A CASE STUDY OF EIGHT FOOD SECURITY PROJECTS

Prepared for the
California Department of Health Services
Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section
California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families

By
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the summary of the community food security and nutrition education projects undertaken by eight agencies funded by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families (Network)* through grant funds provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. CDHS awarded funding to the eight local projects in late 2000 for a four-year grant cycle which ended in September 2004. This report describes the activities undertaken during that time period.

The objective of the *Network* grant was to provide funding to increase the accessibility and availability of low-cost, nutritious food as well as nutrition education for low-income families. These projects also promoted access to and the use of federally funded food assistance programs such as the Food Stamp Program. The grant encouraged locally determined strategies based on community priorities and assets, collaboration to link disparate features of the food system to effect policy change, and participation with the regional *Network* activities. The funded projects model a range of community solutions to the challenges posed by food insecurity.

For the purpose of these projects, Food Security refers to assured access to enough food at all times for an active and healthy life. At a minimum, food security includes: the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and, a guaranteed ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging or stealing, for example).

The California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), California's largest representative health survey, includes a six-item scale to assess levels of food security. The survey has been administered to a sample of approximately 8 million low-income Californians across various cities and counties and is a widely accepted and used measure of food security. The 2003 California Health Interview Survey found that more than one-third (33.9%) of low income-adults (those with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level) suffer from food insecurity. This translates into a total of 2.9 million low-income adults living in California. Levels of food insecurity varied across counties ranging from a high of 45.2% to a low of 20.4%.

The eight 2000-2004 Food Security Demonstration Projects are as follows:

Community Resource Center
Project name: Nutrition Now
Location: Encinitas, San Diego County

Contra Costa Health Services:
Project name: The East West Market Garden Project
Location: Contra Costa County

Ecology Center
Project name: Farm Fresh Choice
Location: Berkeley, Alameda County

Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches
Project name: Pomona Valley Food Security & Nutrition Outreach Initiative
Location: Pomona, Los Angeles County

Fresno Metro Ministry
Project name: Hunger and Nutrition Project
Location: Fresno County

Sacramento Hunger Commission
Project name: Sacramento Nutrition and Access Project (SNAP)
Location: Sacramento County

Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles
Project name: Healthy Hollywood
Location: Hollywood, Los Angeles County

U.C. Cooperative Extension
Project name: Building Partnerships to Address Community Food Security & System Needs
Location: Placer County

Intervention Activities and Results

Community Resource Center - Encinitas. The Community Resource Center has been providing comprehensive social services to low-income residents of the San Diego North County region for over twenty-five years. CRC's general services include assistance to the hungry and homeless through our bread room and food pantry, working with the Interfaith Shelter Network, case management, and counseling.

The Community Resource Center project was largely successful in meeting their goals. In part, this may have been because they took on a handful of realistic and attainable goals. They focused on augmenting and improving existing services to better address the nutritional education and food access needs of community members. Consequently, they far exceeded some of their projections. For instance, one objective was to provide 30 *Libre* residents with at least an hour of weekly nutritional education, but by the end of the four years, over 350 women had participated for some time in the weekly classes.

Contra Costa Health Services, whose mission is to care for and improve the health of all people in Contra Costa County with special attention to those who are most vulnerable to health problems, carried out the project in Contra Costa funded by the *Network*.

Contra Costa County set forth one over-arching goal to guide their project. It was to "improve access to and knowledge about affordable, safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for low income families in West Contra Costa." Their strategies were based on the social ecological model promoted by the *Network*. They focused on changing individual behavior change with

incarcerated youth, and changing the environment by establishing farm stands in low-income communities.

The Contra Costa County project was largely successful in their endeavor, but reaching their goal was not without hurdles, and they were forced to change course several times and make adjustments. The project worked with juvenile offenders to establish an extensive community garden at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Center in East Contra Costa County. In conjunction with the gardening, the project provided nutrition education for the boys. In addition to the gardening and nutrition education conducted at OAYRH, the project aimed to increase knowledge about healthy eating and food safety for the broader population of West Contra Costa County. To do this they facilitated traditional educational workshops for residents and the distributed materials on a variety of healthy eating topics during produce giveaway events in priority neighborhoods in West Contra Costa County. Lastly, the project was successful in establishing produce stands in two low-income neighborhoods. The later was achieved through a partnership of health and community organizations.

The **Ecology Center's *Farm Fresh Choice*** project based its program in Berkeley, California. The project focused on the South and West regions of the city. The regions of South and West Berkeley were chosen, not only because their residents have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, but also because of the poor health status of their residents. In 2001, the Ecology Center assumed became the fiscal agent for Farm Fresh Choice.

The project had two main goals. The first was to "provide and increase access to low-cost culturally appropriate fresh fruits and vegetables" and the second was to "increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among low-income African American and Latino residents of South and West Berkeley". To this end, the project provided bilingual (English & Spanish) nutrition education and cooking classes at four different after-school centers in the priority neighborhoods. In addition, they opened four produce stands at after-school programs in the priority neighborhoods. They introduced the concept of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program to local residents to encourage them to support the farm stands. Through their CSA program, they encouraged 250 residents to join as members and over time maintained this consumer base. These residents were provided with weekly produce in exchange for a small fee, thus enabling them access to locally-grown, fresh produce that, previously, had been more difficult to obtain. Additionally, over 600 customers purchased produce from the weekly stands.

A related component to the Farm Fresh Choice program was the Ecology Center's coordination of the California Farmers' Market Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Implementation and Promotion Project. The Ecology Center's program facilitated the most successful conversion of paper food stamp coupons to EBT at farmer's markets in the U.S. As of July 2004, 62 farmers markets in 11 California counties made the necessary changes to accept EBT cards using a central POS device and a scrip system.

Fresno Metro Ministry, an ecumenical and interfaith nonprofit, has been engaged in problem-solving, advocacy, and community organizing in Fresno County since its founding in 1970. Their mission statement asserts, "Fresno Metro Ministry is a faith-based organization that works to create a more respectful, compassionate, and inclusive community that promotes social and

economic justice". The Fresno Metro Ministry is located in the city of Fresno and serves those living in the broader region of Fresno County.

The Fresno Metro Ministry undertook a multi-dimensional project aimed at improving food security for Fresno County residents. Although most of the Fresno Metro Ministry project focused its efforts on advocacy activities, they did provide some nutrition education in Fresno County. For instance, they made speaking engagements and presentations, they engaged print and broadcast media, and they developed and distributed materials about healthy food access, federal nutrition programs, and emergency food to health practitioners. Fresno Metro Ministry expanded education and prevention strategies. They held 11 forums focused on education, nutrition, and the health effects that result from the lack of access to culturally appropriate, nutritious, affordable food. They made many strides along the way, and were able to complete most of their proposed objectives. For instance, they developed a group of New Leaders for Better Health, organized them to advocate on Hunger Action Day, increased access to participation in school lunch programs, and convened Summer Lunch Summits, cut barriers to food stamps, convinced the Fresno Unified School District to establish a Healthy School Environment Policy Committee, among many other accomplishments. They were able to effectively engage groups of diverse representatives and coordinate them so that they could work on these important achievements.

