

Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant Report

December 2020



REGION FIVE
Development Commission

Funding provided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) through the Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant.

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/business-dev-loans-grants/gfap-tech-assist-grant>

Project facilitation and coordination provided by Region Five Development Commission.

regionfive.org

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Contributors:

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Staci Headley, R5DC Sr. Regional Development Planner, Report Author & Project Manager
Cheryal Hills, R5DC Executive Director, Report Contributor
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Overview

R5DC Final Report for Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant

Purpose of grant: Increase the availability of and access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, for underserved communities in low- and moderate-income areas. Grants are intended to assist technical assistance providers in working with new or existing for-profit, not-for-profit, and cooperative self-service retail food establishments with needs-based assistance.



Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant

Grantee Name: Region Five Development Commission
Grantee Address: 200 1st Street NE, Suite 2, Staples, MN 56479

Date of Report: December 2020 (Final Report)
Grant Period: May 20, 2019 - December 31, 2020

Acknowledgements

We are so grateful to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant for funding this program.

We would like to thank our participants, educators and presenters, and partners for making this program a success.

Summary of Grant Outcomes

R5DC shares a summary of grant outcomes as they relate to the original work plan.



Background

Region Five Development Commission's (R5DC) mission to "enhance the vitality and quality of life in Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd & Wadena Counties" is met through programs like the Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant. Because this region is considered a food desert, the importance of assisting our local retailers in providing healthy, affordable options to all of our residents is vital to the prosperity of our communities.

By providing technical assistance workshops with topics like market expansion, technology, and food and racial justice, our goal was to increase knowledge and contribute to the success of our regional small food retailers. Conducting Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessments and opening discussion around creating welcoming communities also contributes to a positive influence in our region. Lastly, the peer-to-peer audits allowed organizations to find areas of improvement, along with confirmation of the things they are doing well.

Objective 1: Workshops

Objective 1:

Deliver 10 workshops to at least six small food retailers in Central MN.

Workshops were provided in person from June 2019 to January 2020. We paused when the COVID-19 pandemic began and then transitioned to remote sessions via Zoom, in May 2020. In August 2020, we also shifted content to provide an opportunity to learn more about the intersection of food and racial justice, due to the social unrest taking place in our country. Marketing for this training was targeted to employees and operators of small food retailers, such as corner stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, mobile food markets, co-ops, and retail food outlets.

Video archives can be found at www.regionfive.org/gfap or our [YouTube channel](#):



Technical Assistance Workshops

Workshop Topic	Presented By	Date
Market Expansion - local procurement, community engagement/Outreach - incentives to SNAP/WIC shoppers, and expansion of culturally specific commodities/markets.	SHIP Coordinators	Thursday, June 20, 2019
WealthWorks Evaluation - qualitative & quantitative	Region Five Development Commission	Thursday, July 18, 2019
Human Resources - Employee/workforce retention strategies	Rural MN CEP	Thursday, September 19, 2019
Grant writing - Value propositions, Audiences, Storytelling	Region Five Development Commission	Thursday, November 21, 2019
Board Development	Impact MN	Thursday, January 16, 2020
Succession Planning; visioning	Impact MN	Thursday, May 21, 2020
Business Planning - budgeting, cash flow, sales projections, inventory control, food waste planning	Small Business Development Corporation	Thursday, June 18, 2020
Health Education & Policy Incorporation - expansion of Health Care partnerships	Crow Wing County Public Health	Thursday, July 16, 2020
Food and Racial Justice	DeVon Nolan	Wednesday, August 26, 2020
Technology - online tools; Social Media, POS systems, file/information management	Region Five Development Commission Syvantis	Thursday, September 17, 2020

GFAP



Good Food Access
Program Workshops for
Small Food Retailers

JOIN US

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR
SMALL FOOD RETAILERS

REGISTER AT [REGIONFIVE.ORG/GFAP](https://regionfive.org/gfap)

Funded by MDA Good Food Access Program



“

I understand the importance of using food to connect to people of color in order to gain authentic feedback on how to make our co-op more welcoming.

