

Kitchen Connects GSO

Evaluation Report YR3

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Introduction

Background

Guilford County, North Carolina is home to a wide range of agricultural resources, including 90,750 acres of farmland and \$685,000 in agritourism and recreational activity¹. At the same time, Greensboro/High Point, the major metropolitan area within the county, has 24 food deserts², a food insecurity rate of 19%³, and the highest food hardship rate in the United States⁴. Considering this disconnect between local food and agriculture resources available and the use of those resources by individuals, families, and institutions, the City of Greensboro has mobilized several stakeholders to promote food security across our communities and develop mechanisms that support individuals and organizations who start businesses around local foods.

The City of Greensboro, the Greensboro Community Food Task Force, and the Guilford Food Council have been working together to promote food security across the Greater Greensboro Metropolitan Area and tackle the issues of access to healthy food and economic development around local food businesses. In 2014, with funding from U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Planning Grant these organizations, and other community partners, developed a Fresh Food Access Plan which was adopted by the City in 2015.⁵ This plan identified Gaps in Our Food System, Barriers to Food Access, a lack of distribution opportunities for local Farmers and a need for commercial kitchens which would promote new food business development. The USDA has since awarded the City a Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Implementation Grant to help fund portions of a food plan.

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¹ US Department of Agriculture (2014, May 2). *2012 Census Full Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/>

² US Department of Agriculture (2016). *Food Access Research Atlas*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>

³ Feeding America (2014). *Food insecurity in Guilford, County*. Retrieved from: <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2014/overall/north-carolina/county/guilford>

⁴ FRAC (2015, April). *How hungry is America?* Retrieved from: http://frac.org/pdf/food_hardship_2014.pdf

⁵ <http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=28019>

Garden Project, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Center for Housing and Community Studies (UNCG-CHCS). The City is leading in administering the funds and coordinating efforts among the partners, now known as *Kitchen Connects GSO*. The project addresses the lack of shared kitchen space for new local food entrepreneurs which was a recommendation of the 2015 Fresh Food Access Plan (page 33).

Kitchen Connect GSO Program Design

Kitchen Connects GSO (KCG) is an incubator program for local food business entrepreneurs. KCG offers entrepreneurial resources for small businesses preparing low risk, pre-packaged food. The program has created a network of three kitchens in three partner locations and associated training programs. The Guilford County Cooperative Extension now houses a shared-use kitchen, certified by the NC Department of Agriculture; the Greensboro Farmers Market has a demonstration kitchen; and the Out of the Garden Project has an NC Department of Agriculture certified kitchen.

In addition to providing kitchen space to the community, KCG also provides a training program for prospective food entrepreneurs. Participants of the Kitchen Connects GSO program receive food safety training, small business classes in merchandising, marketing and basic small business finance, access to shared use kitchens, mentoring, and a specially designated farmers market table to sell products for a pilot phase. All applicants are expected to use locally-sourced, ingredients in their prepared food. Resources are available to assist in locating ingredients and building relationships with local suppliers. Participants attend the following trainings: ⁶

1. Plan for Success class – 2 hours
2. Safe Plate certification – 8 hour classroom, 2 hours for exam
3. Marketing Your Product – 2 hour
4. Selling Your Product – 2 hour

The program includes up to three uses at no cost of a certified shared-use kitchen (further use at a nominal \$10/hr fee). Participants also have access to the Greensboro Farmers Curb Market for

⁶ <https://www.kitchenconnectsgso.com/>

three Saturdays at specially designated guest vendor tables to test market their products. There have been eight cohorts over the course of three years who have participated.

Organizations Involved

The City is leading in administering the funds and coordinating efforts among the partners, now known as Kitchen Connects GSO. The City of Greensboro is working with multiple partners on this project:

1. The **Guilford County Cooperative Extension Office** (GCCE) will provide training in food safety for those using a newly created Low Risk Shared Use Kitchen and new Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification standards.
2. The **Greensboro Farmers Market** (GFM) will offer space at their market for new entrepreneurs and provide assistance with marketing and business planning.
3. The **Out of the Garden Project** (OOTGP) will use their community kitchen for food education programming and to support new food businesses.
4. The **University of North Carolina at Greensboro Center for Housing and Community Studies** (CHCS) will provide evaluation data for the shared-use kitchen partnership related to the Objectives of the project.

Objectives of the Program

The LFPP funding is intended to support the expansion of local food entrepreneurs and provided them with connections to local producers; enable local growers to create value-added food products; provide a model for working with a neighborhood to increase the consumption of local produce; and provide data that monitors program results and a reveals clearer picture of local eating and shopping habits. This project anticipates the development of new market opportunities for food businesses and support for local food producers by:

- by providing food safety training and certification classes for local farmers and food-based entrepreneurs;
- providing training and marketing space for new businesses;
- increasing domestic consumption of locally produced agriculture by connecting local entrepreneurs to local producers at the Greensboro Farmers Market;

- increasing access to locally produced food by modeling a program to support food education and food businesses in a low-income neighborhood with limited food access;
- assisting in the expansion and development of other food business enterprises by providing statistically valid surveys to analyze food hardship the local food supply and demand in Greensboro and the effect this program has.

Four objectives have been identified for the implementation and evaluation of this program:

Objective 1: Create and coordinate resources for local food businesses.

Objective 2: Create demand for local produce converted into a shelf-stable product.

Objective 3: Decrease the barriers for local farmers that want to diversify from commodity crops to locally consumed crops.

Objective 4: Assess the use of local food resources by consumers, including those provided through the proposed program.

Evaluation

Procedures

The evaluation begins with a statistical/descriptive review of all applications. It then continues with systematic review of telephone exit-interviews conducted shortly after completion of the program. Finally, every 4-6 months after completion of the program, participants are interviewed again to see how their business has progressed. Observations were also made on sales days and in select classes. The evaluation has progressed in years 1 & 2 from one providing “formative” assessment and helping to refine programmatic aspects of Kitchen Connects GSO to one looking more at outcomes. After cohort 5 (Fall 2018) we shifted from interviewing each applicant and attendee to conducting an outcomes survey (Sept 2019). In all, there have been 193 applications to the program with 102 applicants selected to participate. Not all applicants who were accepted ended up participating or completing the program. More than a third (35.3%) of all accepted for the program were interviewed at some point for the evaluation and about 20.0% of those who applied but were not selected were also interviewed.

TABLE 1 - COHORT TRACKING - EVALUATION

	FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT					OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT			<i>Totals</i>
	Cohort 1 Summer 2017	Cohort 2 Fall 2017	Cohort 3 Spring 2018	Cohort 4 Summer 2018	Cohort 5 Fall 2018	Cohort 6 Winter 2018	Cohort 7 Spring 2019	Cohort 8 Summer 2019	
Total Number of "hits" to application	80	40	39	18	45	39	72	51	384
Total number of applicants	25	17	24	7	22	20	46	32	193
Total number Interviewed	12	12	17	5	12	NA	NA	NA	58
Overall Interview Response Rate	48.00%	70.59%	70.83%	71.43%	54.55%	-	-	-	
Total number of applicants who were selected for KCG	16	10	15	5	10	11	17	18	102
Total applicants interviewed who participated in the KCG program	9	6	11	3	7	-	-	-	36
Participant Response Rate	56.25%	60.00%	73.33%	60.00%	70.00%	NA	NA	NA	
Total number of applicants who were not selected to participate in KCG	8	7	9	2	12	9	29	14	90
Total applicants interviewed who did not participate in the KCG program	2	5	5	2	4	NA	NA	NA	18
Non-Participant Response Rate	25.00%	71.43%	55.56%	100.00%	33.33%	-	-	-	

Applicants (Fall 2018 – Summer 2019)

Applicant Characteristics

There were 98 completed application from 91 distinct applicants for Fall 2018, Winter 2019, Spring 2019, and Summer 2019 combined (Cohorts 5-8). Some applicants who were not accepted in one cohort, re-applied for later sessions. The age range of applicants was from 18 to 72 years old with an average of 40.2 (mean). About half of all applicants were African American (52.7% alone or in combination with other race/ethnic identities). Non-Hispanic White applicants accounted for 40.7% of application, followed by Hispanic (4.4%), Asian (3.3%), “other” (3.3%) and American Indian (2.2%). Applicants had a range of educational attainment: High School/GED (14.3%), some college/trade or technical training (35.2%), Associate’s Degree (22.0%), Master’s Degree or higher (28.6%). Only three applicants (3.3%) were veterans.

