Community Tools and Data for Building a New Food Economy

Final version December 11, 2013 by Penn Loh on behalf of Tufts UEP, Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), and Somerville Community Corporation (SCC)

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Summary

In January 2013, the Practical Visionaries Workshop (PVW) launched a project Community Tools and Data for Building a New Food Economy. PVW is an initiative of Tufts Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning (UEP) with three community partners: Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), and Somerville Community Corporation (SCC). In spring 2013, five UEP graduate students, through their Field Project class, developed a set of popular education tools called Cultivate Your Food Economy. In summer 2013, we implemented these tools and took on some other projects with the three partner groups. This report lays out our partnership process, outputs and results, and reflections and lessons learned so far.
Our work was made possible with the support of a Tufts Community Research Center seed grant. This support enabled intensive collaboration among the partners, through monthly steering committee meetings, where the project was scoped, planned for, and monitored. Without the stipends to our community partners, it is doubtful they could have sustained participation of senior staff over this past year.

The main components of *Cultivate Your Food Economy* are the Food Economy Engagement Tool (FEET) and a set of maps of the food economy in Somerville and Roxbury-Dorchester (see: http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/). FEET consists of a survey and food purchasing log, in which participants track where their food dollars go. It is designed to be used with a popular education workshop series in which individuals then reflect on their collective patterns.

In summer 2013, FEET and the workshops were implemented with each of our partner groups. We discovered that the FEET tools were still difficult, particularly for youth, to complete, but that the workshops did successfully engage reflection and learning about their community food economy. With SCC, where 16 FEET logs were completed, some findings verified their assumptions (such as their reliance on Market Basket for groceries), but also some differed (such as assuming their trips were made primarily by car, when in fact most trips were made by walking).

In addition, with DSNI, we conducted visual surveys of gardens in the Dudley triangle and interviewed gardeners. We mapped 65 gardens and completed 39 gardener interviews. In this 1.5 square mile area, we conservatively estimate that the gardens total ~1/5 of an acre, growing 50 types of vegetables and fruits and yielding an estimated 4400 pounds of produce. While some of the gardens were built in recent years with the support of the Food Project’s Build-A-Garden program, the average reported age of gardens was almost 11 years, with one being 42 years old. Almost ¾ of the gardeners surveyed said they saved money because of the garden.

We learned quite a bit about the challenges involved in working with multiple partners and summer youth programs, trying to do both popular education and data gathering at the same time, and satisfying university Institutional Review Board guidelines with community partner co-researchers. While our seed grant funding period is over, we are following up this fall with further analysis of the Dudley Garden survey, drafting a framing paper on food jobs, and writing an article about our learnings from this community action research project. Meanwhile, the PVW continues to plan for a third year of hosting a spring Field Project.
Process

This project was conceived by the Practical Visionaries Workshop and its Steering Committee partners and builds upon our partnership, launched in 2011. There have been three phases to our process so far: project planning in Fall 2012, student Field Project in spring 2013, and summer 2013 implementation. We now enter a fourth phase of follow-up and reflection (described in the Next Steps below).

Phase 1: Planning Fall 2012

The PVW Steering Committee started meeting monthly in Fall 2011 and guided a UEP Field Project in Spring 2012. In Fall 2012, we began discussions about continuing into a second year and how to build upon the first project, which envisioned strengthening the local food economy as an alternative to Walmart’s urban grocery proposals for Boston and Somerville. By then, our ambitions had grown, and we saw the possibility for a multi-year initiative, in which students and faculty could continue to work with community partners, not just through the UEP Field Projects each spring, but also through summer and academic year internships, research assistantships, and masters theses.

Our overarching research question for this multi-year initiative is: *What is the potential for Boston area base-building groups to drive development of a new community economy in the food sector?* Each of our partners was already involved in various aspects of the food system and wanted to explore strategies for a more equitable and sustainable food economy. With Tufts partnership, we could then generate tools and data for the community partners to develop these strategies. We asked ourselves four questions to help us narrow the scope for the first year:

- What are highest priority research questions that will help us move forward collectively and in our own organizational work?
- What project pieces will best connect and coordinate with your organization’s work?
- What emphasis should we place on community versus conventional data?
- What emphasis should we place on popular education tools versus analysis?

