This report represents FRESH APPROACH's responses to Charting Impact, a joint project of BBB Wise Giving Alliance, GuideStar USA Inc, and Independent Sector. Charting Impact uses five simple yet powerful questions to encourage strategic thinking and help organizations share concise information about their plans and progress toward impact.

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Mission:
The mission of Fresh Approach is to create long-term change in local food systems by connecting California communities with healthy food from California farmers and expanding knowledge about food and nutrition. Fresh Approach envisions healthy communities where all people have access to fresh, healthy food from California farmers.

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1. What are we aiming to accomplish?

Fresh Approach believes that the fresh, healthy food grown by California farmers is an integral part of the solution to the growing problem of obesity and poor nutrition in Bay Area communities. A strong food system requires both fair prices for food consumers and fair profits for food producers. Too often the short-term needs of either consumers or producers are given precedence over the long-term goal of building a sustainable food system that supports the needs of both groups. Fresh Approach has defined its role as bridging the gap between these two groups through programs that connect low income communities with the food grown by local farmers. The goal is to improve the health of Bay Area communities while supporting the success of local farmers as the foundation of a healthy and sustainable food system.

2. What are our strategies for making this happen?

Fresh Approach's programs are designed to increase access to fresh and healthy food, increase the affordability of healthy food for low income families, increase the knowledge of low income persons about how to make healthy food choices, and demonstrate the health improvements that are achievable when making healthier choices. -Increasing Healthy Food Access: Fresh Approach's Freshest Cargo program is a “farmers' market on wheels” that purchases fresh produce at wholesale cost from California farmers at local farmers' markets in the morning and then sells the fresh fruits and vegetables at affordable prices in low income food deserts throughout the day. The communities targeted by Freshest Cargo are those where fresh food is unavailable, unaffordable, or of limited quality. -Increasing Affordability of Fresh Food: Fresh Approach's Market Match program helps those enrolled in the state of California's CalFresh food assistance program to increase their purchases of fresh and healthy fruits and vegetables when using their CalFresh benefits at local farmers' markets. -Increasing Knowledge of Healthy Food Choices: Fresh Approach's Healthy Food/Healthy You program provides nutrition education classes and food preparation demonstrations to low income families to improve the quality and nutritive value of food they purchase and consume. -Demonstrating Health Improvements through Healthier Choices: Fresh Approach's VeggieRx program is an intensive four-month behavior change program of health education and healthy food access that works with small groups of low income persons who are struggling with obesity and diet-related diseases such as diabetes or hypertension. At eight visits over 16 weeks, participants receive nutrition education, learn to prepare simple recipes with fresh and healthy ingredients, and receive vouchers that they can use to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from their local farmers’ market.

3. What are our organization's capabilities for doing this?

Fresh Approach's staff of dedicated and experienced professionals is committed to creating healthier Bay Area communities and paths for Bay Area families towards a healthier future. Each staff member brings a different set of experience, professional expertise and educational achievements to address the challenges faced by the communities served by Fresh Approach. Taking on this challenge also requires the engagement of like-minded partners throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. These partners include community-based health centers such as the Indian Health Center of the Santa Clara Valley and the Native American Health Center, which have hosted the VeggieRx program for their clinic patients. It also includes farmers’ market operators such as the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association, the Fruitvale Farmers' Market and the Heart of the City Farmers’ Markets, which have partnered with Fresh Approach on the Market Match program and have accepted VeggieRx fruit and vegetables vouchers within their markets.

4. How will we know if we're making progress?

Each of Fresh Approach's programs has its own set of goals and benchmarks that indicate progress towards the ultimate goal of stronger, healthier, local food system. VeggieRx: 70% of the low income persons enrolled complete the program and
40% show clear health improvements over four months. Follow-up assessments one-year later show at least 50% have maintained the health improvements achieved during the program. Market Match: The number of CalFresh customers choosing to spend their benefits on fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets continues to increase as a percentage of all CalFresh recipients. The average number of farmers' market visits and average spending per CalFresh customer also increase as the CalFresh customers develop healthier shopping and eating habits. Healthy Food/Healthy You: 75% of low income persons participating in nutrition education classes report that they learned a new skill or fact that will affect their future food purchasing decisions and 50% commit to trying a new healthy food or healthy recipe within the next month. Freshest Cargo: The mobile farmers' market serves more customers who shop for fresh produce more often and increase the diversity of the fresh fruits and vegetable they consume. Purchases of fresh produce from local farmers makes their farms more sustainable and strengthens their commitment to continue to sell at local farmers' markets where Freshest Cargo makes its purchases.

5. What have and haven't we accomplished so far?

The scale of the challenge that Fresh Approach has taken on - to help low income Bay Area families get healthier and to create a food system that supports their path to become and stay healthy - is daunting. Creating lasting change for families or in communities requires a long term investment to overcome habits and systems that have developed over years or event decades. Fresh Approach recognizes that it is equally important to create change through its programming and to inspire and support positive changes by others through sharing stories of families and communities that have proven that change is possible. VeggieRx has helped hundreds of individuals lose weight and learn the skills they need to become healthier and remain healthier. But some of those that VeggieRx works with are unable to balance challenges including intermittent work, lack of transportation, and the need for childcare to complete the program or sustain the benefits after the program. Fresh Approach is continuing to seek ways to support its VeggieRx participants, during and after the program, to help them achieve and sustain health improvements. The Market Match program has helped to spur CalFresh redemptions at partnering farmers' markets by over 750% since 2009. But a large number of CalFresh recipients remain unaware that they can use their benefits at local farmers' markets. Reaching these families to help them understand that they can afford high quality, nutritious food, even on a limited budget, is an ongoing challenge. Freshest Cargo is opening up access to fresh and healthy food in communities where quality affordable food has been been difficult to find. Sales in low income communities continue to steadily increase as more customers learn about Freshest Cargo and current customers are encouraged to try more new fruits and vegetables. The challenge for the program is to cover operating costs while paying farmers a fair price for their products and keeping prices for consumers affordable. Grant support and donations are helping to bridge that gap as Freshest Cargo grows its customer base.