“

We learned how valuable it is to build on resources already present in our community and new ways to evaluate success.

“

We realized the importance of partnerships and how they contribute to our success. Collaboration is key! Placement of healthy, single serve snacks by checkout is imperative to expand our market sales.



Objective 2: IDI Assessments

Objective 2:

Deliver Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessments to small food retailer Board of Directors.

Dawn Espe, R5DC planner and qualified assessor of IDI, delivered the following IDI assessments, with both group and individual profile sessions conducted.

Purple Carrot – Little Falls:

Completed August 2019. 7 Group Participants. 1 Individual Profile

Sprout – Little Falls:

Completed May 2019. 6 Group Participants. 6 Individual Profiles

Crow Wing Food Co-op – Brainerd Lakes Area:

Completed February 2020. 9 Group Participants. 0 Individual Profiles.

MN Street Market – St Joe- Did not complete

Ideal Green Market – Ideal township area:

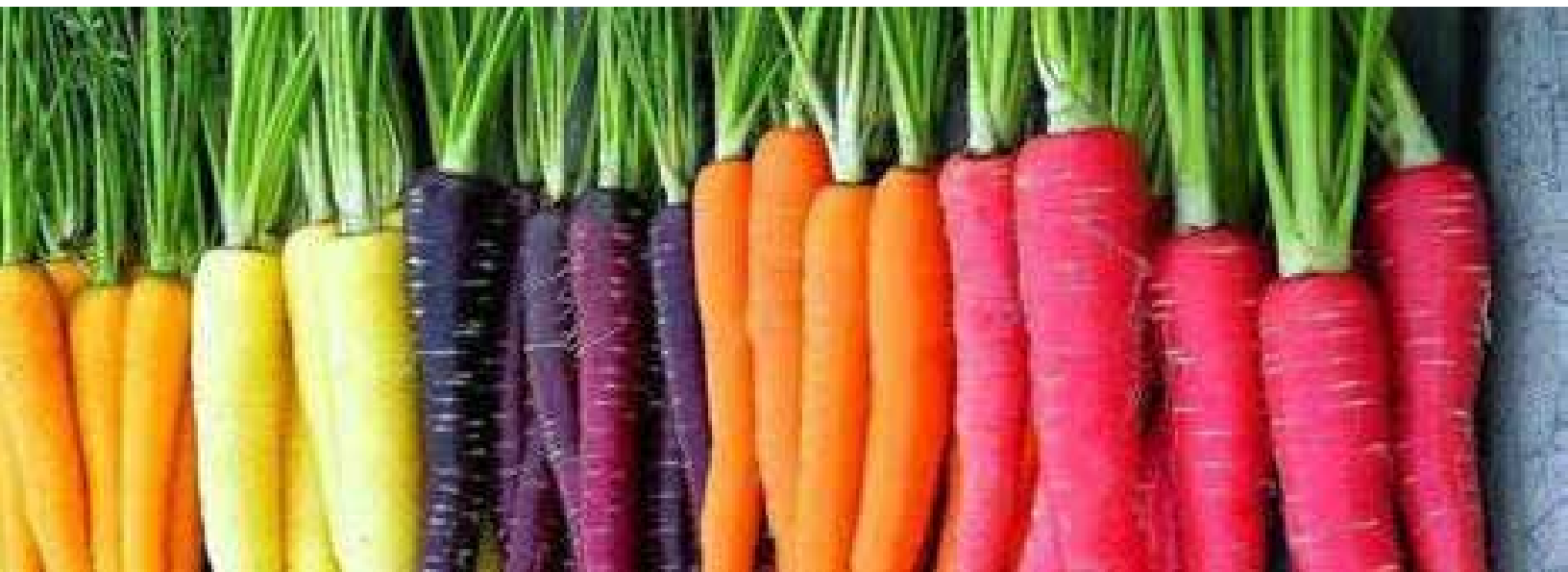
Completed July 2019. 8 Group Participants. 2 Individual Profiles.