For 2013, we decided that the emphasis would be on popular education tools for our partners to engage their own communities, as well as starting to gather data to develop a broader picture of the regional food economy. We chose popular education as a focus because each of our partners relies heavily on their members to help develop strategy and lead their initiatives. Partners felt that regional food economy data would help them strategize ways that they could play a role to help transform their local economy.

Phase 2: Spring 2013 Field Projects

In Spring 2013, five students joined the Field Projects team for this project. They met monthly, from January through May with the PVW Steering Committee. At their first meeting, the partners encouraged the students to identify their own interests, because there were multiple directions that the project could take that would be useful to them. There was general agreement after the first meeting that the students would focus on popular education tools and regional food asset mapping. At the February meeting, the students presented a project Memorandum of Understanding, which was approved by the partners. The discussion at this meeting centered around the driving questions for the food asset maps. The partners identified jobs as a key area they wanted the regional mapping
to focus on. Also at this meeting, the basic idea of surveying people’s food purchases emerged for the popular education tools.

By the third meeting in March, the students had developed a project proposal and plan. They named the popular education tool the Food Economy Engagement Tool (FEET). We discussed what kinds of questions could be included in the FEET survey and who would participate in pilot survey and workshops in the spring. Each partner agreed to have 5-10 people participate in the pilot phase, but that there would be many more, particularly youth, who could participate in the summer.

In April, the students presented drafts of their maps and the FEET workshops. It became clear by then that the partners were having trouble both getting their people started on the FEET survey and in collecting them. They were already receiving feedback that the survey was too long. The partners liked the direction that the workshops were moving and agreed strongly with the proposal that all of the project outputs would be put onto a website, as opposed to a hardcopy report. At this point, we also continued to plan for how to implement FEET more broadly with each partner in the summer.

At the final spring meeting in May, students presented the final project and website. The partners agreed that they wanted their summer programs to incorporate FEET.

**Phase 3: Summer 2013 tool implementation**

In later May and into June, we started preparing for broader summer implementation of the FEET tools and workshops. Three of the Field Projects students were hired to continue working through the summer on the project. We met individually with each of the partners and began an expedited Institutional Review Board (IRB) process to conduct the surveys and workshops with youth under age 18. We met with IRB staff once face-to-face and then had several rounds of phone calls and emails before even submitting our application and protocols. Then, we were required to revise several elements when we received a conditional approval. One sticking point was that the IRB did not like us delegating too much of the consent/assent and parental permission process to the staff at our partner organizations.

The basic plan with each of our partners was to kick off the FEET survey process and then conduct a follow-up workshop once the FEET survey was completed. Below is a summary of our process with each partner.

**DSNI**

Through our main DSNI contact, we were introduced to DSNI’s Youth Director, who we met with twice to develop two elements of summer work. At the first of these meetings, DSNI also invited two staff from the Food Project (including one who was participating in the Spring 2013 PVW course) and ACE, who together with DSNI have been collaborating on the Dudley Real Food Hub initiative. Unfortunately, ACE could not make this first meeting. DSNI’s 7-week summer youth program had three youth teams (each with about 10 youth), and they intended one team to do work with PVW as well as the Food Project’s summer youth.

The first component was the development of a garden survey to help map locations and gather basic data on community gardens in DSNI’s core area and interview growers. This element was conducted in collaboration with the Food Project, which operates the community greenhouse built by DSNI and has had a long-standing program – Build-a-Garden- which helps residents install raised bed gardens and provides technical assistance. The garden survey also included a second year Tufts UEP student, who was interning with DSNI and had been part of the PVW Field Project team in 2012. DSNI’s goal for this survey was to assess how much residents are growing in gardens in their yards.
and porches and for their summer food team to see what was already happening in their neighborhood. For the Food Project, this survey was also a valuable way to assess the needs of gardeners and the effectiveness of their Build-a-Garden program. Specific activities included a community mapping workshop (July 10) and garden surveying days on July 17 and 19.

