

GOTHAM GRAZER

SUSTAINABLE FOOD
NEGOTIATION
SIMULATION

PRESENTED BY





EARTH DAY INITIATIVE

Gotham Grazer

Sustainable & Healthy Food
Negotiation Simulation

Advanced

Negotiation Manager General Information

Scenario:

The neighborhood of Hunts Point in the South Bronx is home to one of the largest food distribution centers in the world. The wholesale food market brings in more than \$2 billion annually. The surrounding area is plagued by poverty. Many local residents do not have access to healthy food and suffer one of the highest asthma hospitalization rates for children in NYC. Nearly 25% of the population is obese, and about 17% have heart-related issues; both which have been proven to decrease with proper nutrition. Most of the population is in school which makes Hunts Point an opportune place to instill the young population with knowledge of sustainability and organic food. Now the new borough president, who won election decrying the previous president's stumbling response to similar crisis', has called together a group of stakeholders to decide how the city should undertake a program of increasing availability of healthy food and developing the proper infrastructure. Should the city improve on its Healthy Bodega Initiative? Should city funding go into the creation of a community-supported agriculture program (CSA)? Start a consistent farmers market or a community garden? Should the city fund educational services to raise awareness and advertise the accessibility and affordability of sustainable food? What scale and pace of response is appropriate given the uncertainty of success and chronic problems of poverty and lack of resources?

The Decision at Hand

Since the new Bronx Borough President entered office he has announced that he is gathering a group of stakeholders to try and solve the lack of healthy food access in Hunts Point. This is a timely manner as the President has many commitments and responsibilities. There is enormous political pressure to do something.

1. City-funded community garden
2. City-funded classes in school
3. Increasing the budget for the Healthy Bodega Initiative
4. Creating a CSA Program
5. Creating a food pantry

Logistics:

This game requires 5 teams (one team representing each different organization) with one team (the president) serving as a facilitator.

The president's facilitation role is important to the game as one hour is a short time to reach agreement among stakeholders with such diverse interests. The game manager can either ask for a volunteer to serve in this role or select a participant who seems willing and able to facilitate. The president's confidential instructions contain guidance on how to facilitate such a discussion. If possible, the game manager should discuss the challenges and approaches to facilitation with this person before the exercise begins. It is also important to emphasize to the whole group that they observe the ground rules and rough agenda contained in their General Instructions.

The game manager should inform the group at the end of the simulation, they will ask the group to vote on the options negotiated by the groups. The vote will take place by simultaneous show of hands. The goal, as laid out by the president, is to achieve the agreement of all parties. However, the city needs to move forward with some plan, so overwhelming agreement among the parties (including the president) would be enough.

The group need not choose one solution from among the options proposed. Rather, a package agreement could include a combination of different programs at different paces and scales to satisfy different stakeholders' interests. No one option will satisfy everyone! If an option is listed as unacceptable, they cannot agree to it unless, perhaps, the agreement substantially modifies the option or greatly advances their interests in another area. The participants should feel free to hybridize solutions and create new options.

Debrief:

The game manager should ask the group questions such as the following to elicit discussion on dynamics within the game and lessons to take away.

Discussion questions:

1. If the group reached agreement, what were the keys to that success? If not, what issues or dynamics prevented agreement?
2. How did different stakeholders respond to the same situation and the continuing threat of poverty and obesity?
3. How were participants able to identify or create options that satisfied multiple interests?
4. How big a role did such issues as social and environmental justice, job creation, financial cost, and uncertainty about healthy food play in the negotiations?
6. Was the group able to agree on a package of solutions that both reduced vulnerability to extreme heat and advanced other important city priorities?

Major lessons:

1. Public policy decisions related to sustainable, organic and healthy food must consider political, economic, and historical realities. Social and environmental justice issues will certainly arise.
2. Effective debate on climate adaptation will require a reliance on shared data and forecasts, which may be interpreted differently, but which can provide a believable basis for discussion.
3. Agreement depends on finding ways to package multiple issues together so that different groups can secure their highest priorities while relaxing their demands in other areas. Tackling issues separately almost always leads to deadlock.
4. The most feasible adaptation measures are those that meet multiple goals, including objectives that are independent of sustainable, organic and healthy food (and all the uncertainties that come with it). We call these no-regrets actions. They can form the core of a more far-reaching response.

Hunts Point Commission Simulation

Role: Bronx Borough President

General Information

One of New York City's pervasive socioeconomic and public health problems is the lack of access to healthy, sustainable food. Food deserts—urban areas in which it is difficult to find healthy, affordable foods—are abundant in high-density low-income areas. Economic realities exacerbate the situation; the lack of a developed market for fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs disincentivizes producers and distributors from entering the space.