IDI Assessments assist our understanding of and ability to experience cultural difference, and how to set and achieve goals that further develop individual and group skills that impact community service.

To learn more about the IDI Assessment, visit:

<https://idiinventory.com/generalinformation/the-intercultural-development-inventory-idi/>

For more information about how R5DC is fostering ways to create more welcoming communities in our region, visit <https://regionfive.org/welcoming-communities>



Objective 3: Peer-to-Peer Audits

Objective 3:

Conduct at least three peer-to-peer food retail audits with participation of at least 11 small food retailers.

The Food Co-op Coalition membership participated in extensive site audits that assisted the food access points in learning how to display foods that result in healthy buying/eating choices among several other site-specific technical assistance offerings. Through a partnership and a match from the UofM Central Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership (CMRSDP) our project documents the entire audit process and we publish this process and our findings/learnings for all other food access points in MN to replicate if desired on our website.

The original plan was to have a two-day process in which representatives from each co-op would meet together to do an in-store audit of two different co-ops with time to debrief and answer questions. However, we had to revise our approach due to the restrictions and safety precautions of COVID. Instead, two staff members from Region Five Development commission discussed an alternative process with the facilitator of the audit process, Swan Ray, CMRSDP. In May, R5DC staff went to the co-ops and took an excessive amount of pictures and video of areas of the stores. The images were shared on a virtual photo album where the food co-ops representatives were able to view at their own pace while filling out an audit sheet. A virtual meeting was held to review all of the photos from both locations and a general overview of what the photos were able to show and answer any questions. Audit sheets were then aggregated by Swan and a final presentation was provided to the food co-ops with great insight and advice in November. A tool kit for replication of similar processes can be found on our website www.regionfive.org/gfap

“

The peer-to-peer audit with input from a merchandising expert was incredibly valuable as Crow Wing Food Co-op planned and implemented an extensive expansion project. We gained advice on how to grow from being one of many groceries our members and shoppers might visit to becoming THE FIRST or PRIMARY grocery our members and shoppers might visit, how to expand inventory to meet more price points and member/shopper needs, how to build on what our members and shoppers appreciate about our store, and how to unify our interior aesthetic to a more consistent appeal. This kind of input is not something we are positioned to invest in otherwise at this point, so having an opportunity to learn and grow with experts and other regional co-op members was a valuable experience.

Jennifer Jacquot-DeVries



Evaluation Summary

Dr Stacey Stockdill, EnSearch CEO assisted in the evaluation during the GFAP. Dr. Stockdill met with Cheryal Hills, Executive Director, Region Five Development Commission (R5DC) and Staci Headley, Regional Development Planner at R5DC prior to the workshops starting in June 2019 to ensure all survey questions would be included for the most successful evaluation process. A mid-point survey, a final survey and surveys for each workshop were created by Dr. Stockdill and were completed by the food co-op participants.

Dr. Stockdill met with Staci on a quarterly basis to review the evaluations completed to the point of the meeting. The full, detailed Evaluation Summary can be found in Appendix B.





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Appendix A: GFAP REPORT OUTLINE

1. Comply with required grants management policies and procedures set forth through [Minn.Stat. §16B.97](#), Subd. 4 (a) (1). Provide technical assistance to retailers who agree to the following conditions, as set forth in [Minn. Stat. 17.1017, Subd. 6\(b\)](#) as follows:
 - Accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits;
 - Apply to accept Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits and if, approved, accept WIC benefits and supply documentation of application and approval or denial status.
 - Except for small food retailers, allocate at least 30 percent of retail space for the sale of affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods, including fruits and vegetables, low-fat and nonfat dairy, fortified dairy substitute beverages such as soy-based or nut-based dairy substitute beverages, whole grain-rich staple foods, meats, poultry, fish, seafood, and other proteins, consistent with nutrition standards in national guidelines described in the current United States Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines for Americans;
 - Comply with all data collection and reporting requirements established by the State including but not limited to annual and final reports.
 - Promote the hiring, training, and retention of local or regional residents from low-income and moderate-income areas that reflect area demographics, including communities of color