The second element was the implementation of FEET and conducting two workshops with the food team on July 26 and August 16. When the summer youth program began, our direct contacts became the two leaders of DSNI’s summer food team.

Note that because Food Project youth were involved in the beginning of this process, we also signed up a handful of their youth on July 16 to start the FEET process. However, plans for a follow-up workshop on August 14 were cancelled due to lack of time in the Food Project schedule.

**ACE**

With ACE, the initial idea was to have several of their youth leaders and possibly one of the youth programs they were working with participate in FEET. We suggested coordinating with DSNI and Food Project summer youth programs. But because ACE’s youth program is more directly youth-led, they had already set other priorities, including working with several other summer youth programs and continuing to take over more vacant lots to build more community gardens. As it turned out, we never connected directly with the other youth program that ACE suggested. With the ACE youth, we met first with one of their youth leaders on July 16 to explain the project, but the other members who were to participate were not there. We returned on August 7 to do a short workshop and kick off the FEET survey with two youth leaders and two youth staff. Then a final workshop was conducted on August 19 with these same participants.

**SCC**

Instead of trying to implement FEET with an already existing group, SCC worked with their summer Tisch intern, two of their summer high school interns, and their Land Use Committee. The Land Use Committee had already identified their interest in building a food coop on the site of the former Star Market on Winter Hill. This group had worked with two members of the PVW 2012 student team to develop a survey assessing resident food needs and a feasibility study for a food cooperative. SCC was also part of a community food security coalition with several other partners. It was with these partners and their own Land Use Committee members that they hoped to involve in FEET, as a way to further develop community narratives around food and to develop visions, particularly as related to land-use, for their food economy. SCC hosted two workshops that implemented FEET on July 25 and August 15. We met with their community planner and summer Tisch intern 3 times to develop the workshop agendas and debrief afterwards.
Outputs and Results

1. Spring Field Project: Cultivating Your Food Economy

All of the outputs of the spring Field Project are at [http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/](http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/). They include a popular education curriculum, Food Economy Engagement Tool (FEET), and community mapping resources. FEET includes a survey, food purchasing log, post-log reflection, and evaluation. This pilot survey and log was distributed to about 40 people through Tufts and the community partners. Eleven complete surveys and logs were returned. There were 3 workshops designed and documented in the curriculum. Parts of the first workshop were piloted with 47 attendees of the April 13th conference Cultivating A New Food Economy, held at Tufts (see [https://sites.google.com/site/tuftsneweconomy/summit](https://sites.google.com/site/tuftsneweconomy/summit)). There was generally positive and supportive feedback from these pilot efforts. The evaluations were also used to improve the tools.

The maps created by the Field Project team are available in both Google Fusion and ArcGIS formats (see [http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/deliverables-2/maps/](http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/deliverables-2/maps/)). The team felt that it was important and useful to use Google Fusion so that the community partners could continue to add and revise the maps, without needing to use ArcGIS. Maps were created for City of Somerville and the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston for the number of food businesses, jobs, and sales in the six main food economy subsectors: production, processing, wholesale distribution, retail, consumption, and nutrient recycling.

For a more detailed set of conclusions and recommendations from the spring 2013 Field Project, see [http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/practical-visionaries-history/conclusions-recommendations-and-next-steps/](http://sites.tufts.edu/foodeconomyfinalreport/practical-visionaries-history/conclusions-recommendations-and-next-steps/).

2. Dudley Garden Survey

The garden survey started with a workshop (see attached agenda) on July 10 to prepare youth to participate as community researchers. The workshop was attended by 30 youth from DSNI and Food Project summer youth programs. It was facilitated by one of PVW’s summer graduate assistants and a Tufts UEP second year student who was interning with DSNI. Youth were introduced to community research and mapping and then went through an exercise to map an urban adventure, using Google Fusion. According to the facilitators and partner staff in attendance, the workshop was well received and got youth engaged and excited about doing community research.