Nowhere are these problems more apparent than Hunts Point. Hunts Point, located in the South Bronx, is home to Hunts Point Food Distribution Center, one of the largest food distribution centers in the world. Interestingly, the center does not serve the surrounding neighborhood. Instead, every day hundreds of delivery trucks drive *through* the neighborhood, transporting food to wealthier neighborhoods and mid-market distribution centers, leaving the people of Hunts Point with nothing more than emissions.

Those emissions are a contributing factor in high asthma rates in the immediate vicinity of the center. Residents of Hunts Point suffer from other chronic health conditions, most notably diabetes, and obesity rates far above regional norms. In fact, The Bronx ranks sixty-second out of sixty-two counties in New York for key public health indicators. The age demographic in Hunts Point skews low, meaning that the local population is younger than the typical New York neighborhood. This can be problematic for the effects of certain health consequences, but also poses opportunities in terms of public education about nutrition and sustainability.

The Decision at Hand

The new Bronx Borough President, who won citizens' vote by pledging to address these issues, has appointed a commission to decide how Hunts Point can address the twin problems of health and environmental consciousness. This is a five-party negotiation among the commissioners addressing the need for change within an underserved community.

The Borough President will lead the negotiation, encouraging groups to work together to compromise on a decision to spend the allotted budget, which is \$250,000. The group may mix and match from among the options. In the event of disagreement, any three-person majority wins, *provided* that the President is one of the three people. The other acceptable way to reach consensus (other than unanimity) is for everyone other than the President to agree. If the group cannot reach consensus by the end of the simulation, the commission forfeits the money and the opportunity to introduce positive change to Hunts Point.

The Commissioners:

The five commissioners are: the Bronx Borough President, the CEO of Hunts Point Cooperative Market, the regional manager of Burger Barn, the Executive Director of Nourish NYC, and the NYC Mayor's Deputy for Food Policy.

Proposed Solutions:

1. Establish a city-funded community garden
2. Introduce city-funded classes in school
3. Reconstitute the Healthy Bodegas Initiative
4. Subsidize a community-supported agriculture (CSA) Program
5. Create a food pantry

Option 1: Establish a city-funded community garden.

A community garden is a space that grows fruits, vegetables, herbs, and sometimes wildflowers for use by people in a specific area. It takes roughly 20 volunteers or paid staff to maintain every 15,000 square feet of garden, and a garden that size can serve as a supplemental food source for approximately 500 households. Assuming the labor force is volunteer and the land is donated or leased at no cost, the annual costs of running a community garden, which include supplies, equipment, city fees, and insurance are around \$3.50 - \$7.00 per square foot. State government and private foundation grants specific to community gardens exist, but competition for them is steep.

Currently, Hunts Point has five plots of approximately 15,000 square feet each that could potentially be used for community gardens (in addition to at least a dozen plots of less than 1,000 square feet each). One potential problem with proposing to use these plots is that New York City ordinance §1-04(b)(iii) prohibits any person from “remove from the ground any plants, flowers, shrubs or other vegetation under the jurisdiction of the Department without permission of the Commissioner.” Passed over a hundred years ago in an effort to protect public space, the ordinance gives would-be community gardeners choices: 1) apply for an exemption from the Parks Commissioner, a bureaucratic process fraught with paperwork and political favors that takes upward of ten months to complete, 2) lobby the city government for a change in the law (which has been tried unsuccessfully by community groups in the recent past, and even if successful would likely take one to two years), or 3) plant community gardens on barges floating next to the waterline of the Bronx. “Barge gardens” are outside jurisdiction of the NYC Parks Department and thus from the reaches of NYC Ordinance §1-04(b)(iii), but cost triple the amount of a land-based garden. A standard barge is 95 feet by 35 feet, and the available waterline space would allow up to 10 barge gardens.

Option 2: Introduce city-funded classes in school.