In addition, they conducted a comprehensive Community Food Assessment, called the Fresno Fresh Access Project. They collected data to assess the accessibility and affordability of fresh produce in Fresno County. They enlisted the efforts of 50 trained neighborhood volunteers and Fresno Metro Ministry's interns administered 75 retail surveys and 375 consumer surveys in five different languages (Russian, Cambodian, Hmong, Spanish, and English). The survey explored where people were getting their food, what kind of food was available, and how much food people were getting on a weekly basis. They also asked about public benefits, transportation, and what kind of changes people would like to see in the food system. As the project's funding was drawing to a close, the Fresno Metro Ministry project received funding to continue some of their community efforts, including an expansion of the Community Food Assessment component. At the time of this report, the data was being entered and results were not yet available.

The **Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches (PIVCC),** an interfaith network of 89 member churches that seeks to address issues of hunger and homelessness in the community, coordinated the food security project in the Pomona Valley of Southern California. The Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches recognized that that they could improve food security in Pomona Valley utilizing an integrated service model. The PIVCC project set forth to provide nutrition education to a busy emergency food closet, the Beta Hunger Center (serving residents of Pomona, Diamond Bar, Walnut, Claremont, Montclair and Chino), and a weekly farmers' market, the Pomona Valley Certified Farmers Market.

The project supplemented services provided at the Beta Hunger Center with the provision of nutrition education. The design of the program was inventive in that it took advantage of a "captive audience" of clients waiting to be called for intake. While clients waited, the instructor administered the one-on-one course which encouraged participants to be comfortable in

participating and asking questions. Course content was chosen based on the results of a participant pre-course survey.

PIVCC also focused on nutrition education and food stamp outreach with approximately 800 low-income individuals who regularly attend the Pomona Farmers' Market. The project set up a mobile kiosk at the weekly market that prominently displayed nutritional information. They featured kid-friendly information, a food planting display, a Parent/Adult Nutrition Guide (with instructions for making brown bag lunches with food from the market, a food pyramid, fruit and vegetable nutritional information, portion size guide, and recipes) for distribution, and general health information (with material on healthy eating habits and exercise). They created a "Nutrition Camp" to provide one-on-one nutrition education sessions to adults, and "Lifelong 5-A-Dayers", to teach children attending the market the importance of eating five servings of fruits and vegetable each day.

Another facet of the PIVCC project was the promotion of food stamp redemption at the Pomona Farmers' Market. Through collaboration with the local Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the project operated a Food Stamp Outreach Program at the market to help conduct food stamp screening tests among people circulating at the market to determine whether they qualified to receive food stamps.

As of September 2003, PIVCC had screened 1,143 (975 at the Beta Hunger Center and 168 at the Farmers' Market) low-income individuals for food stamp eligibility. Of these, 487 (414 at the Beta Hunger Center and 73 at the Farmers' Market) received on-site assistance in completing an application for food stamps. Statistics on then number of individuals and families screened during fiscal 003-04 were not available for inclusion in this report.

The **Sacramento Hunger Commission** conducted a project to reduce barriers to food insecurity and improve access to healthy food in two neighborhoods in Sacramento County. The *Network*-funded project was based, in part, on results from a 1999-2000 food assessment study that the Hunger Commission with support of community groups carried out in North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights. The findings from the study helped guide the project's food security efforts from 2000-2004.

The Hunger Commission took on a variety of activities in carrying out their project. They conducted nutrition education using multiple curriculums aimed at various audiences, trained other social service providers, offered money management workshops, distributed newsletters on nutrition issues, advocated for improved transportation and new grocery stores/farmers' market in the community, researched and produced a food assessment survey, and developed an innovative edible landscape for a housing development. They experimented with a variety of strategies (e.g. train the trainer, web-based nutrition education, and money management) with various populations (e.g. housing development residents, SRO residents, teen gardeners). Many of their innovative ideas for addressing food insecurity were successful and led to improved outcomes.

The **Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA)** conducted the Nutrition *Network* funded food security project. SEE-LA is a private, non-profit community development

corporation that was established in 1996 and evolved from the accomplishments of a local commercial street revitalization project, the Hollywood Revitalization Effort (HERE). HERE played a significant role in starting the Hollywood Farmers' Market, currently a thriving 13-year old institution and one of the largest farmers' markets in Southern California. SEE-LA took over support for the operation of the market located in West Hollywood which boasts weekly attendance by approximately 90 farmers, 30 local artisans, and 30 baked goods and prepared food vendors.[1]

SEE-LA's goal for this food security project was to improve nutrition prospects for the densely populated, low-income residents of Hollywood in a program designed to increase fresh produce consumption, encourage more healthful choices to promote health and prevent disease, and improve access to fresh produce. They facilitated access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables primarily through the provision of nutrition education classes and the establishment of satellite farmers' markets in the neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles.

Early on, SEE-LA developed their "Good Cooking" class curriculum. The course covered the basics of healthy eating and each class focused on a key topic such as the food pyramid, understanding nutrition labels, portion sizes, or the health implications of various foods. The interactive and participatory classes used ingredients from the farmers' market for cooking demonstrations. They chose recipes designed to fit into the budgets and schedules of working families. They conducted focus groups throughout the 4-year grant to gather participant's feedback on the classes and revised the curriculum to meet their needs. In the third year of the program SEE-LA expanded the classes conducting sessions at six new sites.

SEE-LA embarked on an effort to expand the reach of the Hollywood Farmers' Market and improve access to locally grown, fresh, affordable produce for low-income residents. They facilitated bringing farmers to neighborhoods in the form of farm stands, mini-certified farmers' markets that were satellites of the larger Hollywood Farmers' Market each with five to six vendors. The participating vendors accepted payment in WIC or senior farmers' market nutrition program coupons, cash, or food stamps/EBT. SEE-LA used the neighborhoods surrounding the Good Cooking class sites as a starting off point for determining farm stand sites. They were successful in opening two farm stands during their 4-years of *Network* funding.

SEE-LA recognized the importance of promoting and facilitating food stamp/EBT at the local farmers' markets as a means to encourage shopping for and consumption of fresh produce. In September 2003, six SEE-LA staffers attended a training workshop at SEE-LA offices to learn new EBT technology that would encourage farmers' market shopping by food stamp recipients. They met with the DPSS Director of the Food Stamp Program to discuss the development of a prescreening flyer to facilitate enrollment and an outreach strategy to distribute the flyers. Under a separate contract with the Berkeley Ecology Center, SEE-LA acted as the lead agency in the promotion of EBT at farmers' markets throughout Los Angeles County. As a result of their outreach efforts, EBT redemption increased from $0 to $70-$200 dollars per day at the farm stands.

