing these hard issues in the planning stage of our store and including our membership in the development of these strategies will place the co-op in a much more positive light right at the start.

2. We came into the grant period excited about the idea of a multi-stakeholder co-op that included farmers as key component of the ownership model. We were disappointed that this

concept did not seem to gain traction with farmers in our area. As described earlier, we are now pursuing other means for farmer engagement.

3. It is clear from all our work that interest in the cooperative model, worker-ownership, natural food products and local sourcing all run high in the Dorchester community. But the pricing challenge: how to offer good quality food at a fair price to the producers, offering a living wage to our worker-owners, while keeping the prices affordable to our consumers---remains a hurdle to overcome. Looking at ways to open up some of the group purchasing opportunities currently available to larger food co-ops will be an important focus of our work over the next year.

4. The focus groups were an opportunity to have rich conversation with community members. We continue to be impressed with the deep understanding of the relationship between food and health that resides within our community, and the frustration that residents feel about not having physical access or financial access to the food that they want. It inspires us to continue to work to build a store that will meet these needs and contribute to a healthier community. We also learned that our members would like to have more frequent and regular meetings to discuss both general food policy as well as details of the co-op development.

## **9. Future Work and Next Steps**

The Co-op leadership is now charged with incorporating the information we have gathered and lessons learned from the LFPP planning grant into the actualization of the new store. The Board will direct this work and set priorities, and the Project Manager will coordinate the activities until the General Manager is hired. In particular, we will be establishing the store design and making decisions about product selection, using the product preference survey as a guide for decision making. We will be selecting the affordability programs that seem well suited to our particular community needs, and building the models into our financial projections. We are in the process of updating our market study, and will soon hire a store designer and community outreach staff.

The DCFC has been selected as a 2016 Social Innovator by the Social Innovation Forum, and we will receive 24 months of focused support including consulting, executive coaching and presentation advising. This opportunity will allow us to fine-tune our business plan and enhance our ability to access support from the funding community. Fundraising for the Capital Budget of the new store is already underway. A Community Investment Campaign has raised \$100,000, with a goal of \$500,000 by June 2016. In addition, grants are being submitted to foundations and government agencies. The Dorchester Community intends to apply for an LFPP implementation grant to support the project.

In 2017, we will be moving into the construction phase, building out the co-op space, purchasing the equipment, and hiring the store staff. During this period, fundraising will continue to ensure that the Co-op has sufficient working capital for the first several years of operation.

Thousands of members of the Dorchester community have already felt the impact of the Co-op development, with more than 9,000 residents attending our pilot programs over the past 4 years, and more than 100 residents volunteering on various aspects of the project. We created an ongoing Dorchester-wide Winter Farmers' Market that is now spinning off as its own enterprise, administered by one of our partner organizations. Community members are now looking forward to the final stage of our main project, which is the opening and flourishing of the cooperatively owned grocery store in the heart of Dorchester.