Experts have repeatedly pointed to lack of education as a core cause of health problems and poor environmental choices related to food sourcing. Some in the field point to citizen education as the best way to address this shortcoming. Most proposals focus on young people. Hunts Point has six schools that serve approximately 3,100 students:

School Name	School Type	Grade Level	Enrollment #s
Bronx Charter School for the Arts	Charter	Grades K-5	315 students
Hyde Leadership Charter School	Charter	Grades K-12	950 students

PS 48 Joseph R Drake	Public	Grades PK-5	888 students
The Hunts Point School	Public	Grades 6-8	357 students
Vida Bogart School for All Children	Public	Grades K-8	507 students
St Ignatius School	Private	Grades 6-8	87 students

Classes in school come at different price points per student depending upon the quality of curriculum design and delivery. For example, for \$3.50 per student, existing classroom teachers can be trained to use simple textbook supplements to teach concepts like nutrition, healthy choices, portion control, and basic home economics. For \$6.50 per student, classroom teachers and supplemental educational specialists work together to deliver curriculum that covers not only nutrition, but also basic experiential learning like raw food preparation skills (work that can be done in a classroom rather than a cooking lab), higher-level personal finance and budgeting, and some exploration of the environmental impact of food production. For \$12.50 per student, Hunts Point schools can invest in a multi-year, integrated curriculum that covers human health and biology, personal finance and eventually macroeconomics, and environmental science. This “premium” option builds foundational learning concepts in early elementary school and culminates in college-prep, cross-disciplinary experiential labs that taps cutting edge pedagogical design to deliver high-level learning with solid post-exam retention. To be clear, these are examples of what is possible at different price points—a program might elect to spend \$5.00 per student and get something in between the first two example options outlined here. All costs are annual.

Option 3: Reconstitute the Healthy Bodegas Initiative.

A bodega is a small convenience store—typically between 400 and 4,000 square feet—that sells food, lottery tickets, and convenience items. Most food in a bodega is nonperishable, like potato chips and canned soup, and many have a small refrigerated section selling soda. In food deserts like Hunts Point, bodegas comprise a staggering 80% of food retail among residents. The business model of bodegas is not conducive to selling fresh produce—profit margins are thin and bodega owners are usually cash constrained, which makes them unlikely to take risks, especially in neighborhoods where attempts at selling a flat of apples often result in the owner tossing half of the food after it rots due to lack of buyer interest.

In 2005, NYC launched the Healthy Bodegas Initiative, which worked with 100 bodegas in three areas in NYC including the South Bronx. The Initiative included custom-tailored interventions in individual bodegas, ranging from introducing diet soda and low-fat milk in some bodegas to gifting commercial-sized refrigerators to other bodegas who pledged to sell fresh vegetables. On the higher end of interventions, the Initiative even sent visiting chefs to bodegas with sandwich counters to make healthy sandwich, wrap, and salad options.

Critics have pointed out that bodega owners are businesspeople who are meeting the market demands of their customers, and that creating changes in consumers’ preferences is a monumental social task whose burden should not be borne by small—and often struggling—businesses. They also point out that efforts

to educate consumers about healthy choices through advertising healthy food and healthy choices are often rendered ineffective by the massive advertising budgets of multi-national snack and beverage companies who sell to bodega owners. Finally, the intervention model works most effectively on bodegas that are already set up with at least some space devoted to fresh fruit and dairy sales, creating a large infrastructure blockade to this solution. The Initiative has run out of funding, so if the Commission wants to extend this option, it will need to provide funding. Low-end intervention costs approximately \$2,000 per bodega per year, and a higher-end intervention runs up to \$7,500 (and could be more, depending on the level of services and subsidies provided). Hunts Point has 65 bodegas, of which 20 have little or no refrigerated space.

Option 4: Subsidize a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program

Community-supported agriculture is a system that connects the producer and consumers within the food system more closely by allowing the consumer to “subscribe” to the harvest of a certain farm or group of farms. Farmers in upstate New York and other agricultural production areas within 100 miles of New York City would offer subscriptions in their harvest to Hunts Point residents, which would be paid or partially paid by this Commission. Subscribing members would receive a bag of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season. CSAs in other cities have been shown to increase a population’s market demand for fresh fruits and vegetables, largely because of the personal connection people feel to their food providers and because of exposure to a greater variety of appetizing healthy foods.

Delivery of the weekly bags increases the chances that consumers actually receive the food (as opposed to paid but unused subscriptions, much like well-intentioned gym memberships), but increase the cost of the program and make food waste more likely. Consumers who receive unfamiliar food (chard or turnips or kale, for example) without instructions on how to prepare and eat them are likely to toss them or let them rot, which exacerbates the negative environmental effects of food waste.

Hunt’s Point has approximately 8,600 households, of which 80% qualify as low-income. The cost of an annual CSA subscription, which provides one delivery of fresh farm produce per week for the regional growing season (April – November) would run \$14.50 to \$20.00 per household. It is important to note that CSAs are shared risk models—in the event of adverse farming conditions (an early freeze, a hail storm that destroys certain crops, etc.) that reduce or eliminate food production, there is no refund or other compensation to subscribers.