The **University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension in Placer County** is one of 64 Cooperative Extension centers in the state which concentrate on local issues. Placer County

borders Sacramento County and the Nevada state line, extending from the valley floor through the Sierra foothills and mountains. The project began by conducting a countywide needs assessment to identify the strengths and gaps in the region's food security and food system infrastructure. They investigated the demographic profile of those most affected by food insecurity in Placer County, outlined the attributes of food insecure communities, and analyzed existing food and nutrition resources. In May 2002, the project released the results of their study in a report titled, "Placer County Food Security Needs Assessment and Planning Document".

After UC Cooperative Extension conducted the comprehensive food security assessment and developed corresponding strategies for improving food access for Placer County residents, they helped mobilize resources to address the issues. In the first year of the project, they established a Food Policy Council to develop long-term, sustainable solutions to address food insecurity in Placer County. They identified potential collaborators and brought together a diverse group of community representatives to serve on the Council.

In the first year of the project, the UC Cooperative Extension formed a workgroup to identify strategies for increasing low-income families' access to locally grown agricultural produce. Their strategies included improving access through produce wagons, farm stands, and farmers' markets in low income areas. They also proposed the creation of an educational program focused on the benefits of seasonal, local produce. They added their strategies to the larger Food Security Plan. Additionally, the workgroup conducted a gardening needs assessment of Placer County communities.

During their third year of funding, the project took on the task of improving the awareness among service providers of resources and services available to low-income clients. They produced a comprehensive directory of food security and nutrition resources and programs in Placer County. They also worked actively to enhance the coordination among agencies and increase assistance to clients of the food system.

With a food security plan and directory of resources in place, the project turned its focus on nutrition education among low-income school children and improving food access by teaching low-income consumers how to grow produce in limited spaces.

As a result of their careful planning, comprehensive strategy, and thorough attention throughout, US Cooperative Extension's food security project accomplished all of its proposed goals and subsequently improved the food security for county residents.

Overall Conclusions

The eight projects described in this report comprise the second major phase of the *Network*s' Food Security Channel's funding of special projects. Despite their different approaches, the projects shared many things in common. Many projects addressed most levels of the social-ecological model under which the *Network* functions. The model recognizes that there are multiple determinants of health, and not just the behaviors of individuals. In this respect, the projects exemplify the importance of addressing nutrition education and food security issues on

multiple levels. This intersectoral approach is recognized by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) as critical to effective health action.

The projects developed interventions that incorporated various approaches to individual nutrition education. Most found ways to uniquely tailor the education to the characteristics and location of their priority populations. For example, the Pomona Inland Council of Churches conducted their educational interventions during the weekly farmers with fast moving shoppers. The Placer County UC-Cooperative Extension incorporated nutrition education into a school-based garden project. The SEE-LA project developed cooking demonstrations and recipes that fit the tastes of its mostly Latino population. In each case, the projects began their interventions with the population in mind and delivered nutrition education that was meaningful and inclusive. The Berkeley Farm Fresh Choice Project even involved its priority population in the planning and implementation of the nutrition education activities.

In addition to individual nutrition education, some of the projects conducted activities that provided community level education that included a broad distribution of thousands of nutrition education flyers by the Community Resource Center in Encinitas, nutrition community forums by the Fresno Metro Ministry project, and educating residents and food merchants about food safety by the Contra County project. The Pomona Inland Council of Churches also educated farmers on how to point out the nutritious aspects of fruits and vegetables to their customers. The community level intervention is very essential, because it tends to create social-environment messages which reinforce the individual level messages.

Several of the projects created structures in the social environment that improved community access to fresh fruits and vegetables such mobile produce stands, farm stands that serviced over hundreds of people weekly, and an edible landscape in a Sacramento public housing complex. These kinds of social structures are very important in community settings where people have poor access to grocery stores and other food retail outlets that are commonly found in middle income and above neighborhoods. They also have the potential for creating social norms in which easy access to nutritious foods is seen by community members and policy makers as a right and not just a privilege.

Several projects promoted enrollment of low income people into the Food Stamp Program (FSP). The places where FSP promotion occurred included farmer’s markets and schools. Continued promotion in these venues may prove very helpful to FSP social service agencies, because they may not have direct access to all of the eligible populations.

At the heart of many interventions was collaboration with community partners. Indeed, it is unlikely that any of these projects could have accomplished as much as they did on such small funding, if they had not cultivated and interacted with their partners. The Fresno Metro Ministry project worked with community based organizations and non-profit volunteer agencies so effectively that at the end of the fourth year, they were very close to completing a community wide food assessment as a step towards creating a Food Policy Council. Collaboration also resulted in food assessments in the Avondale/Glen Elder community of Sacramento and in Placer

County. The latter assessment resulted in the creation of a Food Policy Council which will endeavor to improve the food security needs of Placer County residents. These types of assessments are very important for building a sustainable and nutritious food environment in any community.

In many respects, the true value of the *Network* funding for each of these projects does not lie in the amount they were given, which in many cases was very small compared to their other funding sources; it lies in how they leveraged those funds. Although a complex cost-benefit economically analysis is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the evaluators' years of insight into how these projects operated allows them to say that the funding dollar was judiciously complemented with other agency resources and the in-kind contributions of many partners. This synergistic effect allowed most of the projects to achieve more than expected.

As these projects ended, it appeared that most will continue the efforts that were supported by the *Network* funding. Indeed, the Placer County UC-Cooperative Extension is actively seeking ways to institutionalize many of their project activities into their existing work. Nearly all of the structural changes created by theses projects (e.g., farm stands) are still in place nearly one-year after funding ended.

Overall, what these projects point out is the need to approach individual changes in nutrition behavior from an ecological perspective. Individual behavior change cannot be achieved unless there are also changes in the family, community, social, and policy environment that create social norms and structural changes that promote healthy behaviors. This is best exemplified by the changes in tobacco use in America which have been caused by multidimensional interventions that included social marketing campaigns and tobacco policies that created healthier environments. Improving the nutritional status of Americans will require similar efforts, and these eight projects exemplify the multidimensional approaches necessary to create long term changes in our communities that can impact individual nutrition behaviors.

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SECTION I: Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Project Background

This report provides the summary of the community food security and nutrition education projects undertaken by eight agencies funded by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families (Network)* through grant funds provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. CDHS awarded funding to the eight local projects in late 2000 for a four-year grant cycle which ended in September 2004. This report describes the activities undertaken during that time period.

During this funding cycle, the *Network* provided grants to eight food security projects conducted primarily by nonprofit organizations that all worked in their local communities. The objective of the grant was to provide funding to increase the accessibility and availability of low-cost, nutritious food as well as nutrition education for low-income families. These projects also promoted access to and the use of federally funded food assistance programs such as the Food Stamp Program. The grant encouraged locally determined strategies based on community priorities and assets, collaboration to link disparate features of the food system to effect policy change, and participation with the regional *Network* activities. The funded projects model a range of community solutions to the challenges posed by food insecurity.