2. Provide data on the following metrics for approximately two-and-a-half years, as set forth in [Minn. Stat. 17.1017, Subd. 9](#) as follows:
 - Names and locations of retail food businesses that received technical assistance, and the type of technical assistance that they received
 - Number of minority-owned or female-owned businesses that received technical assistance
 - Leveraged dollars
 - Collaborations and how they impacted leveraged resources
 - Square footage of retail food space
 - WIC and SNAP sales
 - Overall sales of overall affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods
 - Increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and locally sourced products
 - Jobs created or retained for local and regional residents from low-income and moderate-income areas that reflect area demographics including communities of color.
 - Progress made on each of the objectives identified in Objectives, Activities, and Timeline

Objectives, Activities, and Timeline

Objective 1

By 12/30/2020 deliver 10 workshops to at least six small food retailers in Central MN.

Activities -

- (a) In partnership with trainers, deliver workshops every other month.
 - (b) Video archive and post each video within 30 days of workshop delivery.
- Who – Staci Headley, R5DC planner

Market Expansion – local procurement, community engagement/Outreach – incentives to SNAP/WIC shoppers, and expansion of culturally specific commodities/markets.	SHIP Coordinators	Thursday, June 20, 2019
WealthWorks Evaluation; qualitative & quantitative	R5DC	Thursday, July 18, 2019
HR/Employee/workforce retention strategies	Rural MN CEP	Thursday, September 19, 2019
Grant writing (value propositions, audiences) Storytelling	R5DC	Thursday, November 21, 2019
Board Development	Impact MN	Thursday, January 16, 2020
Succession Planning; visioning	Impact MN	Thursday, May 21, 2020
Business Planning- budgeting, cash flow, sales projections, inventory control, food waste planning	SBDC	Thursday, June 18, 2020
“Health” education & policy incorporation – expansion of Health Care partnerships	Crow Wing County Public Health	Thursday, July 16, 2020
Food and Racial Justice	DeVon Nolan	Wednesday, August 26, 2020
Technology – online tools; Social Media, POS systems, file/information management	R5DC/Syvantis	Thursday, September 17, 2020

Objective 2

By 12/30/2020 deliver Intercultural Development Inventory assessments to small food retailer Board of Directors.

Activities –

- (a) Each food Co-op set meeting dates for: IDI intro, delivery of group profile, individual assessments.
- (b) Deliver assessments

Who – Dawn Espe, R5DC planner and qualified assessor of IDI

Purple Carrot – Little Falls- completed August 2019. 7 Group Participants. 1 Individual Profile

Sprout – Little Falls- completed May 2019. 6 Group Participants. 6 Individual Profiles

Crow Wing Food Co-op – Brainerd- Completed February 2020. 9 Group Participants. 0 Individual Profiles.

MN Street Market – St Joe- DID NOT COMPLETE

Ideal Green Market – Ideal township area- Completed July 2019. 8 Group Participants. 2 Individual Profiles.

Objective 3

By 12/30/2019 conduct at least three peer-to-peer food retail audits with participation of at least 11 small food retailers.

Activities –

(a) In partnership with the Food Co-op Coalition and the UofM Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership and the UofM Humphrey Capstone program - hire grad student(s) to conduct research.

(b) Student(s) secure 5 more Food Cooperatives from outside of our region - around the state to serve on the Advisory Committee.

(c) With assistance from CDS and participation of the Food Co-op Coalition members conduct audits.

(d) Publish toolkit of processes and lessons learned for replication of other food retail businesses.

Who – Cheryal Hills, Executive Director

Appendix B: GFAP Detailed Evaluation Summary

Final Review: Dr. Stacey Stockdill & Staci Headley

Workshops Attended

10 workshops were offered.

