

Increasing Access to Locally Grown Produce in Detroit

Fresh Food Connections Success Story

2023 Michigan Preventive Health and Health Services (PHHS) Block Grant

Challenge

Many small farms across Michigan are interested in improving access to fresh, local food for their community. Growing culturally appropriate food and offering it for sale online provides communities with access to the foods that are important to them and the ability to easily purchase local food online like other retailers. However, farming is a difficult job that requires both the knowledge of how to grow food and how to market and sell it within thin profit margins. Both pieces of the business are time consuming and not always easy to juggle without external resources.

Approach

Recognizing the need to increase their online presence, Ugami Farm, a community-run farm in Detroit created by Ugandan immigrants, reached out to Taste the Local Difference (TLD) to build their e-commerce site. However, due to the lack of any online presence, the build out was more than they could afford. Fresh Food Connections (FFC), a partnership between Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Taste the Local Difference (TLD), seeks to increase fresh produce consumption by connecting Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible communities to farmers committed to food access. One goal of Fresh Food Connections is to build a stronger, more resilient food system by supporting local farmers to build online marketplaces, marketing materials and local delivery systems. TLD recognized that because Ugami Farm is in Detroit and that they have a community focused business approach they would be a great fit as a new farm for FFC in FY23.

Results

Using PBG and SNAP-Ed funding, TLD worked with Ugami Farm to develop an e-commerce site, create marketing materials, and purchase a solar powered cooler. These resources have helped them to expand their community-supported agriculture and have increased access to locally grown produce for the Detroit community. Through this funding, the Detroit community now has an additional, easy way to access local produce during the growing season.