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Project name: Healthy Hollywood
Location: Hollywood, Los Angeles County

U.C. Cooperative Extension
Project name: Building Partnerships to Address Community Food Security & System Needs
Location: Placer County

Introduction to Food Security

Food security, as defined by the USDA, is access "at all times to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle. Food security includes at a minimum (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies)."[1]

Traditionally, the food aid model has espoused the donation of surplus food to solve hunger problems with quick, albeit superficial, results. By contrast, the food security paradigm promotes sustainable solutions to address the root problems including the development of community-based mechanisms to fight hunger and malnutrition. The Food Security Pyramid, at right, developed by Lee Mercer with the Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties, illustrates the relationship between and corresponding impact of various aspects of food assistance that contribute to food security. Food security is reached not only by the proper direction of supplemental food, but also with the assistance of Federal food assistance programs which allow recipients to meet their needs while working toward self-sufficiency. Improving food production within the community and promoting it enhances access to the food and further increases self-reliance. Furthermore, ensuring economic and job security helps to ensure that people have sufficient resources to be food secure.

The converse state to food security, termed food *in*security, is defined as "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods through socially acceptable means." In its

mildest forms, food insecurity contributes to anxiety and may result in foregoing basic needs to feed household members, but it can also result in hunger over extended periods, risking the health of those who suffer from it. In fact, research has linked hunger and food insecurity with significant risks to health which result in substantial costs to society through increased need for medical care. In addition to a variety of poor health outcomes, food insecurity has been associated with social and mental health costs. Among these are poor cognitive functioning, increased risk of emotional problems, and poor school performance among children in food insecure households. Thus, food insecurity serves as a basic indicator of human welfare within a society. [2]

Definitions

Food Security refers to assured access to enough food at all times for an active and healthy life. At a minimum, food security includes: the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and, and a guaranteed ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging or stealing, for example).

Food Insecurity occurs whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food, or the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways, is limited or uncertain

Hunger is defined as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by recurrent or involuntary lack of food and is a potential, although not necessary consequence of food insecurity. Over time, hunger may result in malnutrition.

Source: Center on Hunger and Poverty: Food Security Measurement Concepts and Definitions. Available at: http://www.centeronhunger.org/hunger/meas.html

A relatively new and related concept is that of *community* food security. While there is no universally accepted definition for it, the USDA describes it as "a prevention-oriented concept that supports the development and enhancement of sustainable community-based strategies to improve access of low-income households to healthful nutritious food supplies, to increase the comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues."[3]

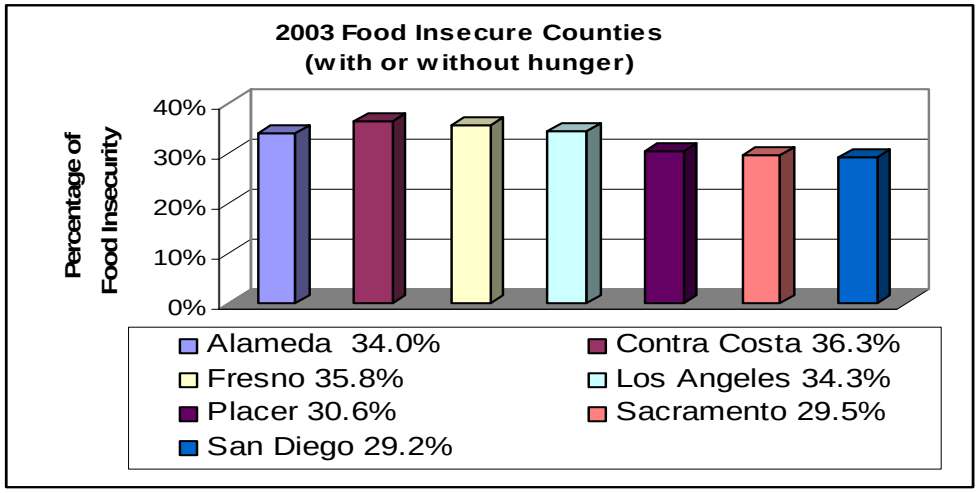
In order to mitigate the effects of community food insecurity, various policies and programs have been developed. These strategies closely resemble those implemented by the food security projects in this report and address food availability and affordability, direct food marketing, and participation in and access to federal nutrition assistance programs. More specifically the community-based efforts attempt to increase the quantity, quality, and affordability of food within communities by utilizing such strategies as community food assessments, farmers markets, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, food policy councils, youth programs, and community economic development.

Measuring Food Security: The Extent of the Problem

The California Health Interview Survey (CHIS), California's largest representative health survey, includes a six-item scale to assess levels of food security. The survey has been administered to a sample of approximately 8 million low-income Californians across various cities and counties and is a widely accepted and used measure of food security.[3] The 2003 CHIS survey found that more than one-third (33.9%) of low income-adults (those with incomes less

than 200% of the federal poverty level) suffer from food insecurity. This translates into a total of 2.9 million low-income adults living in California. Levels of food insecurity varied across counties ranging from a high of 45.2% to a low of 20.4%. The table below, adapted from a UCLA Health Policy Research Brief about the 2003 CHIS results, depicts the prevalence of food insecurity in the counties featured in this report.[5]

Figure 1: Food Security Project by County and percentage of Food Insecurity



The CHIS survey also delineated those who experienced food insecurity with hunger from those who experienced it without hunger. Results from the 2003 CHIS survey indicate that almost 900,000 food insecure adults experienced episodes of hunger as a result of insufficient economic resources.[5]

Likewise, the USDA monitors food security, but they utilize households as the unit of inquiry using an annual, nationally representative household survey. According to the Economic Research Service of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 2003, 36.3 million people in the United States lived in food insecure households.[6] The food security measure employed by the USDA was calculated to reveal even occasional or episodic occurrences of food insecurity. However, they found that most food insecurity was longer lasting. Food insecure households who reported experiencing hunger at some time during the previous year, on average, experienced food insecurity with hunger in eight or nine months during the year, and typically for 1 to 7 days during each of those months.[6] And, while most food-insecure households were able to avoid hunger, they had to resort to a variety of coping strategies such as eating less varied diets, participating in Federal food assistance programs, or obtaining emergency food from community food pantries or emergency kitchens.

Who Is Food Insecure?

Food insecurity has been found to be strongly associated with household income and its prevalence has closely resembled poverty rates. This is not surprising given that poverty rates were originally conceptualized to discern households that could not meet their basic needs for food and other essentials.

