



Please Note:

Your report should address each of the items below. Answers need not be lengthy; three to four pages for the report is often adequate.

All content must be in English and US Dollars.

Progress Report Content

1. Please provide the following information:

- a. Organization Name: Puente a la Salud Comunitaria (Bridge for Community Health)
- b. Program Title: Amaranth Empowering Rural Women to Improve Nutrition and Family Economy
- c. Grant Amount: \$50,000
- d. Contact Person: Hope Bigda-Peyton, Director of Development and Sustainability
- e. Address: 1311-A E. 6th Street, Austin, Texas, 78702

2. Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve.

This program was designed to give rural women and girl's opportunities to bridge the gender gap, become healthier, play a larger role in economic decision-making, and work their way out of poverty. Puente's programs empower women to farm with more access to inputs, improve family nutrition and health, and organize with other community members to create jobs and economic opportunities locally. Amaranth is a pseudo-cereal with remarkable potential; both leaf and grain amaranth are nutrient rich food sources, and the plant resists drought, allowing farmers to adapt to difficult growing conditions. The current market price is considerably higher than that of other grains, offering economic opportunities for farmer families. The nutritional, agro-ecological, and local economic opportunities make amaranth a remarkable opportunity for community development. Specific Objectives:

- 225 farmers learn to grow amaranth using agro-ecological methods through a series of workshops and technical follow-up and participate in farmer-to-farmer exchanges.
- 540 women increase their consumption of amaranth to foster improved health and nutrition through twenty healthy cooking and nutrition workshops that benefit 300 women, eight summer nutrition programs that benefit 160 women and girls, and amaranth exchange vouchers that benefit 80 marginalized women.
- 16 amaranth microenterprise groups strengthen their organization and increase sales by 75%, directly benefitting 50 women.
- Two Regional Amaranth Networks strengthen their organization and 85% of communities that Puente serves are members of the Regional Amaranth Networks
- 480 high school students learn about healthy nutrition and investigate their local food systems, directly benefitting 240 young women.
- 3,000 members of the general public participate in Amaranth Day.



3. Has funding changed for this program? For example, have you received unexpected funding from another source?

Overall, our program funding is healthy and our projected funding is as according to the plan outlined in our DFW proposal. To date, Puente has been able to consistently increase our fundraising to match growing programs. Puente continues to diversify its funding base to include US individual and institutional support, US corporate giving programs, international and Mexican foundations, and Mexican government funding. Several foundations have supported our work over a number of years and should continue to do so in the near future.

As outlined in our proposal, the main supporters of the current project have been the Ford Foundation, Fundacion Produce (Mexican government foundation), the Finnish Embassy in Mexico, Nutrivida Foundation, the Clif Bar Family Foundation, the Harp Helu Foundation, and the Vista Hermosa Foundation. However, a setback was that funding from the Ford Foundation was discontinued due to a shift in funding priorities from grassroots solutions (such as Puente's work) to more government-based policy solutions. Also, a shift in leadership at the Harp Helu Foundation meant that Puente lost some funding which we look to reestablish with the new leadership. In addition, a long-term project proposed with the IAF was declined. We have looked to fill these gaps by investigating new foundations, such as Acting for Life Foundation, and creating a strategy to increase our funding from individual donors.

On the local level, our programs are designed to lead to self-management and sustainability, meaning that after three to five years the population should have built sufficient organizational capacity to allow them to access other funding sources. Puente is fortunate to have established an emergency fund of approximately six months of operating expenses. This will allow us to assure that we can cover 100% of our program budgets and thus fulfill our commitments to our community participants.

4. Is your organization or program situation different than presented in the approved proposal? For example, new executive director, significant program staffing changes or NGO affiliation, loss of large funding, or other significant changes?

As mentioned above, loss of funding from the Ford Foundation was a major change. However, we have been able to adapt to the situation by expanding our foundations research and strategy for fundraising with individual donors.