Number of Attendees = 96

June Market Expansion = 10
July Wealthworks: 8
Sept. HR Workforce Retention = 6
Nov. Grant Writing = 10
January. Board Development = 7
March (Rescheduled to June)
May Succession Planning = 8
June Business Planning = 7
July Health = 7
August Racial Justice/Food Justice = 25
Sept Technology = 9

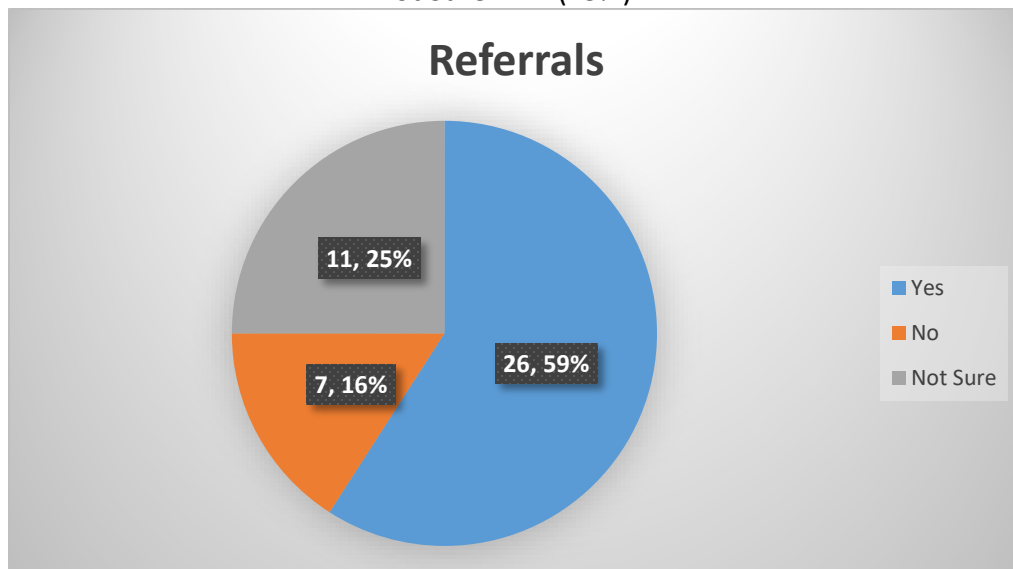
Number of Evaluations Received = 44

June Market Expansion = 5
July Wealthworks = 10
Sept. HR Workforce Retention = 5
Nov. Grant Writing = 11
Jan. Board Development = 7
March (Rescheduled to June)
May Succession Planning = 1
June Business Planning = 2
July Health = 0
August Racial Justice/Food Justice = 2
Sept. Technology = 1

Did you receive referrals to other business or organizations?

More than half responded “yes” to the question, “Did you receive referrals to other businesses or organizations?”

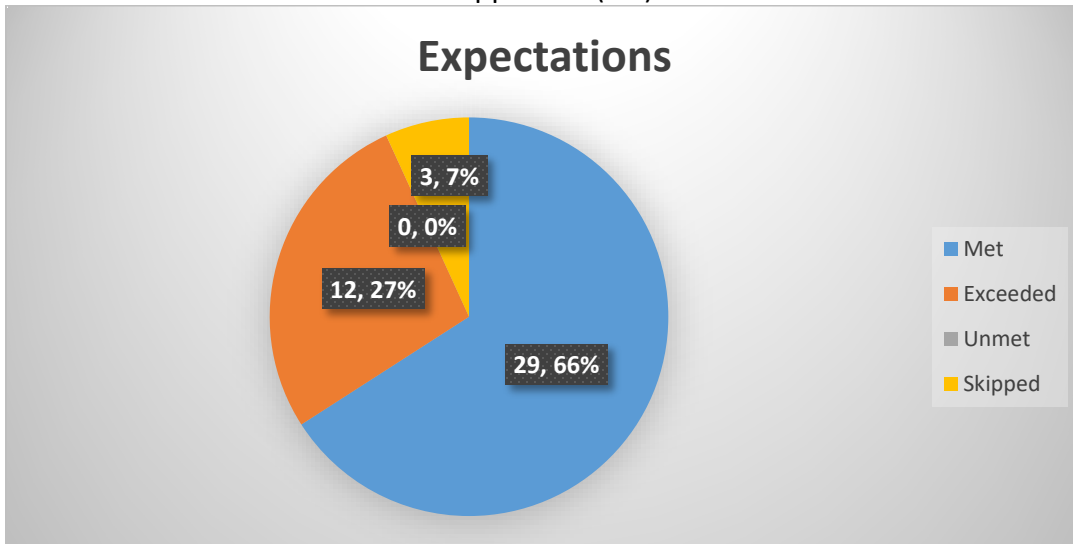
Yes = 26 (59%)
No = 7 (16%)
Not Sure = 11 (25%)