As seen in Figure 3, most of those who are food insecure are among those with household incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. They also include working adults, retired older persons living on fixed incomes, and many parents with children.[4]

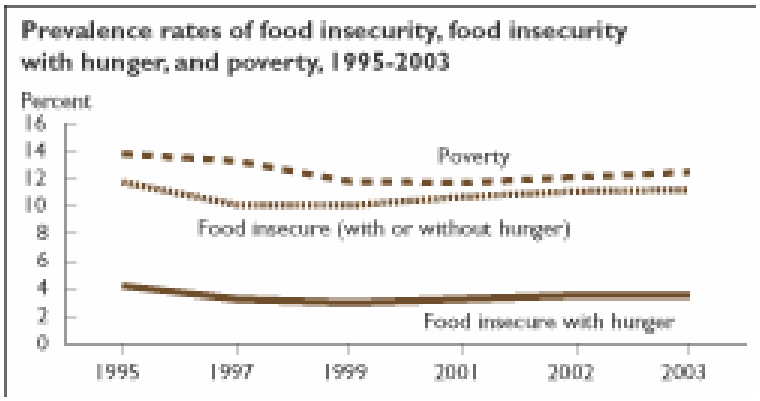
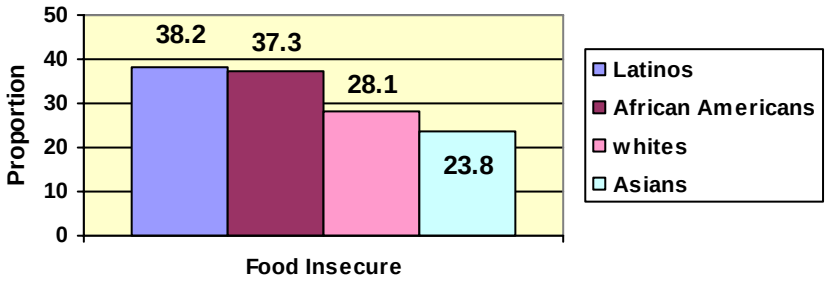


Figure 3: Source: USDA: Measuring U.S. Household Food Security. Available at: http://www.ers.usda.gov/amberwaves/april05/datafeature/

Some people are more vulnerable to food insecurity, despite the fact that food insecurity affects all populations. For instance, in 2003 in California, Latinos and African-Americans comprised a higher proportion of those experiencing food insecurity as compared to whites and Asians (See Figure 4, below).[5]

Other groups of low-income adults that have particularly high rates of food insecurity include non-citizen adult residents without a green card (44.6%), pregnant women between 18-44 years (40.7%), unemployed adults (40.4%), households with children (38.3%), and adults over the age of 65 (20%).[5]

Figure 4: Proportion Food Insecurity Among Low-Income Adults, by Race



The California Paradox

The rates of food insecurity as well as hunger in California increased in the two years the CHIS survey was analyzed, from 2001 to 2003. Prominent UCLA health policy researchers indicate that the reasons for the increase are likely attributable to the growth in the California unemployment rate during that time, the rapid increase in cost of living (including housing costs), and the stagnant expansion (as well as some decreases) in public assistance and income supports.[5]

California is home to most of the nation's fruit and vegetable production. In fact, it is the largest agricultural economy in the United States. Hence, with so much food production, why is food security a problem in California? It appears to be a paradox. California simultaneously ranks as the leading agricultural producer and as the 15th worst state for food insecurity with hunger.[7] Those counties in California that produce the most produce suffer from the highest rates of hunger and food insecurity.

Food Security Strategies

Food insecurity is a complex phenomenon and it results from a range of causes. Contributing factors include high rates of poverty and unemployment, higher costs of living, the closing of food processing and manufacturing companies, and inadequate distribution of available resources. Thus, strategies to combat food insecurity should tackle these underlying causes.

The partnership between the Second Harvest Food Bank, the Eat 5 A Day campaign, the *Network*, and the Community Alliance with Family Farmers characterizes six steps to achieving food secure communities. These steps are:

1. Create new or enhance existing infrastructures to reduce hunger and food insecurity;
2. Strengthen the federal nutrition safety net by supporting full and efficient use of programs such as food stamps, WIC, school meals, summer lunch, and TEFAP;
3. Bolster food from food bank *Network*s by aiding food recovery, gleaning, and food donation programs;
4. Improve food production and marketing by aiding projects that grow, produce, and distribute food locally and promote conservation and sustainable farming practices;
5. Public education on nutrition, hunger, and food security; and
6. Increase economic and job security by helping low-income people obtain good paying jobs and attain self-sufficiency.

Several of these strategies were used by the projects described in this report.

Introduction to Nutrition Education

Nutrition education plays an important role in promoting food security because it stresses the relationship between proper nutrition and good health. Nutrition education involves the teaching of nutritional knowledge and skills to promote changes in attitudes and behaviors. It aims to inform people, to influence them to change to more healthful diets, and ultimately to sustain the behavior change in order to prevent nutrition related problems and to promote health, well-being, and productivity.

This sounds straightforward, even simple, but behavior change is seldom so effortless. Food consumption behavior is complex and its mechanisms are not entirely understood. Eating is influenced by a myriad of factors from individual social-psychological variables to community and policy influences. Thus, behavior change often requires time investment and reinforcement of behaviors to prevent the often unavoidable setbacks to long-term change.

Nutrition education provided in the context of food security must attend to budgetary constraints and incorporate cultural competency in order to reflect the needs of the particular clientele. For instance, it must be acknowledged that people with low-incomes must deal simultaneously with issues pertaining to adequate resources with which to obtain food as well as the range of issues that influence food choice behavior. A “one-size-fits-all” approach rarely has much impact

because it is not relevant for participants. The nutrition education should also reflect the age, knowledge level, and interests of participants so that instruction and materials can be modified to engage a specific group.

There are some common steps for developing and implementing a nutrition education curriculum. First, one should assess the potential participants and determine an appropriate learning theory by assessing factors such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, interest, literacy, and socio-economic status. The provision of nutrition education should be based on appropriate communication or behavioral model to identify how people learn and to guide the intervention. Examples of theoretical orientations for nutrition education include the Health Belief Model, Social Learning Theory, Stages of Change: the Transtheoretical model, learner readiness, diffusion of innovations, and social marketing. Once specific learning objectives and proposed outcomes are identified, one can determine the content and select specific teaching methodologies. Once these preliminary planning tasks have been undertaken, the program can be implemented and outcomes evaluated.

Nutrition education interventions incorporate a range of approaches from individualized counseling to population-based approaches that include efforts such as social marketing and informational campaigns that seek to change behavior. These learning approaches should impart not only cognitions, but also skills (such as how to read food labels, cook healthfully, and grow produce). Other strategies may include printed food and nutrition materials such as brochures, audiovisuals, and other resources for classroom use. Topics might include the introduction to and promotion of healthy foods, food safety, food science, basic nutrition, and dietary management. Teaching materials might include cooking instruction, food models, and games.

Regardless of the specific methodology implemented, the goal of any nutrition education program should be to promote healthy, sustainable food choices with a vision of encouraging healthy people in healthy communities.

For many people, nutritional knowledge is critical, but only the first step in achieving food security. Inadequate resources can serve as a formidable barrier to attaining sufficient food for consumption.