Option 5: Create a food pantry

Food pantries come in many varieties. At the lowest cost end of the scale, food pantries are repositories for nonperishable food items that are then given away free to low-income people. At the higher end of the scale, food pantries include perishable foods and “food rescue” programs that redistribute surplus food from restaurants and stores to qualifying programs and individuals. Non-perishable food pantries address food insecurity of low-income people, but don’t do as much to address environmental concerns with food production and transportation or nutritional and health concerns. Perishable food distribution and food rescue programs can help with both of those matters, but cost considerably more.

Hunt's Point is currently served by a number of small food pantries that offer non-perishable items, but more than half of households in the area still report food insecurity. The nonprofit City Harvest, which addresses food insecurity and environmental concerns through food redistribution and food rescue programs, would like to serve Hunts Point if funding were available. One possibility for Hunts Point is to set up a series of small "food pantries" at key points throughout the neighborhood to receive and redistribute food from City Harvest.

A single food pantry location that serves 7,500 households with only nonperishable food would cost around \$35,000 per year. A food pantry with perishable and non-perishable food options that serves approximately 2,000 households would cost approximately \$50,000 per year.

Bronx Borough President: Confidential Information

Guidance for the President on Facilitation

Be deliberate about the process your commission uses. Your job is to structure and support the discussion, leading the group towards an agreement that yields good outcomes. Keep in mind that you have a dual role as an advocate and a facilitator.

Confidential Instructions:

It is **vital** that this commission reach a consensus. You appointed these commissioners and you campaigned—successfully—on these issues, so failure is almost certain to result in a single term to your elected office, and a rough remainder of your term. One of the biggest criticisms you faced during your campaign was that you are too well-heeled to truly understand the everyday worries of your constituents. The wealth gap between you and your constituents is a constant trouble for you from an optics perspective.

You also need to make sure that the program(s) the city undertakes is fair, and appeal to the needs of low-income residents.

Long-term effects are not of extreme concern to you. You have crafted a solid plan for one reelection as borough president and then have your sights on higher offices. You should prioritize any course of action that will show your dedication to improving the Boroughs' existing food crisis, and provide immediate positive results, regardless of its long-term effects (beyond two to three years).

Your Preferences on the Proposed Solutions:

Option 1: Establish a city-funded community garden. This is your second priority. By establishing a community garden, you will provide residents of the Bronx with an opportunity to grow healthy and sustainable food. It will be obvious if people respond positively to this garden, and you can use this success to increase your chances of reelection next year. This program appeals to low-income citizens and directly addresses their struggles regarding the food crisis.

Option 2: Introduce city-funded classes in school. This does not show an immediate, effective course of action to address the food sustainability issue- it is more of a long-term, indirect solution. Therefore, it is not a viable option for you to choose.

Option 3: Reconstitute the Healthy Bodega Initiative. This is your third priority. The Healthy Bodega Initiative has had a positive impact in the past, increasing the purchase of healthy food items from 5% to 16%. However, this solution does not address the high poverty level of the Bronx- it does not fairly provide the opportunity to access healthy food to lower-income parts of the community. This is not an option for you, as increasing the budget will not allow you to fulfil the promises you made during your campaign.

Option 4: Subsidize a CSA program. This is an ideal course of action. This is your first priority. While running for your position as Borough President, you criticized the food crisis that exists in the Bronx. If a CSA program were put into place, it would show that you are directly addressing this crisis and acting to serve the people efficiently. You are criticized for your status as a higher-class individual and accused of not understanding the struggles of lower-class people. By creating a CSA program, you will be able to show support for low-income farmers, and possibly create jobs for the residents of the Bronx.

Option 5: Create a food pantry. This option would show that you are eager to initiate a positive change. This is your third priority. Doing so reflects a concern regarding food wastage- a huge issue when it comes to sustainability- and shows your critics that you understand more about the food crisis than they may think. The food pantry would mostly appeal to those who have very low incomes, showing that you prioritize serving these people. However, the food pantry will not bring the community together in the same way that other options would, and lacks an educational aspect.

You should try to end the simulation with a solution that incorporates either your first or second priority, although you may need to compromise and construct hybrids and packages out of the proposals. You can be more flexible on matters that are not your top concern.

If an option is listed as unacceptable, you cannot agree to it **unless** the group modifies it so that you benefit in some way. You can always disagree to the terms being negotiated, but **keep in mind** that while this process aims at consensus, mutual agreement among the other stakeholders is enough for the simulation to progress without addressing your concerns.