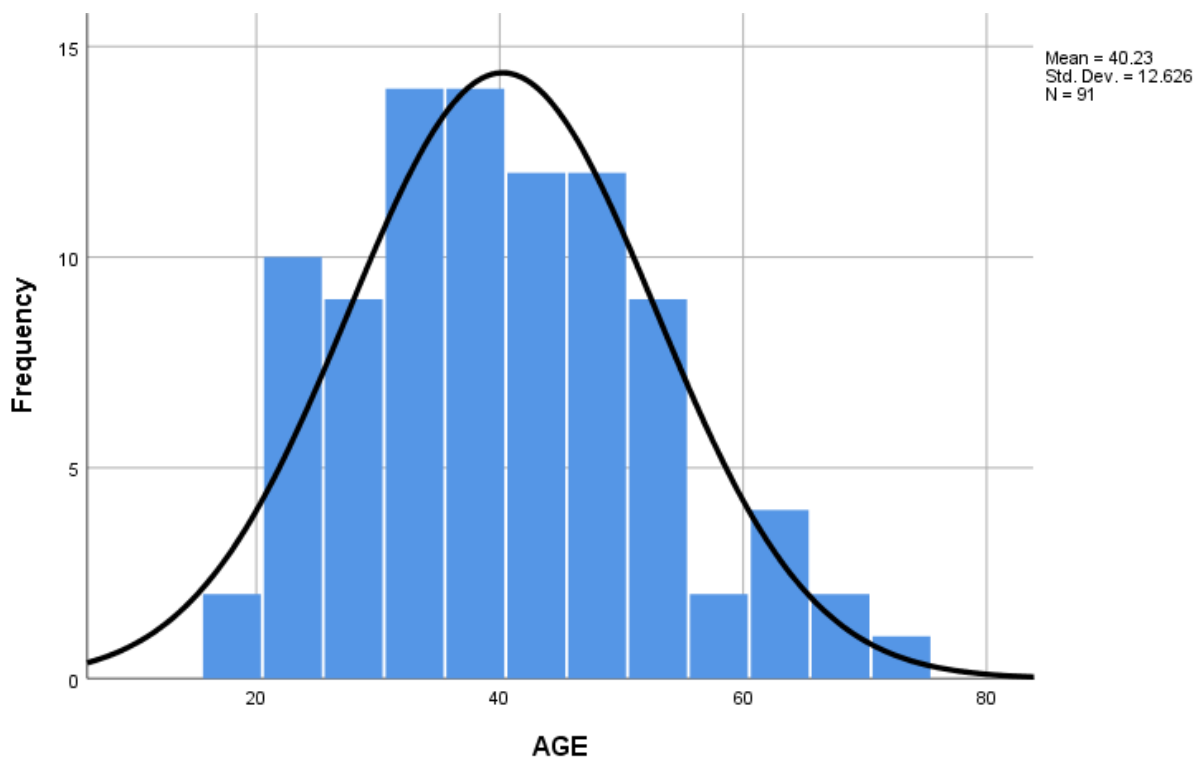


FIGURE 1 – RESPONDENT AGE

Responses	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Black or African American	48	49.50%	52.70%
Non-Hispanic White or European American	37	38.10%	40.70%
Latino or Hispanic American	4	4.10%	4.40%
Asian	3	3.10%	3.30%
Other	3	3.10%	3.30%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	2.10%	2.20%
	97	100.00%	106.60%

TABLE 2 - RESPONDENT RACE/ETHNICITY

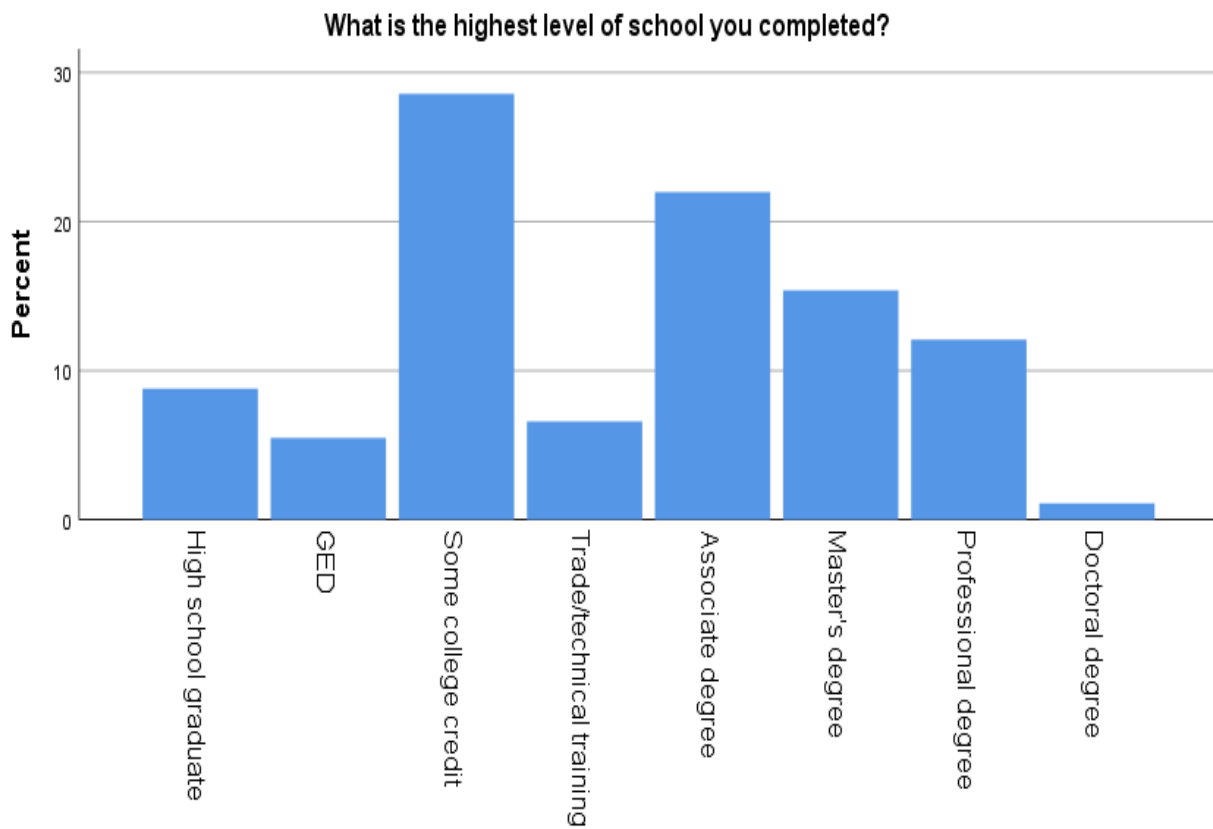


FIGURE 2 – EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Personal Finances

About two-fifth of the applicants were employed full-time (45.1%), a quarter (26.4%) were self-employed, 11.0% were homemakers, 8.8% part-time employed. The remainder were unemployed, disabled, retired, or no longer in the work force.

Gross income ranged from \$0 to \$300,000 annually. The average (mean) income was \$40,163. However, the median income (better accounting for the outlier with \$300,000) was \$28,400. Many applicants (n=66), received other forms of assistance including SNAP/EBT (25.4%), WIC (5.1%), housing assistance (5.1%), and SSI (5.1%). Nearly a third, (30.5%) were single parents and 61.0% of applicants were the head of household.