Introduction to Food Stamps

The Food Stamp Program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, is the nation's largest nutrition program for low-income Americans and serves as a basic safety net for many people. The main purpose of the program, described in the Food Stamp Act of 1977, is "to permit low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet....by increasing their purchasing power."[8] The idea for the program was first developed as early as the 1930s during the Depression era and was a limited program until 1943, but it was not until 1977 that the program expanded in the structure that we know today.[9]

Eligibility and Disbursement

The program is designed to enable low-income participants to buy nutritious food. Eligibility for the program is determined according to financial and non-financial factors and the application process includes an application form, interview, and verification of critical facts. Determination of eligibility takes into account citizenship status, social security numbers, work rules, student status, persons on strike, as well as resources, income, and deductions. The food stamp benefit is paid entirely by the federal government, though state and local governments share a potion of the administrative costs.

The amount of food stamp benefit is based on the Department of Agriculture's Thrifty Plan and is estimated according to the cost to provide a household with nutritious, low-cost meals. A household is defined as a person or group of people living together, but not necessarily related, who purchase and prepare food together. All households must have net incomes below 100% of the poverty level to be eligible. California also provides benefits for legal permanent non-citizens residing in the U.S., who otherwise would not be eligible for federal food stamp benefits. The amount of the food stamp benefit changes from year to year to reflect food costs, but on average, the amount is $86 per person and about $200 per household per month (providing an average of nearly 90 cents a meal per person).[9,10] Most households use the food stamps as a supplement to their own limited resources.

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)

Beginning in 1996, the Food Stamp Act allowed states to distribute food stamp benefits via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), a system which allows participants to access their account at authorized retail outlets through a plastic card with a magnetic strip (not unlike a credit card). The Program has adopted the EBT system to provide benefits with electronic debit cards, which participants use to buy food from eligible retailers. States using EBT mail the cards to eligible participants and automatically deposit their food stamp benefits into their food stamp EBT account each month they are eligible. Currently over 95% of benefits are issued via EBT.[11]

Recipients of the food stamp coupons and EBT benefit are permitted to purchase foods for human consumption such as breads and cereals, fruits and vegetable, meats, fish, and poultry, and dairy products. They may also use the food stamps to purchase seeds and plants to grow food for household use. However, the program prohibits the use of the benefit for non-food items such as pet food, soap, household supplies and paper products; alcoholic beverages; tobacco products; vitamins and medicines; any food that will be eaten at the store; nor any hot foods.

Program Participation Trends

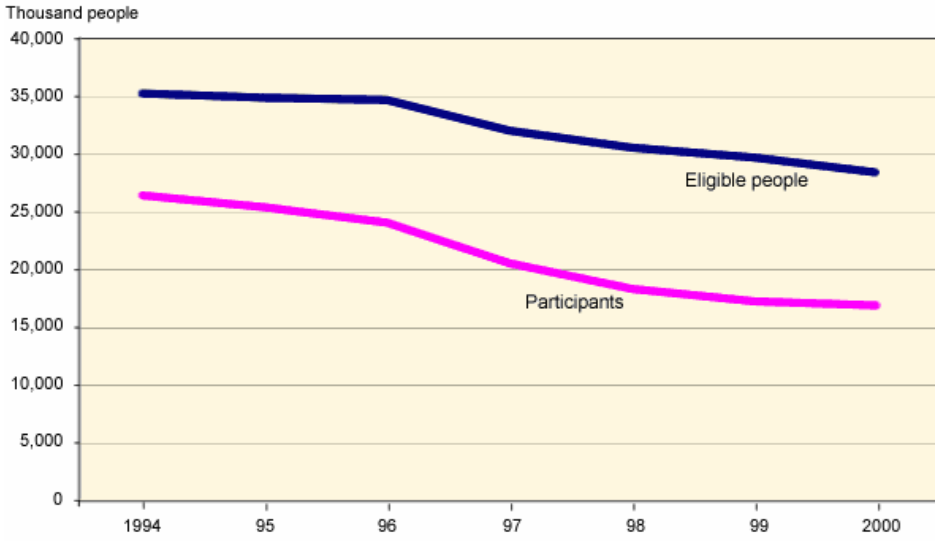
In California participation rates in the program declined 17% between 1994 and 1999 (from 66% to 49%). Moreover, California's participation rate lagged 8 percentage points behind the average national participation rate.[8] It is unclear what precise combination of factors led to the decline; however the USDA surmises several potential reasons including changes in the food stamp eligibility rules, confusion about the changes, perceived need for benefits, and reluctance to participate due to expanding job opportunities in the strong economy at that time.

Beginning in 2001, the national trend began to reverse and there was an increase in the number of people receiving food stamps in most states.[12] By FY 2003, an average of 21.3 million people in 9.2 million households throughout the country received food stamps each month. Approximately 1.8 million of the recipients were in California.[13] In 2004, the participation rates in the Food Stamp Program further increased due, in part, to high rates of joblessness and a weakened economy, states' improving access to the program (including legal immigrants), and the effects of implementation of food stamp reauthorization (which was signed into law in 2002). The participation rate rose from the previous year by 2.4 million people, and reflected an increase of more than 7 million people since 2000 (when program participation reached a decade low).[12]

Underutilization

Despite the recent rise in Food Stamp Program participation rates, nearly half of those eligible are not receiving benefits (see Figure 5, below).[12] According to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, California has among the worst participation rates in the Food Stamp and Food Assistance programs. Only 49% of those eligible (approximately 1.8 million) people participate in the food stamp program.[13] Furthermore, it is probable that countless more Californians could likely benefit from the Food Stamp Program but remain ineligible because they are undocumented immigrants living in the state. The low rate of participation among eligible people is significant because these programs are the nation's largest nutrition assistance program for low-income Americans, and serve as the primary safety net in combating hunger. Many people are experiencing food security and hunger which could be prevented by the program.

Food stamp participants and eligible people, fiscal 1994-2000
The number of program participants fell more sharply than the number of eligible people during the 1990s



Sources: Fiscal Year 1994-2000 Quality Control Samples, in *Trends in Food Stamp Program Participation Rates: 1994 to 2000, Final Report*, by Karen Cunnyngham, Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau.

One reason that Federally-funded food assistance programs are currently underutilized by qualified families in California primarily because people do not realize they are eligible. In recent years, the Food Stamp Program has embarked on an aggressive outreach campaign to promote the program and facilitate enrollment. However, red tape remains a barrier in the process, inhibits and delays efficient use. Focus groups conducted in 2001 among California residents with limited household incomes identified several significant barriers to utilizing the Food Stamp Program. These included:

- The nature and amount of information required of applicants;
- Lack of knowledge about who qualifies for the program;
- Frustration with the application process;
- A negative stigma associated with the program;
- Fear of losing future earnings due to having to pay back the equivalent of the assistance they receive through the program; and
- Fear that applying for the program will affect their application for legal residency.[14]

Additional Program Benefits

In addition, to its intended effect of providing families with increased food purchasing power, USDA research has shown that every food stamp dollar spent creates $1.84 in local economic activity.[13] The Legislative Analyst's Office has recently shown that, likewise, the state budget experiences a beneficial impact because when low-income people utilize food stamps, it frees up other money for the consumption of food or other items, which are generally taxed goods. Local and state governments, then, benefit from the tax revenues. Following this analysis, California could bring in up to $1.6 billion annually, according to California Food Policy Advocates estimates, if full food stamp participation (rather than the current 49%) was achieved.[13]

Food Stamp Recipient Characteristics

Food stamp recipients are a diverse group, but several characteristics of this group stand out. For example, over half of recipients (51%) are children and 9% are elderly; many food stamp recipients work (28% of households have earnings); the majority do not receive cash welfare benefits; recipient households have little income (38% have incomes at or below half the poverty line) and posses few resources (on average, households posses only $154 in countable resources, such as checking and savings accounts); and most of the households are small (the average household size is 2.3, though those with children averaged 3.3 members).[13]

The following three graphs (Figures 6-8) depict the demographic characteristics of food stamp recipients in 2001.