On July 17 and 19, youth teams from DSNI and Food Project conducted walking surveys of the DSNI core triangle area, completing visual surveys of 65 gardens and conducting 39 interviews with gardeners. The groups started with addresses of approximately 40 gardens built by the Food Project’s Build-a-Garden program but also recorded surveys for all other gardens they came across. On the first day, a sampling plan was created where five teams were given a certain set of streets to survey, but by the second day teams just split up in different directions and prioritized a list of gardens where they were to try to do conduct interviews with gardeners.
Gardens Surveyed in DSNI’s Core Area
Key Results of Garden Survey

• Types of gardens on the 65 properties surveyed: 38 raised beds, 54 in-ground, and 26 potted.

• Total estimated area of gardens is 8253 to 9383 square feet (or .19 to .22 acres). Based on an assumption of .5 pounds of produce per square foot of garden¹, these gardens produced an estimated 4127 to 4692 pounds of vegetables and fruit.

• Types of produce: visual surveys identified 33 types of vegetables and fruits being grown, while the gardeners reported growing 50 types. The most commonly identified were tomatoes, beans (of several varieties), collard greens, corn, squash and pumpkins, lettuce and greens, herbs, and peppers.

• Gardeners reported that their gardens ranged in age from less than a year to 42 years, with an average of 10.9 years (and median of 5 years) for those who responded. Eleven gardens are 20 years or older, while 17 are 5 years old or less.

• Gardener characteristics:
  Gender: 21 (60%) female, 13 (37%) male, 1 transgender
  Age: 5 (16%) were 18-29 years, 5 were 30-39 years, 5 were 40-49 years, 4 were 50-59 years, 11 were 60-69 years, 1 each in the 70-79 years and 80-89 years.
  Race/Ethnicity: 12 (36%) Cape Verdean, 8 (24%) African American, 5 Hispanic/Latino (15%), 4 (12%) White, 2 Jamaican, 2 Other/Multiracial.

• Average household size = 4.5; Average number of children under 18 in household = 1.1; Gardeners reported an average of 5.4 people eat regularly from the garden (includes those who are not in the household).

• 24 of 31 (73%) said they save money on food as result of having garden. 7 said they did not save money, and 2 were unsure.

• 18 said they wanted to learn more about gardening resources, farmers markets, or other food programs and events in the future, while 4 said no. 15 gave their contact information.

• Gardeners reasons for gardening varied. 25 indicated at least one or more of the reasons listed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because I like growing plants</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because I like growing plants</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve diet</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because gardening is relaxing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce food costs</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spend more time outdoors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase exercise</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build relationships with neighbors</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Summer FEET Workshops

DSNI

We recruited initial participants and distributed the FEET tool to both DSNI and Food Project youth on July 16 in the afternoon, after they had spent a long day building raised beds at the Dudley Charter School. There was only time for a very basic explanation of the tool, the research project, and the consent and parental permission process. The youth found the packets a bit overwhelming and confusing, particularly with all of the consent and parental permission forms. Thus, we returned on July 18 to answer questions and recruit a few other participants who were not there on the first day.

On July 26, one of the Tufts graduate student assistants conducted a day-long set of activities based on FEET’s first and second workshops. Youth started the day touring the Whole Foods grocery in Jamaica Plain, learning about nutrition, food sourcing, and organics. The group then conducted a quick version of FEET’s Purchasing Power exercise, where participants estimate the amount that they spend at various food stores and then see collectively where their food dollars go. The visual estimates seemed to be effective at showing the youth the purpose and importance of participating in FEET, which as it turned out most of the youth had not yet completed. The final exercise was the Supermarket Sweep, where youth picked out lunch items from four stores and then discussed the social, economic, environmental, and health consequences. Although the group’s focus tended to waver at times, the discussion went pretty well. One conclusion the group arrived at was that they felt like they could trust corner-store owners, and other food service workers, a lot more if they knew them personally.