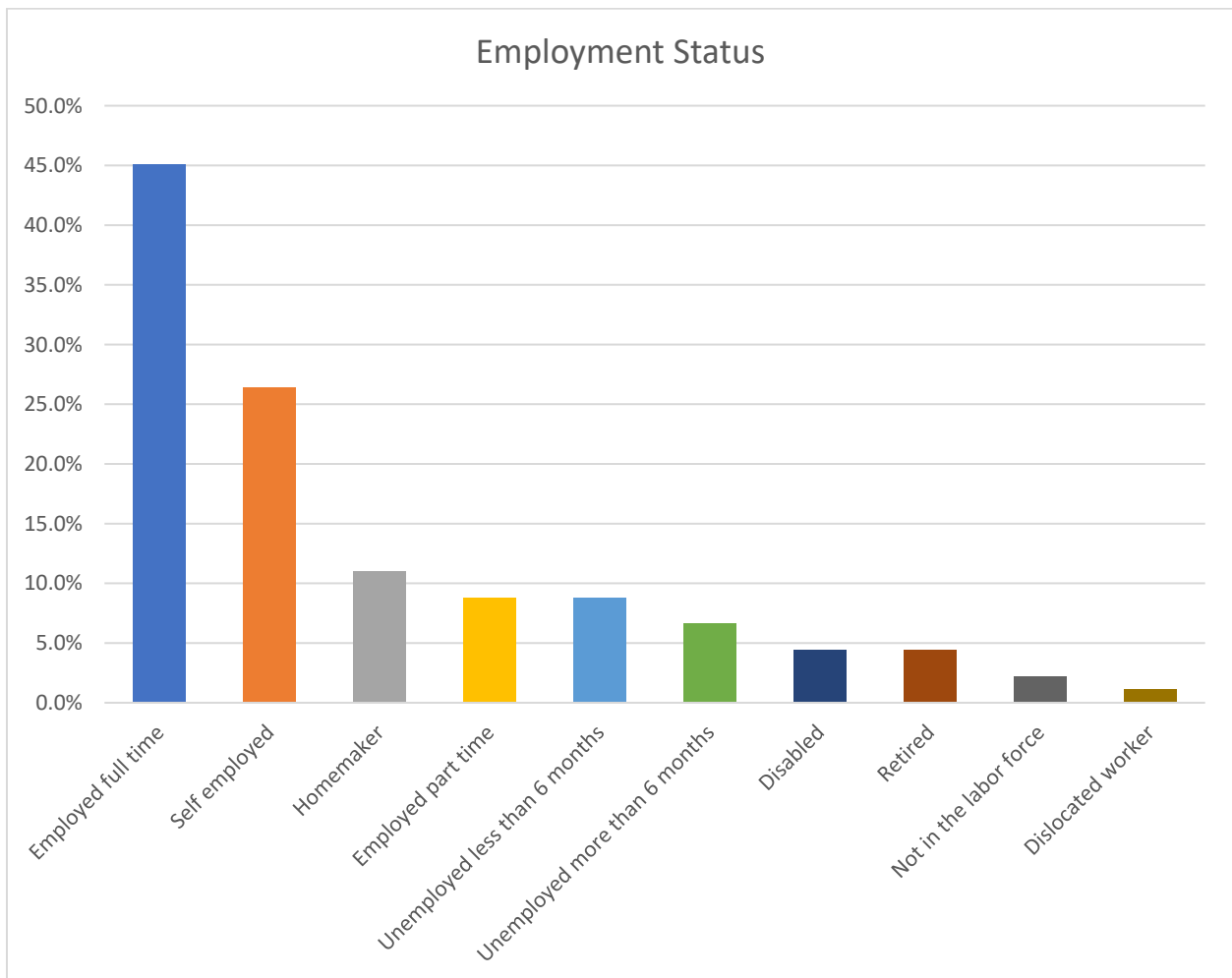


FIGURE 3 – EMPLOYMENT STATUS

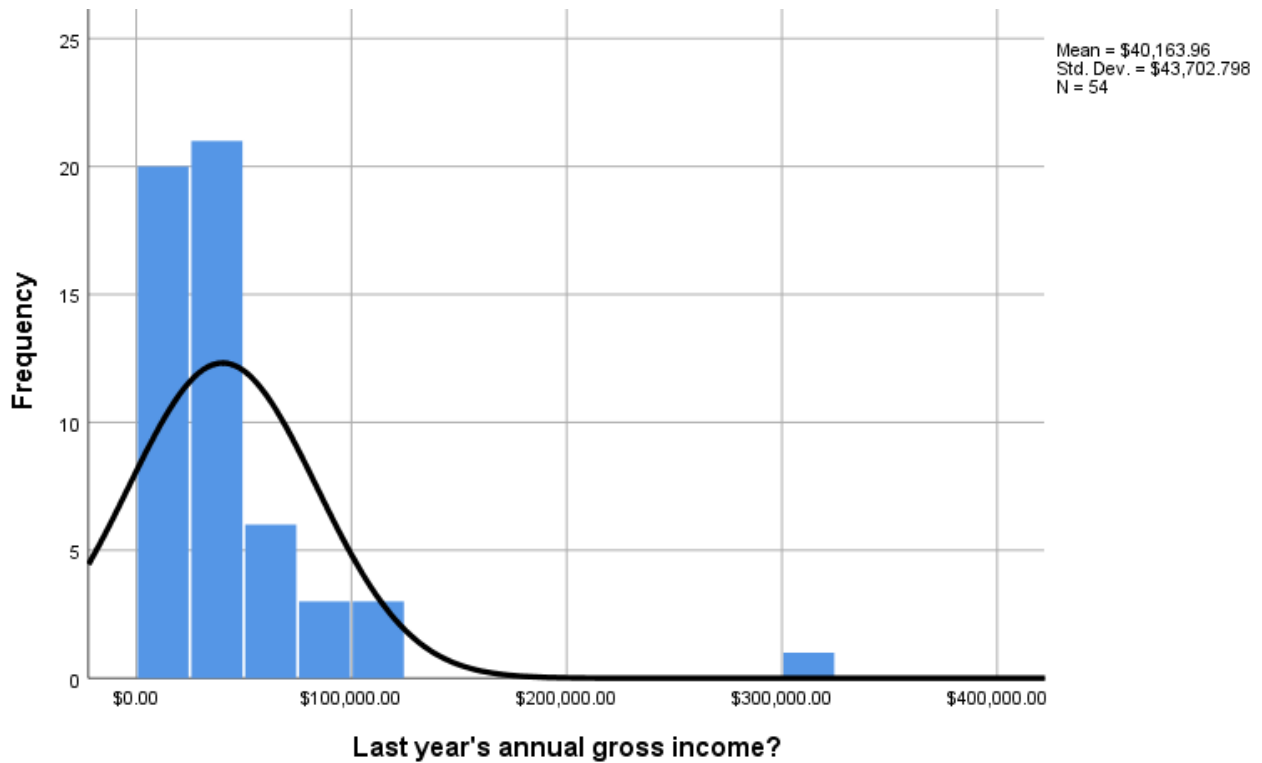


FIGURE 4 – RESPONDENT INCOME

Recruitment

Applicants were asked how they learned about the program. Many found it online through Google searches (23.1%) and Social Media (17.6%). Others learned from the partner agencies: Farmers Market (16.5%), Out of the Garden Project (3.3%), or the Cooperative Extension (3.3%). Word of mouth (12.5%) was also a common way to learn about Kitchen Connects Greensboro.

How did you learn about this program?	Frequency	Frequency
Greensboro Farmers Curb Market	15	16.5%
Facebook/Instagram/Social Media	16	17.6%
Word of mouth	16	12.5%
Google Search	21	23.1%
Local news/ News & Record	8	8.8%
Out of the Garden Referral	3	3.3%
Guilford County NC Cooperative Extension	3	3.3%
Other Agency	2	2.2%
Other	7	7.7%
Total	24	100.0%

TABLE 3 – METHOD OF RECRUITMENT

Business and Economic Interests

While 69.3% of applicants had some experience working in a food business (catering, bartending, restaurant cook/chef, food trucks, etc.), this was a new venture for 82.0% of applicants, though many also indicated having other food-related endeavors. For example:

- *I have been independently cooking and selling food products as a way to pay for schooling and catered events; however, this is my new business venture to get started full time with my passion.*
- *I have been independently cooking and selling food products as a way to pay for schooling and catered events; however, this is my new business venture to get started full time with my passion.*
- *I previously prepared and sold my Mason Jar salads from January 2016 until July 2017. They sold very well because they were convenient and lasted up to 5 days in the Mason Jar. They were just as fresh on day 5 as they were on day one. The price per salad ranged from \$7 - \$9 depending on the ingredients. I used fresh produce, cheeses, and freshly prepared meats in each salad. I had about 25 regular customers/week.*
- *I have been working on the concept, design, function, and execution of my business since mid-2013. I am now interested in going as far as I can with this venture going forward. I would really love and appreciate the knowledge and support that this program provides, as this could assist me in getting to the next level.*

Two-fifths of applicants (44.7%) wanted the business to eventually become their primary source of income. A quarter (24.7%) saw it as a supplemental income opportunity. Others thought of the business as a way to educate or help the community:

- *To educate people more about traditional cooking and use of spices*
- *To have enough to expand into a mobile business for the community and to enough profit to build my other business together to service more of the community needs.*
- *Produce authentic tasteful products while maintaining low cost and affordable purchases to my customers.*