Figure 6: Food Stamp Recipient Characteristics: Age and Disability Status (2001)

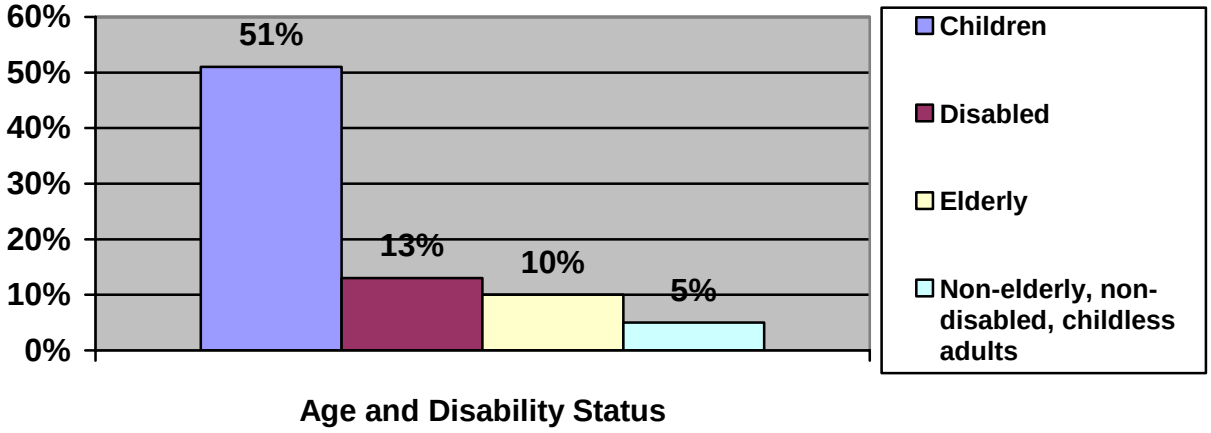


Figure 7: Distribution of food stamp participants by race, 2001

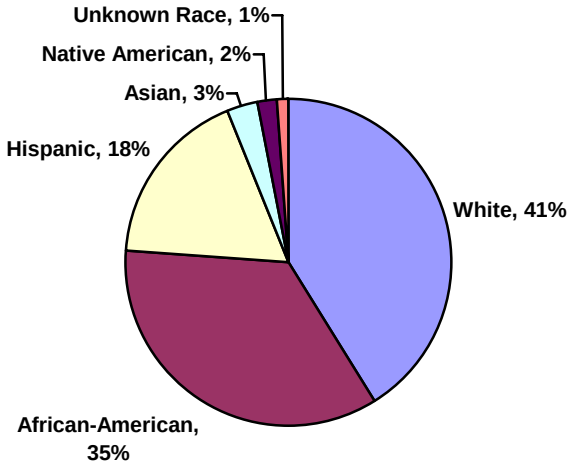
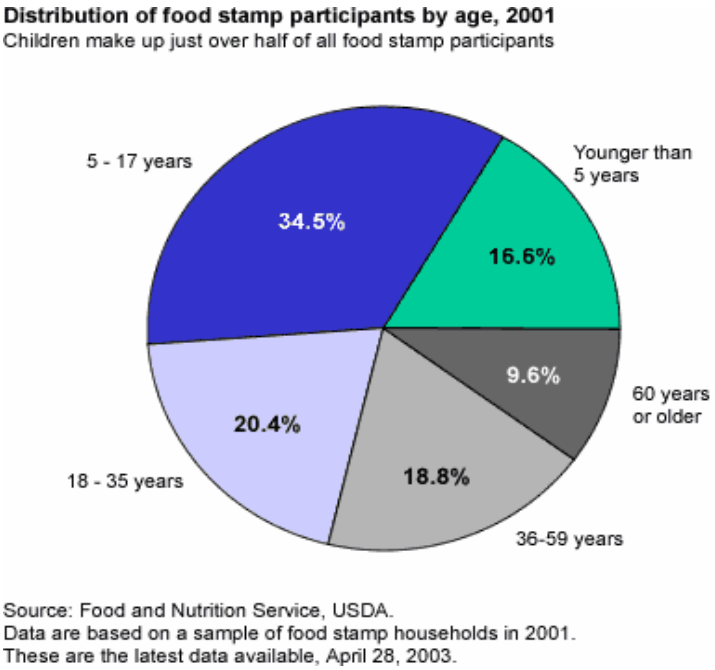


Figure 8: Age characteristics of food stamp recipients



Source: Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.
Data are based on a sample of food stamp households in 2001.
These are the latest data available, April 28, 2003.

CASE STUDY METHODS

This evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- What intervention methods did each project use, and how effective were they?
- What challenges did each project experience?
- How successful was each project in achieving their objectives?
- What lessons did each project learn?

To answer these questions, the evaluators used a number of data gathering techniques, including, conducting initials site visits to newly-funded food security projects, frequent conference calls with the local grantees, frequent email correspondence with the grantees to gather supporting information, reviewing project materials and reports, meeting with and teleconferencing with the program management team, participating and presenting at Food Security Task Force meetings, reviewing the conference minutes, conducting key informant interviews, and finally, a very important part of the evaluation was on-site observations of each rodeo.

REPORT FORMAT

The following report is derived from the evaluators' meeting notes, conference call notes, conference call minutes, project materials, and project progress reports. In effect, this report reflects a process evaluation that concludes with the evaluators' observations on the lessons learned across the 1999-2002 project years.

This report summarizes the objectives developed by each of the projects and describes the activities and outcomes achieved across the 1999-2002 period. Newspaper articles, newsletters, and other project materials that were submitted by project staff to CDHS as part of their quarterly or final project reports were assessed during the development of this report. However, due to their high number and bulk, this report does not contain those items. In addition, the report does not contain the full description of project objectives or exact details of program activities. That information can be found in the multitude of documents sent by the projects to the *Network* staff. However, the submitted materials were analyzed, in order to develop the project activity descriptions and for reaching evaluation conclusions.

The report contains the following sections for each project:

- Project Location and Background
- Project Goals
- Nutrition Education Intervention Activities
- Food Access Intervention Activities
- Food Stamp Intervention Activities (included in some case studies)
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Overall Evaluation Conclusions

The complete report contains an abstract and ends with overall conclusions.

