



## APIOPA delivers the goods in Asian and Pacific Islander communities

### Making a difference

The Asian Pacific Islander Obesity Prevention Alliance—APIOPA—empowers Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities to improve their health. Their four-person team tackles obesity and chronic disease risks through programs such as nature hikes, bike rides, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, farm tours, cooking workshops, and youth leadership development in API faith institutions.

APIOPA attributes high rates of obesity in Los Angeles API neighborhoods in part to the lack of access to produce familiar to and sought by API communities. Some low-income API neighborhoods are located in areas that lack a full-service grocery store or supermarket. APIOPA staff reported that available produce was poor quality, culturally unfamiliar, and unsuitable to the food preferences of many Asian and Pacific Islanders.

The Roots CSA program was developed by APIOPA to offer vegetables common in Asian cuisine, like bok choy, Japanese eggplant, Chinese long beans, and Napa cabbage. After initial attempts to source Asian produce from local urban farmers proved unsuccessful, APIOPA turned to a Hmong farmer in California's Central Valley. Twice a month, APIOPA staff drove to a local farmers' market in their personal cars to purchase and deliver fresh produce to a few dozen subscribers.

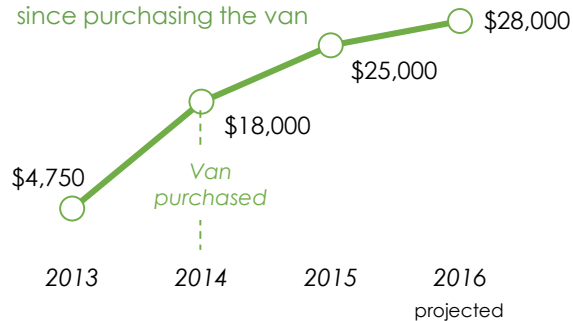
Demand soon exceeded supply. A \$27,000 FreshWorks Fund grant allowed APIOPA to purchase a new cargo van to meet the growing demand for CSA produce.

### Leveraging the FreshWorks Fund

A Nissan NV1500 commercial cargo van, APIOPA's first significant asset, allowed the group to bring 10 times more produce from Central Valley farmers to Los Angeles consumers. The number of subscribers increased from 10 at one site in 2013 to between 60 (low season) and 120 families at 10 distribution sites during peak season in 2015.

This revenue-generating aspect of APIOPA's work will support new paid delivery staff, fuel, and truck maintenance. Meanwhile, APIOPA has seen a steady increase in revenue from the ROOTS CSA sites.

APIOPA's CSA revenue has steadily increased since purchasing the van



Getting that van was so big. The FreshWorks Fund grant let us shoot for the stars. Without it, we wouldn't have even dreamed of doing an expansion.

— APIOPA program director Scott Chan

Hmong farmers in Fresno receive 65 cents for every dollar of sales to the ROOTS CSA, allowing them to diversify their outlets and rely less on selling at distant farmers' markets, where sales can be unpredictable. Overall, purchases from the Fresno-based farmers increased from \$11,000 in 2014 to \$14,500 in 2015.

Back in L.A., representatives from the Los Angeles Food Policy Council and Leadership Urban Renewal Network approached APIOPA concerning a potential collaborative project with COMPRA Foods, a purchasing cooperative. COMPRA distributes produce to small groceries and corner stores throughout high-poverty areas of L.A. in quantities they can manage.

Small urban grocers lack the square footage and refrigeration equipment necessary to stock fresh produce, making minimum wholesale orders challenging. COMPRA Foods aggregates small grocery and corner store orders into purchases large enough to procure from wholesale produce distributor 4Earth Farms, thus offering store operators an alternative to big-box or other retail stores. APIOPA's van is used to pick up wholesale orders and distribute the produce to the small stores.

## Community impact

Three Central Valley farms have achieved economic stability and vitality from the Roots CSA and COMPRA Foods programs. Among farmers often face struggles with cultural isolation, land use and lease issues, and persistent drought.

APIOPA partnered with the Small Business Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture to offer four bilingual workshops on organic certification, marketing alternatives, and small-farm business practices. Each workshop attracted as many as 15 farmers, several of whom now aggregate their harvests at one farm for shared distribution in Los Angeles.

### How is the FreshWorks Fund Small Grants Program having an impact in California?

We surveyed 52 other FreshWorks Fund grantees. Among the 30 who responded, the majority reported sustaining, expanding, or growing their program beyond the grant funding. Of those, 13 were able to leverage their grant to secure additional grants or other financing; three other projects are now financially self-sufficient.

Survey responses suggest that small grants support business development and planning, and have helped scale up projects through marketing, outreach, and purchasing additional equipment or space.

The partnership with APIOPA has given COMPRA Foods access to corner stores and grocers in neighborhoods where APIOPA is known and trusted. Community partners feel confident that APIOPA can help them reach their produce distribution goal of 60 retail outlets.



*APIOPA program director Scott Chan and program coordinator Kyle Tsukahira in the new cargo van purchased with their FreshWorks Fund grant*

FreshWorks is a public-private partnership loan fund created to bring grocery stores, markets that offer fresh produce, and other innovative forms of healthy food retail and distribution to communities where they are currently lacking.

## What's next?

APIOPA is moving into the planning phase of expanding the Roots CSA program to suburban communities. Increased delivery services will allow APIOPA to employ additional drivers and possibly offer stipends to low-income residents that agree to host a CSA distribution site. If successful, it is anticipated that demand will outpace the van's capacity, so another innovative idea is being explored: contracting with freight companies that have trucks returning from Central Valley routes empty, which can instead accept produce from the farmers' hub and transport it to the LA distribution facility.

APIOPA recently secured a two-year, \$300,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation to study other food hubs, selectively adapt their practices in a culturally appropriate way, and establish one of L.A. County's first API-focused food distribution hubs. APIOPA is looking to diversify and start sourcing Hmong farmers' produce for schools, hospitals, and restaurants.

For more information about these programs, please visit [www.apiopa.org](http://www.apiopa.org)

Relatively small investments from the FreshWorks Fund Small Grants Program enable local social entrepreneurs to innovate, leverage assets, and scale their programs in an effort to increase access to healthy food and to contribute to their community's economic and social health.

As a nonprofit community development finance institution, Capital Impact Partners provides financial services and technical assistance that help make high-quality health care, healthy foods, housing, and education more accessible and attainable, and eldercare more dignified and respectful.

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