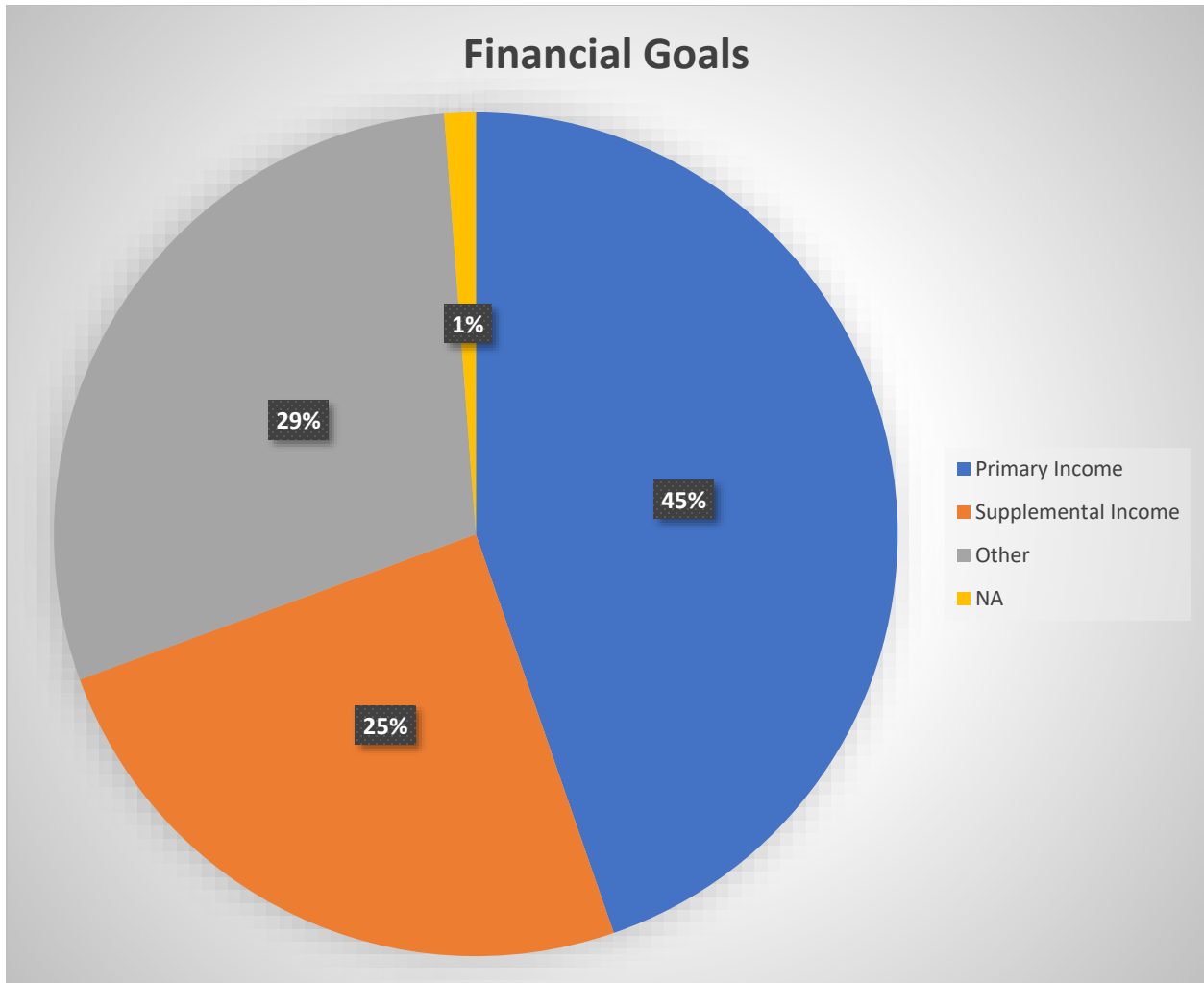


FIGURE 5 - FINANCIAL GOALS OF APPLICANTS

Applicants were interested in learning to master the basics of food business (84.7%) and if their business idea was viable (68.2%). A few had really begun to plan in earnest: 31.9% had a business plan, 26.4% had a cost-benefit analysis, and 15.3% had a food safety plan. Nearly all (93.1%) said they would like help completing these tools.

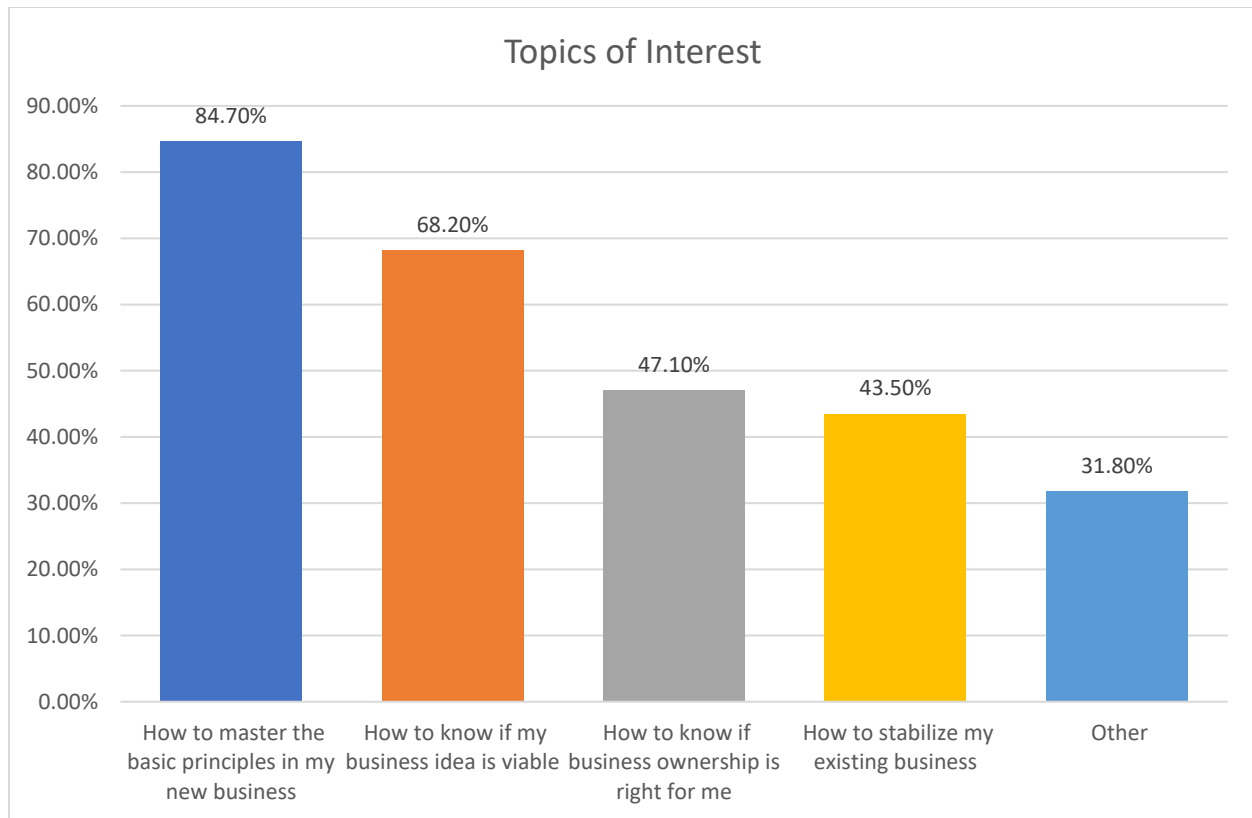


FIGURE 6 - TOPICS OF INTEREST

Many applicants had clear intentions of using local food ingredients. For example:

- *All fruit will be purchased locally at the Greensboro Farmers market or the State Farmers market.*
- *Currently, we source honey from Winston Salem and our natural alkaline water is donated by Old Saratoga Bottling in Saratoga, NC. Not due to lack of trying, we have not been able to locally source the juices we use and in the instances where we are able to find a source, the cost has been significantly higher. If you all are able to provide some contacts for local sourced juices, I would love to have that conversation.*
- *I purchased many of my fruits and veggies from the farmer's market off Sandy Ridge Road during the summer months.*
- *My plan is to obtain organic produce used for the sauces at local farms, i.e. Faucette Farms (Browns Summit, NC) or Peacehaven Community Farm (Whittsett, NC), or another organic produce farm I can find via this program. If I am able to connect with local purveyors of other ingredients needed (i.e. oils or bases), I will make every effort to do so. That's one reason I am so excited about this opportunity -- the ability to connect more with others in this area, too! :)*

Kitchen Connects Final Applicant & Participant Survey

Cohorts

A final exit survey was sent to 192 former applicants and participants to the Kitchen Connects program. The survey invitation was sent five times between Sep 3 and Sep 23, 2019. Five emails bounced; 53 surveys were completed (28.3% response rate). Earlier cohorts were better represented among respondents than later cohorts.