My expectations of the workshop were:

93% of those who completed the evaluation reported that the workshops either met (29, 66%) or exceeded (12, 27%) their expectations.

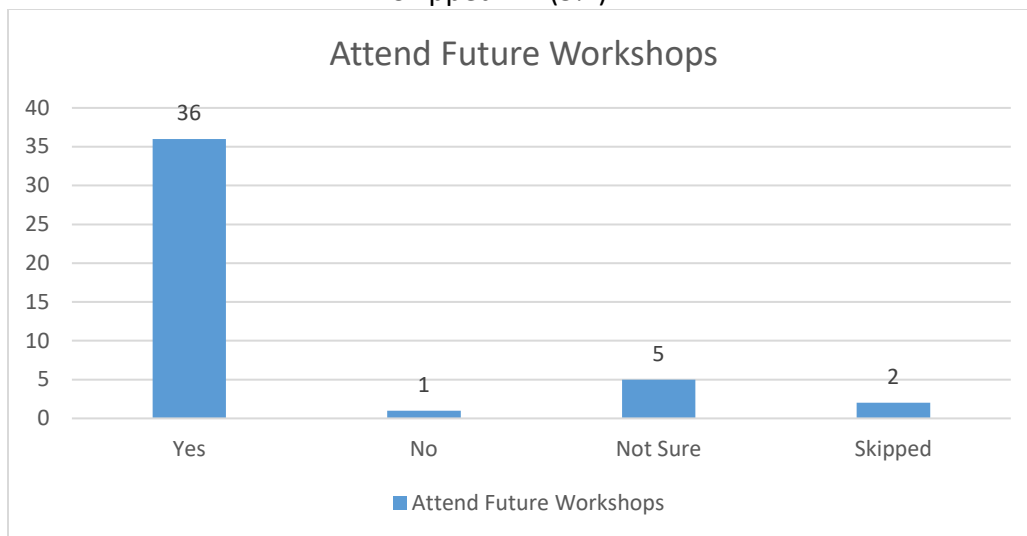
Met = 29 (66%)
Exceeded = 12 (27%)
Unmet = 0 (0%)
Skipped = 3 (7%)



Do you plan on participating in future workshops?

Most (36, 82%) plan on participating in future workshops.

Yes = 36 (82%)
No = 1 (2%)
Not Sure = 5 (11%)
Skipped = 2 (5%)