Two Tufts graduate assistants then conducted a final workshop on August 16 that was meant to follow up on the community mapping and garden surveys, as well as FEET. The first activity was to have the youth hand draw on maps (see example below) where they buy food and how they get there (adapted from the exercise that SCC did at their first workshop – see below). Unfortunately, only a few had completed FEET, so their own data could not be included on the maps, so instead, they just estimated the amount of their food purchasing at each location. When they shared out their maps, they got into a really great discussion about where their money was being spent on food (inside or outside of the community) and their experiences with how it could be difficult for them or their family to buy food where they wanted to. In the second part of the workshop, youth then went through an interactive exercise on how to use Google Fusion tables to create maps from their own data.
In contrast to DSNI, our process with SCC included a workshop to start participants on FEET. SCC staff, including their summer Tisch intern, spent the first few weeks of the summer talking to and conducting workshops with several of their partners in the community food security coalition. As a result, the first workshop on July 25 was well attended by about 30, including youth from Teen Empowerment, Groundwork Somerville, as well as a number of adults recruited through SCC. Translators for Haitian Creole and Spanish were available and each used by one participant.

At this first workshop, SCC conducted exercises to get the group talking about community organizing and local food economy, creating their own food maps (hand drawing their food sources and travel routes), and discussing how land can be used to improve their food economy. We then introduced FEET, recruited participants, and had some time for some of them to fill out the FEET survey.

SCC then held a follow-up workshop on August 15, where it was hoped that the participants from the first workshop would come back with their FEET surveys filled out. As it turned out, there were only 8 attendees at this workshop, but only a few had done FEET and attended the previous workshop. Despite the lack of continuity between first and second workshop participants, there were 15 FEET surveys and 16 FEET logs returned from a total of 18 people recruited.

Some of the key data from FEET were analyzed and brought back to the August 15 workshop. Below are charts showing the total expenditures by food business type, number of food shopping trips by food business type, the motivations cited for these trips, and the mode of transportation for each trip.
The total amount spent at all food stores was $1968.92. The most spent was at Supermarket/Grocery stores (80% of all money spent). In second was Fast Food Restaurant (5.5%), followed closely by Sit Down Restaurant (5%), Take Out/Delivery (4.7%), and Convenience Store (4.5%), with others (Coffee shop/Café, Vending Machine, and Specialty Store) coming in under 1%, while there was no money spent at Fruit/Veggie Market and Cafeteria. However, it is interesting to note that some people logged food that they consumed for “free,” at community organizations, cafeterias, and houses of friends and family. Another interesting point to mention is that some people used different categories for the same stores (i.e. Dunkin Donuts was categorized as coffee shop/café by some, and fast food by others, while small neighborhood grocers were categorized as supermarket/grocery by some and convenience stores by others), and some chose more than one category for one store (some restaurants categorized as take-out, fast food and sit down at the same time).
The chart above shows that the most frequently visited food business type was the Supermarket (21% of all shopping trips). In second was Convenience store (13%) followed closely by Fast Food restaurant, “Sit down” restaurant, Coffee shop/Café, Fruit & Vegetable store, and Take-out/Delivery.
As shown in the chart above, the most frequently cited motivation for choosing a particular food business was Convenience and Price (tied at 22% each) but followed closely by Quality (19%) and Selection/Variety (18%).

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Finally, Walking was the most frequent mode of travel to food businesses (65%), followed by Car (18%), and Bus (10%).

Compared to the pre-log survey, the actual log data yield some interesting results:

- Although not every participant filled out the section of the survey for estimating food dollars spent in the same way (instructions were to estimate percentage spent at each category, while some just checked boxes and others left the entire section blank: out of 15 returned, 12 filled it out and 7 filled it out correctly), the majority of respondents estimated that they spent about 75% at supermarket/grocery, 27.5% at “other” (which included food pantries and other free/subsidized meals, and home/community gardens), 9% at convenience stores, 6% at take-out/delivery, 4% at fast food, and others coming in at 2% or less. Due to inconsistencies in survey completion these numbers don’t add up exactly to 100%. At the follow-up workshop people noted that most of their food dollars went to supermarket/grocery stores, as predicted. But they also found that more money than estimated was spent on fast food and sit-down restaurants, and less than estimated at convenience stores.