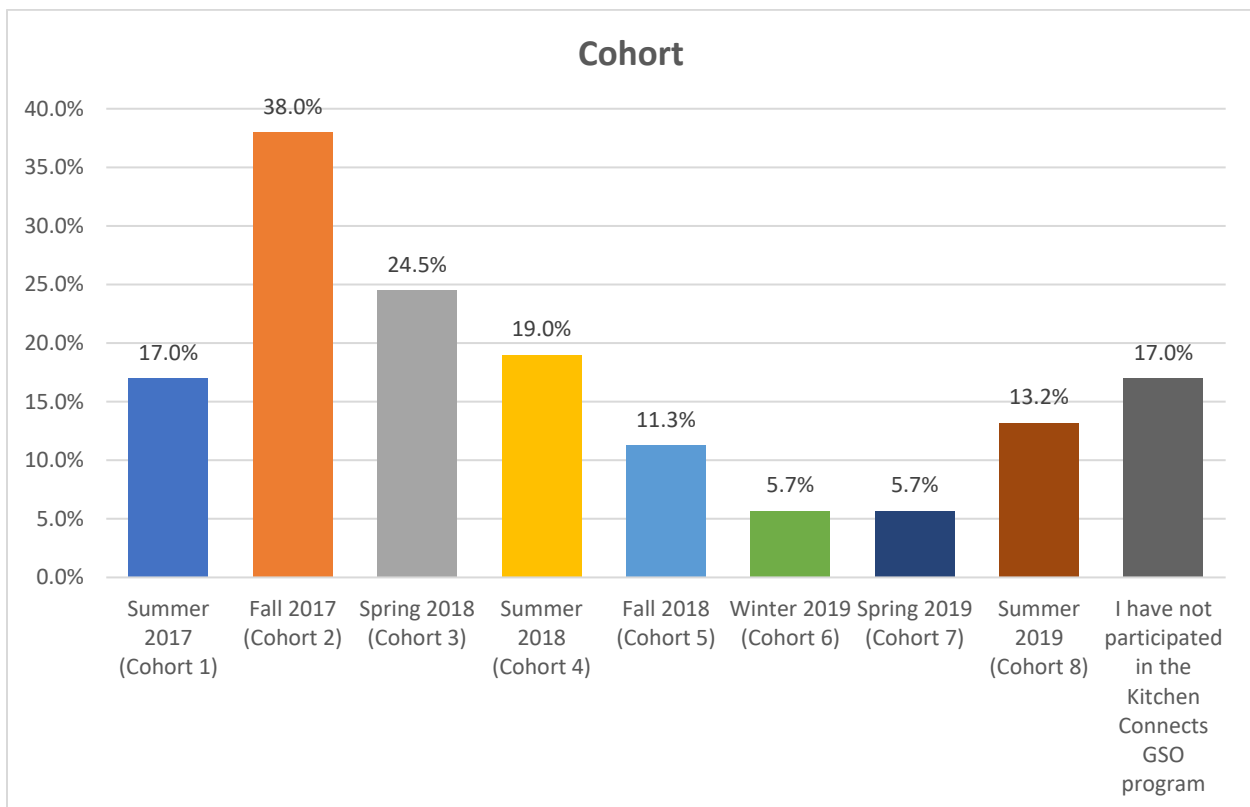


FIGURE 7 – RESPONDENTS BY COHORT

Sales

Most, 68.2% had begun vending their products. Half (50.0%) said things were going somewhat well while 31.6% said extremely well. 17.9% rated their outcomes as poor or extremely poor. Some of the reasons for poor outcomes included:

- *Family emergency and settling down to be able to start again in the Spring*

- *I did not have the financial resource I was originally counting on to get my business off the ground.*
- *I have not moved forward with plans to develop or sell, due to taking a new job and relocation.*
- *I never had response to an email I sent to Ashlee about a missed RE SCHEDULED class, never had any mentoring, and never got into shared use kitchen to have any feedback or opportunity to "present" my product in class.*
- *No capital*
- *The time of year that I did the program was less than ideal*
- *Time, financial resources, will*

For those who had not yet begun to sell, 5.0% were Unable to source ingredients or supplies needed; 8.3% didn't have enough money to purchase ingredients or supplies; 8.3% didn't have enough money to cover kitchen costs; 13.3% didn't have enough money for other expenses. Other reasons for not starting yet included: 8.3% didn't have enough time; 1.7% shared use kitchens unavailable when needed; 1.7% had nowhere to vend; 6.7% had other family obligations; 3.3% had work obligations; and 1.7% had health issues. Other reason (8.3%) included:

- *Do not have product yet. Still developing*
- *I got pregnant earlier in the year and just had my baby in October*
- *Simply put, too much effort and not enough gain*

Six of the respondents not currently selling (46.2%) said they still plan on vending, 38.5% may vend, and 15.4% will not vend. Among those who plan to begin selling later, 66.7% plan to start selling within the next 6 months.

Among those already selling their products, most (60.0%) were selling at the Greensboro Farmers Curb Market. Program participants are also vending in retail businesses or grocery stores (40.0%), the Corner Farmers Market (36.7%), and other markets (30.0%).

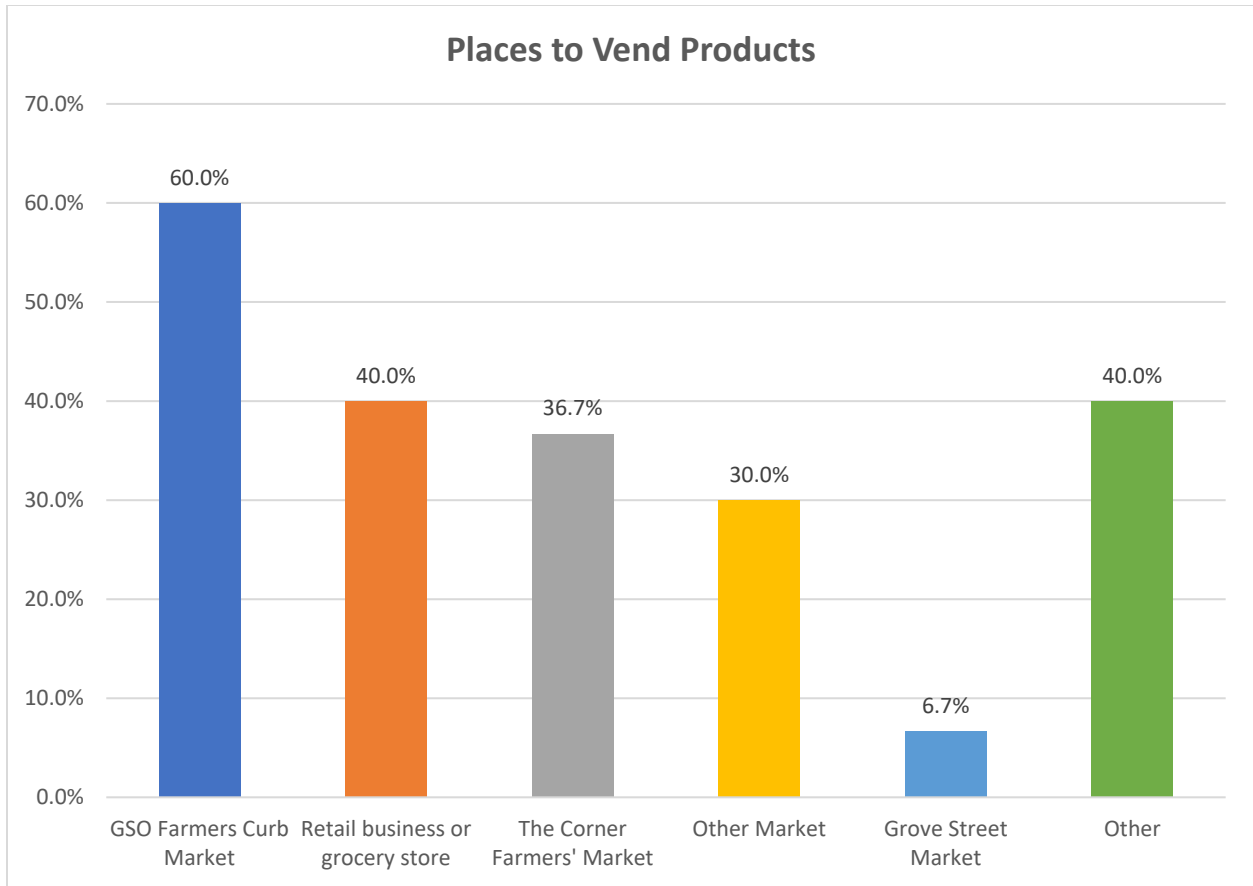


FIGURE 8 – LOCATION OF VENDING

Most (86.1%) are using local ingredients in their products. Demand for their products range from low – not having many sales (20.7%), to moderate -selling well (51.7%), to high – selling more than anticipated (27.6%). Most (75%) say they are keeping up with demand. Among those not having many sales, some reasons included:

- *Chocolate sales are generally seasonal - October through May. This past season was all about building infrastructure, which is tough as a sole proprietor with another job. This season, I expect to do better.*
- *I am not putting effort into the business at the moment.*
- *My lack of advertising*
- *Not really advertising.*
- *Still recovering from surgery on ankle and leg, having hand surgery on 9/19/19*
- *Taking a break due to family matters, though prior to pausing my product was selling well*

Some of the perceived barriers included financial, personal, kitchen access, ingredient access, business knowledge, and weather:

- *Access to capital, access to equipment to make enough product, getting enough rental time at our local commercial kitchen (they are great, the kitchen is just really in demand and we often have to cook really late at night)*
- *Access to inspected kitchen*
- *Availability of cucumbers and other products I use to make the pickles.*
- *Capital to grow and advance sales. Juggling to cover expenses*
- *Competitors*
- *Difficulty finding locally grown ingredients. Also, difficulty in scheduling shared-use kitchen time.*
- *I have to order my product from New Jersey as there are no legitimate wholesalers in the southern geography. I have to order in very large quantities because they only ship by pallets. Freezer storage space has been an issue. Prep stations has been an issue.*
- *Insurance*
- *Keeping on top of the tax laws and changes*
- *Limitations of my small in-home kitchen and the shared kitchen.*
- *Money, can not get into any markets*
- *My biggest problem is the location of the shared kitchen. I live in High Point. It would be great if there could be a sight in High Point which is part of Guilford County.*
- *Too much time and effort required and not enough (financial) gain. Using the kitchen and being able to sell at the farmers market for free was great, but after that... the cost barriers were just too high. Especially for the amount of time and effort required. I was able to break even plus a very, very small profit, but I was exhausted. That, plus after my farmers market freebies were over, I really didn't know how to even begin to get my foot in the door with local restaurants (which was where I thought I'd have "the best" chance of being able to sell my product.)*
- *Weather - heat and humidity, rain are not friendly to Crisp biscotti.*

Profits and Expenses

Half (55.9%) of respondents indicate that their profits have increased since taking the workshops. A quarter (25.0%) said their profits were high, 41.7% said they were getting a low profit on their products, 16.7% said they were just breaking even, 13.9% were experiencing a small loss, and 2.8% had a large loss. Some of the reasons they gave for having improved with profits were:

- *How to capture all the costs of the product, how to survey the market to see what it will bear before setting your price. Also found a lower cost inspected kitchen to utilize.*
- *How to diversify my product line and customer demographic*

- *I am now able to sell at the Farmers market and able to introduce my products to a lot more people. The marketing class surly helped.*
- *I learned about overhead and bank fees.*
- *I learned how important calculating cost of ingredients and factoring in every aspect that goes into producing that ONE product made a large difference in pricing to get a profit*
- *Learned how to capture all costs and how to price product appropriately. Also learned better marketing and merchandising techniques.*
- *Learned how to market/advertise more efficiently*
- *Placing my product in stores. The classes help me learned how to promote my product so it would sell well*

Average monthly total expenses were \$1,553.67. “Other” costs, ingredients, and labor were the highest expenses. Most were using personal savings (25.0%) and earnings from another job (35.0%) to pay for these costs when they were starting up. Now, most cover the costs by reinvesting earnings (60.6%) though some still use personal earnings (24.2%) or credit cards (12.1%).

On average, how much are your monthly operating expenses?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
all materials and supplies	24	\$190.71	321.28932
ingredients	21	\$220.62	275.74127
kitchen fees	18	\$182.00	303.05600
insurance	14	\$148.21	252.87217
vending fees	18	\$150.61	251.85877
taxes	19	\$123.79	221.05444
labor costs	12	\$213.83	372.95816
other costs	10	\$323.90	401.25538

TABLE 4 – OPERATING COSTS

How do you cover these operating expenses now?	N	Percent	Percent of Cases
reinvesting earnings from this business	20	47.60%	60.60%
personal earnings from job	8	19.00%	24.20%
credit cards	4	9.50%	12.10%
personal savings	2	4.80%	6.10%
profit from other businesses	1	2.40%	3.00%
personal loan from an individual	1	2.40%	3.00%
other (please specify)	6	14.30%	18.20%
TOTAL	42	100.00%	127.30%

TABLE 5 – OPERATING FUNDS

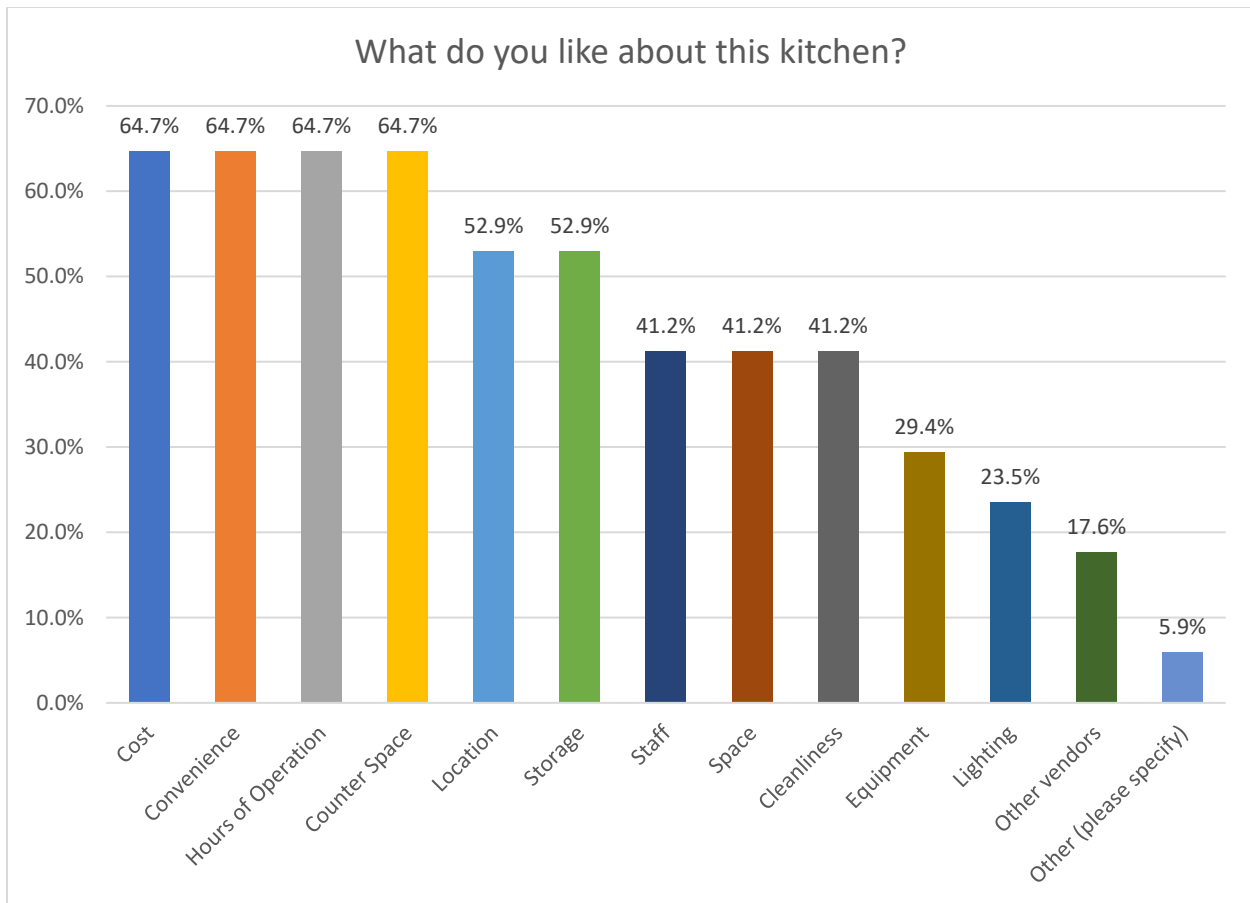


FIGURE 9 – BENEFITS OF SHARED-USE KITCHEN

Kitchen Usage

Among vendors, half (48.6%) said they are still using the Clifton Road – Out of the Garden Project Shared-Use Kitchen. More than a third (38.9%) were weekly or more often, a quarter (27.8%) were monthly or several times a month. Nearly three-quarters of respondents who used this facility equally ranked cost, convenience, hours of operation, and counter space as what they like about the space.