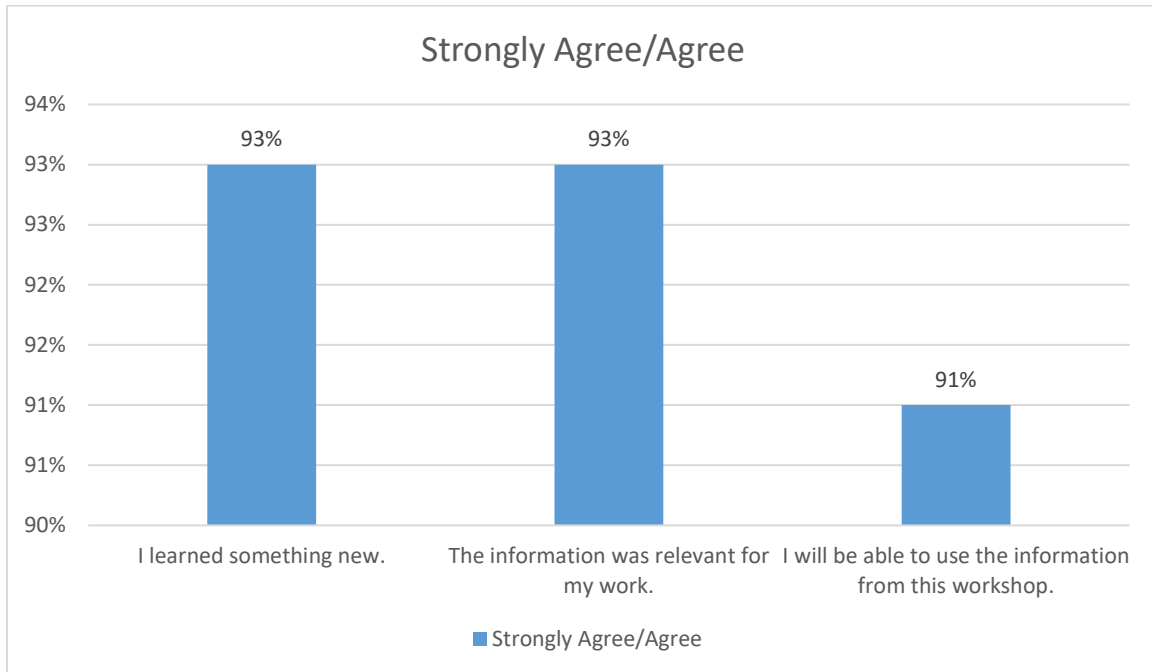
Because of this workshop ...

The participants learned something new, reported that the information was relevant for my work, and that they will be able to use the information from the workshop.

I learned something new: (Strongly Agree/Agree) = 41 (93%)

The information was relevant for my work: (Strongly Agree/Agree) = 41 (93%)

I will be able to use the information from this workshop: (Strongly Agree/Agree) = 40 (91%)



What is one item you will take away from this workshop?

Workshop #1: Market Expansion

- partnerships are important
 - collaboration is key!
 - State government agencies are in silos and don't really share information. I sound a little negative but this is what I remember when discussing my issue with SNAP and not being able to use the benefit due to the State of MN not wanting to renew our agreement. The reps from MDH seemed shocked to hear this. MDH works hard to make sure there is access to wholesome foods. My co-op has the same goal yet the office that takes care of SNAP seems to have a different focus
 - Placement of healthy single serve snacks by checkout!
-

Workshop #2: WealthWorks Evaluation

- Value chain vs supply chain. Movement to value chain.
- Value is relative, success is also relative. Goals can be changed.
- new ways to evaluate success
- Build on resources already present in a community
- It's not just about financial (8 forms of wealth)
- Thinking more broadly about evaluation
- Its not just about financial (8 Forms of Wealth)
- Build on resources already present in a community
- New ways to evaluate success
- value is relative, success is also relative. Goals can be changed.
- thinking more broadly about evaluation

Workshop #3: HR- Workforce Retention

- deficiencies we must identify with regard to governance and work/employment issues
- List of helpful resources
- Huge amount of resources available
- List of employment resources
- Be MSP toolkit / course

Workshop #4: Grant Writing

- I know nothing about grant writing - I needed a beginners class - I did not understand anything discussed
 - strategies for grant research, use of white paper
 - White papers are new to me
 - Strategies for working with grant partners, project delivery timeline
 - Adapting project to fit guidelines of grant
 - Doing white paper & utilizing tables to show work plan
 - That I should be bolder with funders and reach out more to build trust and communication
 - Confidence to approach grants through relationship/idea building - establishing more creativity in a process that can be draining
 - It's possible to request copies of grant applications from organizations that received funding
 - Partnerships
-