A significant program staffing change was onboarding two new program directors in the summer of 2015, we had originally planned to look for just one program director for our farm-to-table program but discovered that the program requires two diverse skill sets, public health and organic agriculture, and therefore made the decision to hire two program directors to focus in each of these areas. Beyond that there have been minor staffing changes at the regional level, we hired a new regional and technical coordinator and one of our staff members is currently on maternity leave. Overall, we feel the program staff is strong and the operational structure is flowing well.



We continue to implement our 2014-2019 Strategic Plan as outlined, and have made major improvements in consolidating our monitoring and evaluation system by setting up an online system of log-frames. We are excited to see these positive changes as the organization grows and expands its reach.

5. What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

Some major challenges are rising food prices, uncertain climatic conditions, and high rates of out migration leaving less family members to work on farms. We have been able to turn these complex challenges into local opportunities for the reintegration of sustainable approaches for growing and eating healthy foods in a complex food system. We believe that sustainable agriculture education and training will lead to a more conscientious approach within rural communities.

A main challenge is the increasing climate variation that farmers face, which makes the amaranth harvest variable. Last year the small farmers we support had a record harvest of 30 tons of amaranth, but this year we project a smaller harvest due to rainfall variation, poor soil quality, and pests. Another challenge to productivity has been the transition many farmers are going through from using conventional growing methods with chemical pesticides and synthetic fertilizers to organic growing methods. This tends to lower productivity in the first few years, as soil quality improves gradually. We continually seek out strategic mitigation techniques to combat these issues, providing economic support farmers to mitigate risk and encouraging the use of composts, cover crops, and crop rotation to improve soil quality and ensure a healthier agricultural ecosystem over time. We have also worked to improve our harvesting and storage infrastructure so that farmers have a place they can store their grain in dry conditions to ensure it lasts over time and there is consistent access to quality amaranth grain.

A major challenge continues to be creating positive behavior change in nutrition as in the communities we serve local, endemic foods are devalued and publicity and access is strongly in favor of processed food products. Our Healthy Families Program has a variety of strategies to promote behavioral change, increasing healthy food access and consumer consciousness and education, but this continues to be a challenge.

The Regional Amaranth Networks have taken great steps in becoming more independent and grassroots entities, and we continue to support their development by strengthening community organizing around amaranth and healthy food. A challenge they are now facing is what their formal structure will look like and what type of legal constitution each network should have (e.g. cooperative, nonprofit, agricultural business, etc.). We see this as a great opportunity to accompany the Networks on this exciting process, and are organizing workshops with allied organizations such as the Oaxaca Community Foundation to inform the members about the advantages and disadvantages of different organizational structures.



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6. Have you revised your original objectives since the project began? If so, why? What are your new objectives?

Our project objectives remain the same.

7. What progress have you made toward achieving your objectives? Please address each stated objective.

Puente objectives between January-June 2016:

- 225 farmers learn to grow amaranth using agro-ecological methods through a series of workshops and technical follow-up and participate in farmer-to-farmer exchanges.
 - We have trained 192 farmers to grow amaranth using agro-ecological methods during our irrigation growing cycle (January-May) and rainy-season growing cycle (April-November). We conducted four farmer-to-farmer exchanges and 17 workshops. The final data for the amaranth harvest will be available in December 2016, we have a positive outlook and improvements in our harvesting technology and infrastructure have made a big difference for farmers.
- 540 women increase their consumption of amaranth to foster improved health and nutrition through twenty healthy cooking and nutrition workshops that benefit 300 women, eight summer nutrition programs that benefit 160 women and girls, and amaranth exchange vouchers that benefit 80 marginalized women.
 - Overall, 535 women have increased their consumption of amaranth to improve health and nutrition through the different activities of the Healthy Families Program. 274 women participated in 19 cooking workshops (we still have additional cooking workshops planned for the year, so will hope to surpass our goal here), nine summer nutrition programs were held benefitting 181 women and girls, and 80 women received amaranth and healthy food vouchers. The summer program was very successful, and we have observed a positive uptick in amaranth consumption. We will be able to report on these final impact indicators in December.
- 16 amaranth microenterprise groups strengthen their organization and increase sales by 75%, directly benefitting 50 women.
 - 20 amaranth microenterprise groups have formed and strengthened their organization through 30 workshops and sales have increased by 57%, benefitting 68 women who now have a chance to generate more sustainable livelihoods in their home communities.
- Two Regional Amaranth Networks strengthen their organization and 85% of communities that Puente serves are members of the Regional Amaranth Networks
 - We have facilitated 12 workshops and given technical follow-up with two Regional Amaranth Networks, who have made great strides in grassroots organizing. Both Networks recently celebrated their Anniversaries with