- In the pre-log survey, the most frequently reported priorities or motivations when shopping for food were Price and Quality, followed by Convenience and Health. The log revealed that the most frequently cited motivations for actual trips were Convenience and Price, followed by Quality and Selection/Variety. In the pre-log survey, Selection/Variety ranked 7th among the top priorities.

- Most participants thought they usually traveled to get food by car/truck (12 of 15), but most trips were actually made by walking. Walking was cited by only 7 of 15 as their usual transport mode in the pre-log survey.
The FEET tool was evaluated both through a post-log evaluation survey as well as verbal feedback at the second workshop. For the most part, participants reported that the Survey was easy to fill out (average 2.9 on a 7-point scale, where 1 is easy) and that the Log was slightly more difficult than the Survey but still not difficult (average 3.3). All respondents indicated that they did not find any questions or sections of the Survey or the Log confusing. Six of 14 found that FEET helped them think about their personal interaction in the food economy, specifically about how they spend their money, the need to eat healthier, and reliance on going to just one grocery store. Four made suggestions about how to improve FEET, commenting that it should be shorter, more detailed to make comparisons, made available electronically, and allow the user to fill in their own food categories. Two offered very positive comments about the tool. In the workshop, one participant liked the tool but thought it should be more focused on nutrition, and two said they loved the tool and it helped them reevaluate where and why they purchase their food, as well as what kinds of foods they are purchasing.
Discussion and Reflections

Overall

There are several overall learnings that stand out as this initiative comes to the end of its first year. We have been successful in developing some popular education tools for our partners to engage their communities, but there have been challenges in implementing the tools as designed. We have only begun to compile the data that will be useful to our partners in developing their vision and strategies around the food economy. Our partnership has continued to evolve, where each of the partners knows that they can work with us for a more extended period beyond one semester or one project. They are now thinking ahead more about how they can best use our partnership resources.

Some general lessons learned so far:

• It is very difficult for a popular education curriculum to contribute to learning and engagement as well as collect data. Thus, there is a core tension between learning and reflection and data gathering goals. For example, the curriculum that goes along with FEET can be adapted and used in many ways by our partners, but the FEET purchasing log requires a more commitment and planning on behalf of participants.

• Having 3 partners in two different cities introduces challenges of having a single project meet the needs of all. In fact, the failure of FEET to do both education and data collection probably stems from the fact that we created a more generic tool for all the partners, as opposed to customizing a tool for each one.

• The stipends for partners is critical for keeping their commitment to long-term planning and aligning our joint work with their programs. As community-based nonprofits, each of the organizations is challenged with fundraising, and we would not have been able to sustain the commitment of senior staff without a small amount of funding.

Garden Survey

The garden survey worked well in that there were a number of gardens identified that were not on the list of Food Project Build-a-Garden sites. The process was also launched in a very positive way through the workshop with youth from DSNI and Food Project. They were excited about doing community research. The interviews with the gardeners were also very valuable. We were surprised at how many of them were available during the day and how willing they were to talk about their gardens.

The area that could be most improved in the process was training of the youth on the garden survey and interview instruments. The data that was recorded was not as consistent as it could be, in that some of the visual survey questions were left blank on many surveys (such as what percentage of garden is growing food). If we were to do this again, we would have all the youth go through a mock interview and fill out a visual survey on a common plot, so that they could ask questions about how to conduct the survey and get practice using it.