Workshop #5: Board Development

- board growth, retention and strength
- Committee ideas. Strength. Broaden diversity.
- Board recruitment - plans
- dashboard for financial/organizational oversight
- We're doing ok - there's room for improvement. The business plan can be converted to a strategic plan
- Bylaw interpretation. Board development/diversification/orientation to work
- Expanded understanding of the importance of organization and documentation

Workshop #6 Business Planning:

- It is ok to fail on paper
- The format of the business plan

Workshop #7: Succession Planning

- Adding it to the strategic plan for sprout

Workshop #8: Health

Workshop #9: Food Justice/Racial Justice:

- The realization of how black farmers were blocked from owning land and how that has affected them through now.
- Use food to connect to people of color to gain authentic feedback on how to make our co-op more welcoming

Workshop #10: Technology

- Many ideas both on technology options for document sharing as well as social media planning
-

Summary of Mid-Term Review:

Responses to the Mid Term review came from seven participants from three different food co-ops; Crow Wing Food Co-op, Purple Carrot, Sprout.

Food Coop Members & Members of Minority Populations

Name of Co-op or small food retailer	If you're a Food Co-op - Number of Co-op members	If you're a Food Co-op - Estimated number of food Co-op members self-identify as members of a minority population
Open-Ended Response	Open-Ended Response	Open-Ended Response
CWCFC	1300	
CWCFC		
Purple Carrot	400	5%
Purple Carrot	393	5%
CWCFC	1300	unknown
Sprout		
Sprout MN		

Acceptance of WIC/SNAP

Name of Co-op or small food retailer	WIC/SNAP sales. If you do not currently accept WIC/SNAP benefits Please go to MN Department of Health WIC vendor website to register to accept WIC payments.
Open-Ended Response	Open-Ended Response
CWCFC	yes
Purple Carrot	not open yet
Purple Carrot	NA
CWCFC	WIC - we will do
Sprout	Snap

Promoting the Hiring, Training & Retention of Residents from Low-Income and Moderate-Income Areas.

Name of Co-op or small food retailer	Do you currently promote the hiring, training and retention of local or regional residents from low-income and moderate-income areas that reflect area demographics?		
Open-Ended Response	Yes	No	not sure
CWCFC	Yes		
CWCFC			not sure
Purple Carrot			
Purple Carrot			
CWCFC			not sure
Sprout	Yes		
Sprout			Not sure

Purchase from Local Producers

Name of Co-op or small food retailer	Do you purchase from local producers?		
Open-Ended Response	Yes	No	not sure
CWCFC	Yes		
CWCFC	Yes		
Purple Carrot			
Purple Carrot			
CWCFC	Yes		
Sprout	Yes		
Sprout	Yes		

Low Income Involved in Strategic Planning

Name of Co-op or small food retailer	Have low-income businesses or individuals, or minorities been involved in the strategic planning of your store?		
Open-Ended Response	Yes	No	Not sure
CWCFC			Not sure
CWCFC	Yes		
Purple Carrot	Yes		
Purple Carrot			
CWCFC			Not sure
Sprout	Yes		
Sprout MN	Yes		

Homework for June Workshop:

Sprout MN (Only Response)

1.6	Full-time Jobs BEFORE RECEIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:	3		
1.8	Part-time Jobs BEFORE RECEIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:	2		
Section 2 Retail Space and Sales				
2.1	Retail Square Footage BEFORE RECEIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:	N/A		
2.4	Complete the following chart indicating sales figures across various categories. Do not include non-grocery items such as cards/gift wrap, healthcare products, pet food, restaurant sales, etc.			
		(Actual)	(Estimated/Actual)	(Estimated)
		Measure in Most Recently Completed Fiscal Year Before Project Implementation	Measure in First Fiscal Year After Project Implementation	Measure in Second Fiscal Year After Project Implementation
	Item	\$ Amount	\$ Amount	\$ Amount
	Fresh Fruits and Vegetables			
	Minnesota Sourced Fresh Fruits and Vegetables	90,523.94	90,523.94	120,000.00
	Total Grocery Products			

Up over 72% on CSA sales for 2020.