

NEW ENGLAND GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENT FUND

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BOSTON GRANTS INITIATIVE **GRANT REPORT FORM**

Recipients of a New England Grassroots Environment Fund grant are asked to complete a final Grant Report **no later than one year** after receiving their grant check. We rely on your **candid** responses to help us assess the effectiveness of our grantmaking program. Completing this report as a group at a regular meeting would help gather a broad perspective from your organization.

Date: February 18, 2011

Contact Person: Simca Horwitz

Name of Organization: Brookwood Community Farm/Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition

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Email Address: simca@brookwoodcommunityfarm.org

Date of Award: May, 2009

Grant Amount: \$6000

Purpose of Grant: To help support the Mattapan Food Systems Project, a collaborative initiative to strengthen food security in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston. This project links community development, youth leadership development, public health and sustainable agriculture to create a neighborhood food policy council that ensures broad community support and engagement and a seasonal farmer's market to bring fresh, local produce to Mattapan residents.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 1: UPDATING GRANTEE PROFILE

Please update the **Grantee Profile** that you submitted with your original Grant Application. You can either note changes on the original form, or fill in the changes on the attached blank Grantee Profile.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 2: GRANT OUTCOMES

Please answer the following questions about your group and the work it is doing.

A. CHANGE OR ADVANCEMENT OF GROUP'S FOCUS/GOALS

1. How is your campaign progressing? Briefly describe its evolution.

The Mattapan Food Systems Project completed its third year in 2009. The partnership between the Brookwood Community Farm (BCF) and the Mattapan community is stronger than ever. The Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC), an initial outcome of the first year of funding of the Mattapan Food Systems Project, has emerged as a neighborhood leader promoting a healthy environment in Mattapan. BCF staff now attend all monthly meetings of the MFFC and sit on the Farmers Market Committee. The Mattapan farmers market has grown from its first year to now have two farm vendors and one additional produce vendor. Late in the 2008 growing season, the market secured an EBT machine to enable processing of food stamp benefits. However, technical problems and limited outreach prevented the market from accepting a single EBT transaction in 2008. In 2009, the market began the season with a functioning terminal and conducted significant outreach, successfully completing many EBT transactions and participating in the Boston Bounty Bucks program that doubled the value of all EBT purchases. Effective outreach for EBT sales does remain a struggle and will be a major focus in future seasons.

Mattapan youth were hired as interns at the farm in 2009 and members of the MFFC youth group volunteered at the farm. These youth were also present at every day of the Mattapan Farmers Market and have assumed significant responsibility for market management.

The BCF assistant grower was hired as the manager of the Mattapan Farmers Market. This was a strategic move on the part of the MFFC to fill an immediate need with an experienced manager while simultaneously building the internal capacity of MFFC members to manage the market in future seasons. MFFC hired a former Mattapan youth program participant to serve as the assistant market manager. The assistant manager was a young man very active in Mattapan's Haitian community who could help ensure that the market was accessible to this community. He received on-the-job training in market management including customer service, data collection and evaluation. This staffing situation represents the values of the Mattapan Food Systems Project to promote local leadership and develop ways for Mattapan youth to assume leadership positions in neighborhood organizing efforts.

2. What factors have helped move your campaign forward?

In 2009, the Farmers Market employed an experienced market manager who was also an assistant grower at the Brookwood Community Farm. Having an individual with experience in market management was helpful in coordinating new outreach activities, ensuring a consistent market presence, improving communication amongst vendors, and ensuring better data collection and evaluation of the market. Similarly, the joint employment of this individual by the Brookwood Community Farm and Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition strengthened the relationship between the farm and the MFFC. A

BCF staff person and board member are present at all MFFC meetings and actively participate in the Farmers Market committee of the MFFC.

3. What obstacles still stand between your group and achieving “success?”

The farm continues to experience challenges in sustainably bringing fresh, local produce to the Mattapan community and engaging Mattapan residents with farming. Attracting customers to the farmers market is an educational project, since the market is a new concept in the community and must overcome barriers such as perceptions amongst residents that farmers markets are always expensive.

We strive to develop a market that is truly sustainable, meeting the needs of both low-income residents and under-resourced farmers. The farmers market continues to experience challenges recruiting new customers and particularly attracting SNAP (food stamp) participants. While the EBT terminal was present and functioning at each day of the market in 2009 (a major improvement after significant delays and technical difficulties in 2008), redemption of SNAP benefits remains low. The acceptance and doubling of SNAP benefits is one way to make the farm accessible to low-income customers without hurting the farmer, but it is dependent on successful outreach and high rates of redemption. The group is in the process of evaluating what factors may be hampering the growth of the market including market time, location and outreach strategies.

B. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

1. Have members of your group become more active in other community activities or organizations since you began your campaign? If so, in what ways?

Two BCF Community Supported Agriculture members are now active participants in the MFFC. Members of MFFC have become active in citywide food organizing efforts, including leading projects of the Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness.