Another aspect of the survey project that was not fruitful was leaving flyers at garden sites where no one was home, directing gardeners to fill out the survey online. The flyers themselves were in English only and included the requisite research consent language that made it not very accessible. No online surveys were completed, even though flyers were left at all of the garden sites visually surveyed but where the gardener was not home (~25 homes).
FEET

We learned a lot about the challenges of conducting a joint popular education and action research project with summer youth programs. We knew that these programs are very fast-paced and hectic, lasting only 6-7 weeks from the time summer vacation starts in July through early August. And thus, we spent a bit of time with partner organization staff to ensure that this project was built into their summer plans. But despite the planning, we ran into a number of challenges:

• Completing FEET turned out to be more difficult than anticipated for the youth, particularly those who did not participate in a workshop as part of their recruitment (DSNI and Food Project youth). Where we did achieve a high rate of success in completion with SCC, we attribute that to the fact that there was an entire workshop introducing participants to the kinds of questions that FEET is designed to address.

• FEET was not well designed for youth, many of whom are not the primary food purchaser in their households.

• It was difficult to coordinate with summer youth staff at DSNI, as they were consumed with the youth program for most of their days. Also, the senior staff who we set up the programs with were not the ones directly implementing the summer plan. Thus, we had to build new relationships with the summer youth staff.

• Working with SCC, who already had an ongoing conversation about the local food economy was both helpful and challenging. They had a pretty good idea of the problems and issues in their community and were not completely open to further analyzing these issues. The other challenge is that we did not adapt our tools to help facilitate more discussion around their main focus – land use – and how the food economy could support more community power and ownership around land.

The workshops related to FEET proved to be much more successful than the survey and log. The curriculum was implemented in various settings and appeared to engage people and help them reflect on their own involvement in the food economy as well as their community’s issues relating to the food system. The curriculum was designed to be adaptable, and it was used in various contexts. However, we found that with both ACE and SCC, where they had already had various discussions about food, we still needed to go further in customizing the workshops. One example is that the Supermarket Sweep activity conducted with ACE used Market Basket as the supermarket example, but the participants in Roxbury were not familiar with that particular store.

Thus, as a data collection tool, FEET still remains largely untested. If we are to use it to collect more data, we will need to include stronger incentives for people to complete and to come to a kickoff workshop. In the spring, the Field Project had begun discussions with a programmer to develop a mobile FEET log application, but we decided not to spend the time and resources to develop this app for the time being.

We also felt that the post-FEET reflection questions in the spring pilot should still have been included in the summer implementation. They were removed because we thought the packet was already too large and that the reflection would happen in the summer workshops. We also want to make sure that in future follow-up workshops, each participant get a copy of their own FEET log back to use in group reflection.

Ultimately, we question whether FEET’s education and data collection purposes need to be combined. The curriculum can stimulate critical reflection, even without having participants invest a
week in collecting their food purchasing data. In SCC’s case, some of the data simply reaffirmed what participants had already assumed, for instance that many of them rely on Market Basket for a lot of their food.

**IRB Process**

The IRB process was a bit cumbersome and time consuming. We knew that for the summer we would have to go through an expedited process, simply for the fact that we would be gathering data from youth under 18. Even though the spring project with adults received an exemption because the research posed minimal risk of harm, the IRB required us to have a written parental permission process. Because our partners felt that obtaining parental permission was not a practical, we originally proposed obtaining verbal parental permission through a phone call.

Furthermore, the IRB questioned our initial proposal to have our partner organization staff conduct the consent process. We did not have time for the summer staff to become CITI certified and thus classified as co-principal investigators. Thus, we listed them as playing other research roles. For future projects that will require IRB, we will try to have at least one lead staff from each partner become CITI certified.

Fortunately, the IRB staff were very open and receptive to meeting and answering our questions. Without their guidance, the approval of our protocol surely would have been delayed to almost the end of the youth summer programs. While we understand the need for the university to ensure ethical research and comply with the law, we felt that ultimately, the legalese of the consent/assent documentation was onerous and did not contribute to having research participants actually understand their rights. Even the use of different words – “consent” and “assent” – is confusing. Finally, the IRB is not well set up to understand how community partners who are not PI’s can be involved in the research process.