Suggestions for improving the shared-use kitchen include:

- *Training. When someone new comes in have some ne train them on what is expected from them as a kitchen user*
- *The chest freezer in the middle of the room*
- *Not finding dead bugs on the floor*
- *More quality equipment, more effective layout for multiple users, cost*
- *More equipment*

- *Meat preparation*
- *Location*
- *Lights outside and some way to identify others that are supposed to be there.*
- *It is extremely dirty. Flies and bugs everywhere*
- *I'd like other vendors to follow the rule of closing the door behind them every time they come in. Not leave the door open, allowing for flies to come in, until they fully unload their product.*
- *I need flat grill for my business but until now the manager helped me to accommodate*
- *Better management. The women's bathroom has been dirty, several times have found equipment dirty.*

Overall Outcomes

Among participants, 28.6% said the program exceeded or far exceeded their expectations.

Nearly half (45.7%) said it was equal to their expectations. About a quarter (25.8%), said it fell short of far short of their expectations.

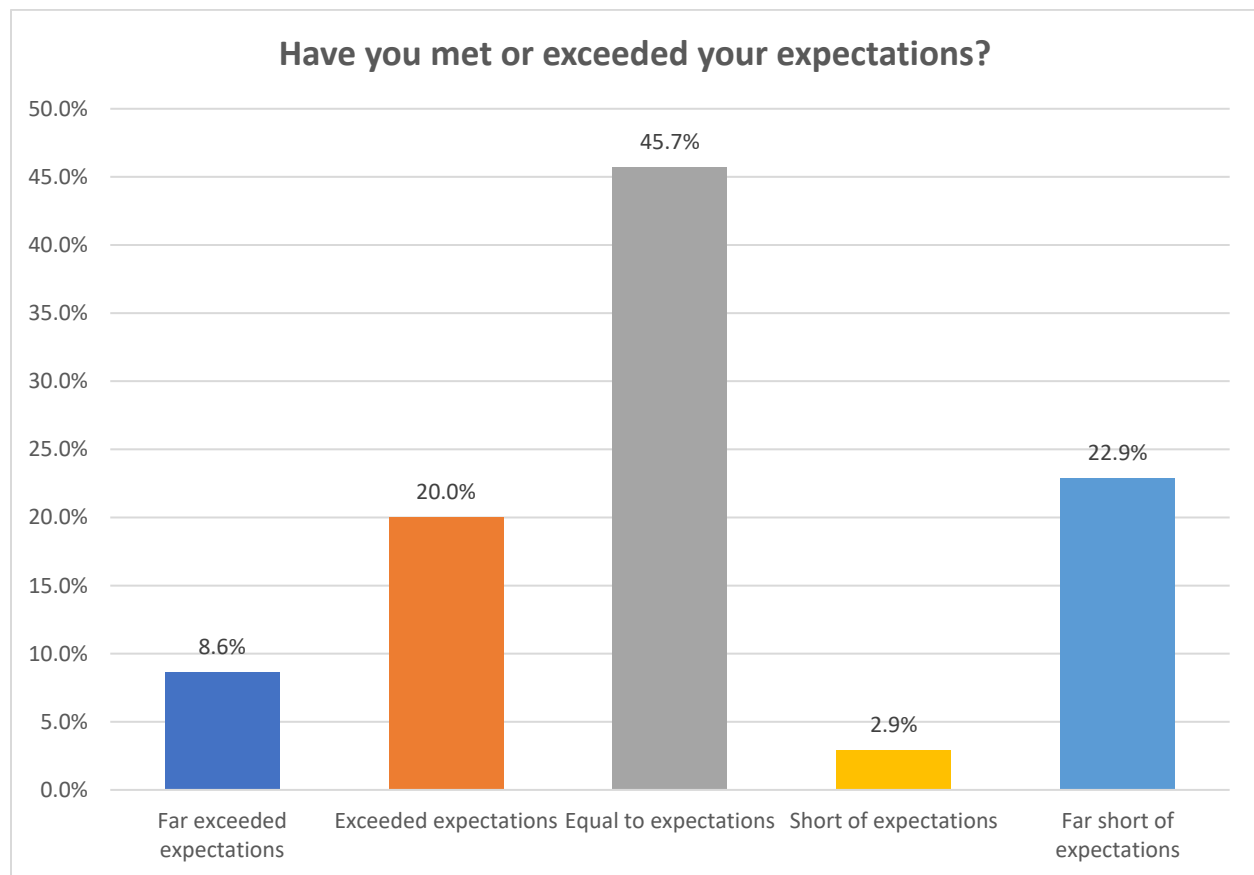


FIGURE 10 – OVERALL RATING OF PROGRAM

LFPP Final Key Personnel Final Feedback

Program Goals

Each of the programs were asked to complete an exit or final feedback survey as well. Six staff from the three agencies (Out of the Garden Project, NC Cooperative Extension, and the Farmers Curb Market) replied to the survey. The staff were first asked to recap their understanding of the goals of the program:

- *To educate individuals on entrepreneurial skills and provide a means to produce locally sourced products to a pre-established audience.*
- *To get food entrepreneurs into our kitchen focusing on using a key local ingredient and assist their potential or current food business aspirations.*
- *To assist community members who wanted to become food entrepreneurs. This program allowed them to acquire the tools and resources that needed to start their food business specifically entering into the farmers market sector.*
- *The goal of the Local Food Promotion Program Implementation Grant was to provide opportunity for the growth of local food networks in both local food production and entrepreneurship by supporting and teaching local food entrepreneurs who use locally grown products.*
- *Increase capacity and use of local food and stimulate local economy by developing new prepared food artisans*
- *To develop a system of training, physical spaces, and support for beginning small-scale, low-risk food producers to prototype, market, and evaluate their products and business model, with the goal of achieving sustainability.*

All agreed that the program achieve these goals moderately (83.3%) to very well (16.7%) overall. Staff rated their success at increasing access to locally produced food by modeling a program to support food education and food businesses in a low-income neighborhood with limited food access as the lowest, followed by increasing domestic consumption of locally produced agriculture by connecting local entrepreneurs to local producers at the Greensboro Farmers Market. Highest rates was providing food safety training and certification classes for food-based entrepreneurs and providing training and marketing space for new food businesses.

In your opinion, how effective was Kitchen Connect GSO in meeting the following program goals	Not effective	slightly effective	moderately effective	very effective	extremely effective	TOTAL
Providing food safety training and certification classes for local farmers	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Providing food safety training and certification classes for food-based entrepreneurs	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Providing training and marketing space for new food businesses	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
Increasing domestic consumption of locally produced agriculture by connecting local entrepreneurs to local producers at the Greensboro Farmers Market	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	33.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Increasing access to locally produced food by modeling a program to support food education and food businesses in a low-income neighborhood with limited food access	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

TABLE 6 – PROGRAM STAFF RATING OF GOALS

Staff explained that that some items were ranked lower for the following reasons:

- *Value-added goods cost money, money that limited resource communities may not have. The program may have been able to provide an array of products to these communities, but it was not always at an affordable rate.*
- *We were not as effective and did not have the resources to do much with the last question [Increasing access to locally produced food by modeling a program to support food education and food businesses in a low-income neighborhood with limited food access].*
- *We may have engaged low-income populations, but I don't think that we were able to retain engagement for some of the cohorts throughout the program. Retention was probably a struggle because low-income populations tend to have more than education that may be holding them back.*
- *I think that timing was a serious constraint and limited the effectiveness of the program as a whole. There was a pretty narrow window in which entrepreneurs were able to get certified, inspected, complete their courses (marketing and business) and produce for a trial market. Several participants were unable to finish complete everything because of this.*
- *Have not seen the final data however Neighbors / the community living near of the prepared food kitchens did not get integrated into the program i.e. not many were from the area. It was effective in the city-wide initiative that did actively engage participants from across the community.*
- *In the year that I had a role with the Kitchen Connects GSO program, I saw that the participants who were most successful and able to make the most of the program were those who had already run their food business on a trial basis and were looking to expand into a larger market, or who had done extensive research and savings. These participants came into the program with considerable resources. I think that our program was too short for participants who had limited or low resources and hadn't planned or saved up for a food business. Even with the Kitchen Connects GSO program, and the 3 free trial times at the shared-use kitchen and the market, every business has startup costs (certification classes like Acidified Foods Manufacturing School, ingredients, containers, labels, liability insurance, etc.).*

The staff said that the overall impact of the program was that it helped increase the number of food artisans and value added farmers, created the only low risk shared-use kitchen in Greensboro, and provided access to staff who had expertise in food production and marketing. As a result, the program produced new clients for future programming and opportunities, and staff are better equipped to coach food entrepreneurs and farmers as to how to move their products ahead.