2. Did the experience with this group make you and/or other group members more politically active at any level? If so, at what level: local, state, regional?

The MFFC started a public policy committee in 2009. This committee primarily engages at the city-level to advocate for improvements in the built environment in Mattapan. For example, group members participated in community meetings related to the establishment of bike lanes in Mattapan, expansion of bus service through the community, and plans for development of a greenway in Mattapan.

C. COMMUNITY CHANGES

1. In your opinion, have you and/or group members significantly increased knowledge of any of the following: environmental justice, environmental health, greenspace issues, how your community works or how to solve problems locally?

Since the initiation of this partnership, awareness of sustainable agriculture, public health and greenspace issues amongst group members has risen dramatically. Youth and adult members of the group have become active in the citywide Boston Collaborative for Food and Fitness and have attended multiple trainings on food systems issues, including presenting the work of the Coalition at the 2009 Community Food Security Coalition

annual conference in Iowa. Youth members of the group have done extensive research on food justice issues, screening and then hosting a sustainable food film series in Mattapan.

From conversations at the farmers market and at community meetings, it is clear that general awareness of the negative environmental impacts of the conventional food system is rising. Similarly, community members recognize the connections between diet related disease and lack of healthy food options in their community and are acting on this at multiple levels, from individual conversations with shop owners to attempts to change the food at their schools.

Members of BCF are increasingly aware of food access as an issue in urban communities and some farm members have begun attending MFFC meetings even if they are not Mattapan residents. The farm continues to educate membership about our food justice efforts in Mattapan through our weekly newsletters and annual meeting.

2. Since the group's formation, have other local environmental issues received community attention and sparked other community activism? If so, what issues?

The activity of the MFFC has increased significantly since the founding of the group in 2007. The MFFC has emerged as a leading vehicle for promoting a healthier community in Mattapan. The group now has a committee working specifically on public policy with a focus on the built environment. Primary attention has been given to work on the Neponset River Greenway, which could potentially provide significant new opportunities for community members to engage with the natural environment.

D. NEGEF'S IMPACT ON GROUP'S WORK

1. Although it's hard to quantify, please tell us if and how NEGEF's grant and support made a difference to your group and its work. If you had not received the grant from NEGEF, what difference, if any, would it have made to your campaign?

Without support from NEGEF we would not have been able to hire youth interns from Mattapan to work at the Brookwood Community Farm. These youth are a critical link between the farm and the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition. They are the driving force behind much of the MFFC work – coming up with ideas for new projects and assuming significant responsibility for implementing projects. These youth were essential staff at the Mattapan Farmers Market, providing critical translation services to the large Haitian Creole speaking customer base at the market and individual shopping assistance to elderly customers. The funds helped support the salary of an assistant grower at the farm who supervised the youth interns both on the farm and at the Mattapan farmers market. Without this support we may not have been able to dedicate farm staff time to youth development activities at the farm.

2. What additional skills, information, trainings would help advance your campaign?

It is clear from our experience at the Mattapan Farmers Market that new strategies are needed for conducting outreach within this community. It would be helpful to receive trainings or information regarding best-practices for engaging community residents in a very diverse, multi-lingual, low-income urban neighborhood.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 3: FINANCIAL REPORT

- 1. Please attach an itemized expense sheet that shows how you spent the NEGEF grant money.**
- 2. Was the NEGEF grant your only source of funds? If not, what additional funds did your raise? From what sources?**

The Brookwood Community Farm primarily supports farm operations through produce sales. The farm also received funds from the Reebok Foundation and the Copeland Family Foundation to support additional youth intern salaries. The Copeland Family Foundation, a Milton foundation, granted support solely for interns from Milton. The Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition received support from the Tufts Health Plan Foundation to support efforts to engage senior citizens in the market.

FINAL REPORT SECTION 4: NEGEF PROGRAM EVALUATION

- 1. Please comment about our program and how you think we can improve it to meet the needs of the grassroots environmental community in New England.**
NEGEF provides a critical source of funds for groups that are often overlooked by large foundations. With a large number of projects related to food and agriculture, providing trainings and technical assistance in the winter, when farmers and community gardeners have more available time, would be helpful.
- 2. Do you know of other community groups that might benefit from our program? Please include names and addresses and we will contact them.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND IDEAS. YOUR INPUT WILL HELP US IMPROVE OUR PROGRAM.

BROOKWOOD COMMUNITY FARM

2009 Mattapan Food System Project Spending

EXPENSE	DETAIL	AMOUNT
Intern Supervisor/Mattapan Project Manager	Portion of salary at 40 hrs/week at \$12/hr for 22 weeks	\$3,200
Mattapan Youth Interns	2 teens 25 hrs/week for 7 weeks @ \$8/hr	\$ 2,800.00
TOTAL		\$ 6,000.00