**Maps**

The information that we compiled and mapped on the food economy has not yet been used. SCC did post several of them around at their first workshop, but there was never any closer examination and discussion. We still believe that there is a need to compile this kind of data to help our partners envision the food system regionally. But at this point, the leadership group that would use this data for developing strategy has not yet come together. Each has programs and committees that are at various stages of development. We expect that this resource will still prove valuable as these groups continue to develop their work in the food economy.
Next Steps

There are a number of next steps that flow from our work this summer:

• Further Analysis of Garden Survey Data.  
  Our team plans to use the garden survey results to calculate the food growing potential of the gardens identified. This projection will help answer the question of how much food is already being produced by resident growers and what impact these gardens are having on the neighborhood. Another extension of this survey will be a class project in the UEP Food Justice class. One of the student teams will be working with Food Project to do more follow-up on the impacts of their Build-A-Garden program and using our survey results as a starting point. Finally, DSNI will have a youth food team during the school year, which they hope will also do follow-up.

• Food Jobs framing paper.  
  One of the outputs that we began to outline in the summer is a framing paper on the potential and challenges of creating good jobs in the food economy. This paper’s goal is to help those who are interested in strengthening the community food economy think about strategies for creating new good jobs and turning existing low-wage jobs into good ones in the food economy. We would like to have a draft by end of this fall and use it as a basis for convening dialogue with our community partners and policy makers in early 2014.

• Article on our community research.  
  We plan to draft an article detailing our partnership, process, and initial findings. This article will be a case study and meant to contribute to the literature around community based research. We still need to identify possible journals in which to publish, but would like to have a draft of an article by end of 2013.

• Field Project 2014.  
  The process has already begun to scope out another UEP Field Project for spring 2014. This will be the third year of a project guided by the PVW. The partners have initially decided to focus a project on the Dudley Real Food Hub, which is a collaboration of DSNI, ACE, and the Food Project. The project will support the development of a community food action plan.

• Continue to support partners who want to use FEET.  
  We have just learned that the Dorchester Food Coop plans to use FEET, as it continues to work towards launching their business. We will continue to help support their efforts as well as those of our partners. Both ACE and DSNI expect that their school-year youth programs will want to engage in food issues and may implement parts of the FEET curriculum.

• Pursue funding to support PVW and continuing research projects.  
  We have obtained support from the Tufts Talloires Network to support a graduate assistant from UEP to work with PVW and help UEP develop its community engagement work. Part of this support will be helping to identify outside funders. In addition, UEP is working to develop a proposal for the university to better support its community engagement work, with PVW as one of the models.
Appendix – Additional Dudley Garden Data

In Fall 2013, Tufts UEP’s Food Justice class built on the PVW summer work with the Food Project. The Food Project’s Build-a-Garden program has a database of raised bed gardens that it has built all over Boston since 2007. This data was combined with the PVW summer survey, totaling 733 gardens across Boston. This data is compiled on Google Fusion Table at https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?docid=1JuFQQLjYS-tQKzAhTFOP6Ek89upCi406AnQsvzA&invite=CPSHz8sO#map:id=3.

Below is a map of the all the gardens combined, as well as an info-graphic summarizing key findings from the summer 2013 survey.
**GARDENS!**

**REPORT**

What’s growing in Dorchester/Roxbury?

Results of 2013 Summer Community Research
by the Tufts/Practical Visionaries Cultivate Your Food Economy

**Gardens**

**WHAT WE FOUND**

- 65 gardens
- in a 1.5 square mile area
- and about 1/5 acre being gardened

**50 type of crops being grown:**
- Tomatoes, Beans, Collards, Corn

**Estimated annual crop production:** 4,400 lbs

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**I grow my garden:**

- because I like growing plants (17)
- to grow plants from my culture (12)
- to improve my diet (10)

**Gardeners**

- 39 interviewees, representing many ethnicities and a range of ages
- 81% say all household members eat from garden
- 36% said food is shared with others outside of household
- Indicated challenges where they could use gardening help

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