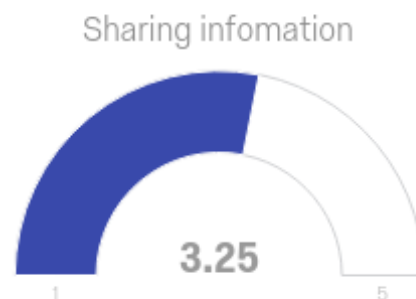
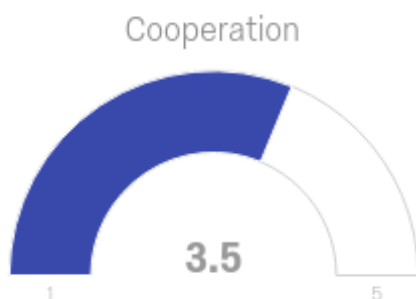
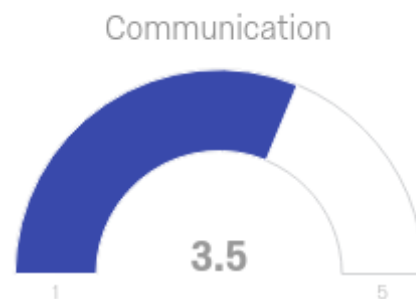
Capacity & Resources

Over the three-year period the partner organizations contributed a number of resources to Kitchen Connects GSO (personnel, volunteers, equipment, facilities, etc.):

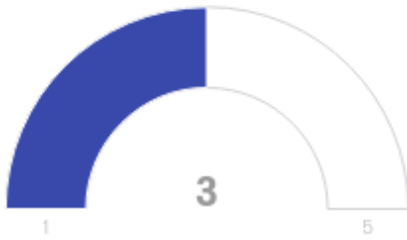
- 6.5 FTE staff across four organization
- 7.0 FTE unpaid or volunteer personnel across four organization
- \$22000 (across two organizations reporting) in new equipment
- \$9,000 (across two organizations reporting) facilities or space paid for by the program
- \$63500 (across two organizations reporting matching funds
- Additional grants and donated funds.

Collaborative

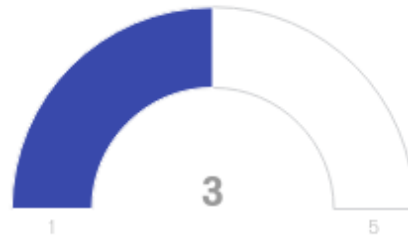
Program staff we asked to rank the dimensions of collaboration across their agencies. They ranked “collaboration beyond Kitchen Connects GSO” as highest (very effective). Logistical issues (scheduling, coordinating activities, planning) and accountability were ranked the lowest at moderately effective.



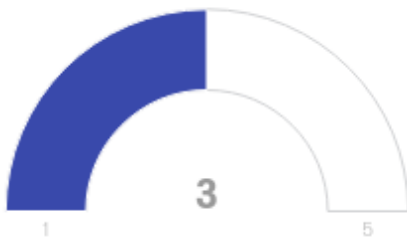
Coordination of activities



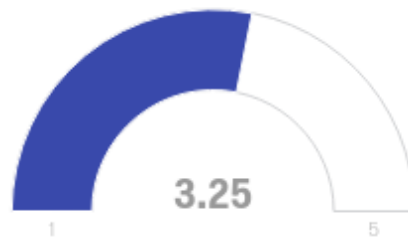
Planning



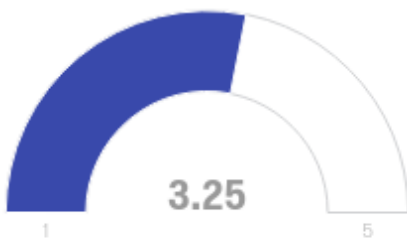
Scheduling



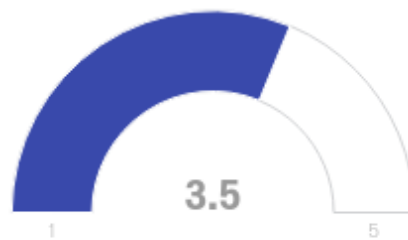
Sharing resources



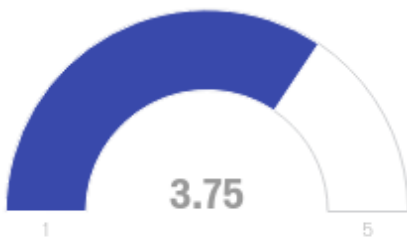
Meetings



Mutual organizational support



Collaboration beyond Kitchen Connects
GSO



Areas for Improvement

Program staff said that if they were to run the program again they would create a phase 2 courses for participants: “They learned how to start a business, but no further skills were taught on maintaining a business or working through year 3, 4, etc.” Staff also said, “we did not ask for enough resources and were forced to find additional funds.” Also, another area that would have improved logistics would have been to have a “dedicated committee chair, as well as dedicated secretary to plan meetings and provide detailed minutes to the group.” Retaining participants was acknowledge as an issue. One suggestion for improving was “giving applicants more time to complete their market trial and expanding the network of available markets would improve retention in Kitchen Connects GSO.” Finally, real-time evaluation feedback would have been helpful “as to effectiveness of the classes to retool if needed. More clarity to applicants around what is local was a learning curve.”

Program staff turnover was an issue at times for each of the organization. Suggestions for limiting this turnover included:

- *Secure more funding for permanent positions.*
- *Re-write job titles for better understanding of position.*
- *Have standard operating procedures clearly written in order for new staff to easily transition to the position.*
- *Needed to pay more per hour.*
- *Having multiple staff that partner in doing the same role.*
- *We don't provide benefits and the hourly rate could have been higher/and or allocated more hours to reduce the turnover.*

Outputs

While 102 applicants were selected to participate in the program over the course of three years, differing numbers were reported on the final number of individual food vendors, farmers, or others you trained or served in this project:

- Cooperative Extension 31
- OOTGP: 51
- SERVSafe: 46
- Farmer's Market: 45

Conclusions

Four objectives were identified for the implementation and evaluation of this program:

Objective 1: Create and coordinate resources for local food businesses.

Objective Met - More than 100 applicants were selected over the eight cohorts of the program. Approximately 50% of those selected completed the program. While not all completed the program, many are still involved in vending food. Most, 68.2% had begun vending their products and 81.6% of those selling say things are going somewhat to extremely well. Half (55.9%) of respondents indicate that their profits have increased since taking the workshops.

Objective 2: Create demand for local produce converted into a shelf-stable product.

Objective Met – Most vendors in the program (86.1%) are using local ingredients in their products. These ingredients included: beans, eggs, fruits, milk, mushrooms, cucumbers, okra, beans, watermelon, honey, flour, blueberries, peaches, garlic, pears, peppers, peppers, apples, onions, cilantro, and other fruits and vegetables.

Objective 3: Decrease the barriers for local farmers that want to diversify from commodity crops to locally consumed crops.

Objective Partially met - Half (50%) of respondents are sourcing local produce for their products. They are being introduced to farmers at the local markets and through the Kitchen Connects program. The Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) training was terminated early in the program. A direct linkage between farmers and food entrepreneurs was not formalized, though many vendors mentioned meeting farmers at the local markets.

Objective 4: Assess the use of local food resources by consumers, including those provided through the proposed program.

Unmet - The process for developing an instrument is still ongoing. An instrument has not been finalized or tested.

The future of Kitchen Connects as it existed is uncertain. The partner organizations will not continue to share the name. They are hoping to open a kitchen in High Point and a commercial kitchen in Greensboro if funding can be secured. There is a small grant to try a women's empowerment in the kitchen training program. All programs indicated that they would seek additional grants to continue the work.