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celebrations in their regions, bringing together over 1,000 people to learn about work with healthy food and amaranth.

- 480 high school students learn about healthy nutrition and investigate their local food systems, directly benefitting 240 young women.
 - 493 high school students have participated in workshops on healthy nutrition and investigating their local food systems, directly benefitting 240 young women. The students are now on their second phase of the project, which will take them through the process of creating value added products with amaranth that they can sell in their schools and communities to generate additional income.
- 3,000 members of the general public participate in Amaranth Day.
 - This past October 8th Puente held its 5th Amaranth Day event in Oaxaca City. The event, held in a major park in Oaxaca City center, was a huge success. We hosted over 300 community members, farmers, microenterprise groups, women's groups, and NGO partners to join us in celebrating community work with amaranth in favor of food sovereignty and share that work with the Oaxacan public. As a special event, we created the largest amaranth-based tlayuda (a traditional Oaxacan dish) in the world. An important strategy we have is to position amaranth as a staple food item in the local diet, so this event showed how amaranth can be integrated into traditional Oaxacan cuisine on a grand scale. We also had workshops, speakers on food sovereignty, agriculture, and nutrition, children's activities and live music. There were over 50 online and digital publications in important local and national new sources about the event.

8. Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal? **Jan – June 2016.**

No, all activities outlined in the proposal are going according to plan.

Within the report also include:

- Several high-resolution JPG photographs of the program depicting the women/girls who have benefited from the grant funds should be posted to your assigned Dropbox. Photos should be submitted with the right to use in all forms and media in DFW documents and website. Include confirmation of grantee's right and consent to use photos/videos as per local law. *Additional files included.*
- Any message you would like us to convey to our membership and donors about the impact our grant is having on those being served and/or your organization and its mission. *See below.*
- Detailed list of all expenses incurred during the reporting period which have been paid for with the Dining for Women grant. *Additional files included.*

Message for Dining for Women membership and donors: One of our supporters recently said that in a time of walls, Puente builds bridges. In a country with growing woes over economic and



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class divisions, we are so incredibly inspired to be a part of your movement to come together to support diverse groups of women and girls all over the world. What force is strong enough to combat the kind of hate and discrimination that we are seeing in this election season in the United States? I think that the only answer is a kind of love that can heal and protect, a love beyond family, beyond community, beyond creed, and beyond nation. Love that leads us to dedicate our time and energy to the most hurt and vulnerable among us and that seeks to heal the world, rather than insulate ourselves from it. It was a pleasure for me and our staff members and board members to meet a group of people who embody this kind of love and are working to make a difference for women and girls around the world.

We were so pleased to meet many of you in person or over Skype over the course of our project. If you would be interested in setting up a Skype interview to update you on our project progress we would be happy to accommodate! We invite you to get in touch with us, visit us in Oaxaca, follow our work on social media, and donate to our year-end campaign to continue empowering rural women and farming families in Oaxaca.

On behalf of the 1,200 women and girls living in poor, indigenous communities of rural Oaxaca that you have benefitted with your generous donations, we thank you. Through your donations they now have the opportunity to improve their nutrition, farming practices, and economic livelihoods through amaranth, a healthy, local grain. Thank you for your time, and we hope to continue this important work together in collaboration!

-Hope Bigda-Peyton, Development Director, Puente a la Salud Comunitaria (Bridge for Community Health)

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