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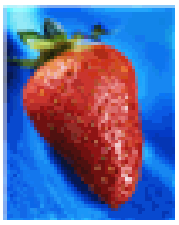
SECTION II: Project Management and Evaluation Support



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The eight food security projects described in this report conducted a variety of activities in their respective communities in order to increase the accessibility and availability of low-cost, nutritious food for as well as the provision of nutrition education to low-income families. They were funded for a four year contract period from 2000 through 2004 by the California Department of Health Services (CDHS) *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families.* Each of the projects were managed and supervised by *Network* staff. This section of the report describes the specific management activities as well as the evaluators' assessment of said activities.

Network Staff

Project management of the California Department of Health Services (CDHS), *Network for Healthy, Active Families* food security projects were conducted by Associate Health Program Advisors: Frank Buck, MSW and Rosanne Stephenson, MPA. Mr. Buck served as Program Manager and provided oversight and supervision for each project's scope of work while Ms. Stephenson, the Contract Manager, administered the contracts and budgets. They developed a formal management structure to provide ongoing support and oversight of the projects which included the organization and facilitation of meetings, conferences, teleconferences, and site visits. These activities served to enhance communication between the project managers and projects as well as between the individual projects themselves. The evaluators, who have years of experience in observing funding agencies and funded projects, observed that in this project the staff provided exceptional support and oversight to the local grantees.

Project Oversight

The majority of the project oversight was provided by Mr. Buck, the Program Manager and Ms. Stephenson, the Contract Manager. Early on, the prospective projects were invited to participate in contract negotiations with the *Network* staff. At that time and thereafter, Mr. Buck and Ms. Stephenson provided grantees with guidance on the grantees' proposed scope of work objectives. Furthermore, the *Network* staff created semi-annual progress analysis reports which were distributed to the grantees. The reports included a brief summary of the project objectives as well as constructive feedback to the grantees indicating areas for improvement.

Based on the many years of observing funding agencies and projects working to improve public health, the evaluators felt that the professional relationship between the *Network* staff and the food security grantees was especially cooperative and beneficial. This was due, to a large extent, to the efforts of Mr. Buck and Ms. Stephenson who upheld a high level of communication with the projects. Through their written progress report responses and personal telephone calls to project managers, they skillfully examined project progress and were quite comfortable in steering straying projects back on track. Moreover, they generated a collegial atmosphere for meetings, conference calls, and workshops. Using this supporting project management style, they built the existing capacity of projects by providing various educational opportunities, technical and evaluation assistance, constructive project analysis reports, and occasions for networking and socialization (i.e., Food Security Task Force meetings)

Project Site Visits

Network staff visited each of the local projects at least once during the 2000-2001 contract period as a critical component of the project management. Due to unforeseen budget constraints within the California state budget, no visits were made after 2001. The comprehensive visits provided opportunities for projects not only to communicate, but to show, what they do in their work. It also allowed the *Network* staff and evaluation consultants to observe the projects' in action and offer more thorough, individualized guidance to projects. The tours were generally scheduled over an entire day and included a tour of the facility and setting, an overview of program activities, and meetings with project staff to review the scope of work and evaluation plan. More often than not, to make efficient use of the limited time, Mr. Buck met with project members to discuss program-related issues while Ms. Stephenson met with the agency's finance person to discuss budget finances. In most cases, the project evaluator(s) accompanied the *Network* staff on the site visits and offered guidance on projects' evaluation plans. Usually, the meeting generated follow-up activities for the evaluators to provide further assistance.

In addition to the agency tour, the site visits generally included an off-site visit to observe related activities. For instance, at the Community Resource Center (CRC) in Encinitas, the *Network* and evaluation staff were provided an opportunity to visit the transitional housing units serving the agency's clients, survivors of domestic violence. The visit gave them the chance to meet some of the residents and see the quad which housed the project's community garden. Thus, they attained a better understanding of the overall organization and the setting of the project. In the case of CRC, during the second year of the project, the garden suffered increasing competition from resident children and dogs that inadvertently trampled plants as they played in the quad's limited space. Because *Network* and evaluation staff had seen the setting, they could fully appreciate the project's predicament of wanting to maintain the garden but experiencing opposing needs. As a consequence, they decided collectively to transition the community garden to container gardening to salvage both the needed play space and the garden. Seeing the setting had enhanced the visitors' capacity to support this needed change.

Food Security Task Force

The Food Security Task Force is a workgroup consisting of people who are actively involved in addressing food security. It is organized by the *Network* and meets regularly to work towards realizing its objectives. According to the *Network's* website the objectives include providing guidance to the *Network*'s food security channel for reaching low-income consumers; providing resources and oversight to food security planning and implementation projects funded by the *Network*; sharing information regarding food security issues, advocacy efforts, and upcoming events; and encouraging increased communication and collaboration between different segments of the food security system in the state.[5]

All eight funded projects participated as members of the Food Security Task Force and two of the project coordinators were invited to serve as its co-chairs. In their capacity as co-chairs, the Project Coordinators helped ensure a participatory membership and promoted a sense of

ownership among the members of the group. Other task force members included agency non-governmental organization representatives.

During the project period, the Food Security Task Force meetings were held semiannually, once in the fall and once in the spring, at alternating locations in northern and southern California. Also, they added a third annual meeting which took place during the summer. Attendance to the summer meeting offered additional value, especially for smaller agencies traveling to the meetings, because it was organized to take place on the day prior to the related and well-attended Social Marketing Conference.

The meetings brought *Network* funded food security projects together and provided an opportunity for grantees to share information, provide updates on their activities and successes, as well as seek advice and guidance from colleagues. In 2002, attendees to the meeting participated in a strategic planning session to generate ideas to strengthen the effectiveness of the Task Force going forward. Later that year, the Joint Steering Committee (comprised of the *Network* and the *California 5 a Day Campaign*) ratified their policy priorities. In addition, the meetings offered opportunities for project coordinators to build relationships and socialize with one another. The sharing and socialization among those working in the same arena were highly valued by the project coordinators. When possible, the *Network* staff organized occasions for attendees to conduct a tour of one of the projects situated near the meeting to give members a chance to learn from other projects "in action." The *Network* staff valued the meetings as an opportunity to seek input from food security project coordinators regarding the potential distribution of funds and future direction of the *Network*.

Social Marketing Conference

The Social Marketing Conference is a statewide conference held annually in Sacramento, California sponsored by the *Network for Healthy, Active Families* to provide an opportunity for those working in nutrition education and physical activity promotion to share best practices and provide opportunities for skill building. Approximately 600 people representing the varying *Network* funded projects attend the conference each year where they listen to nationally recognized speakers and attend educational workshops. The Social Marketing Conferences provided food security project grantees educational and skill building opportunities and, like the Food Security Task Force, it offered occasions for valued networking and socialization.

During the project period the themes for the conference included From People to Policy: Empowering Healthy Change (2003) and Changing Environments for Healthy Eating and Active Living (2004). In August 2004, the evaluation consultants presented *A review of eight food security projects* at the conference in collaboration with Pompea Smith (from the SEE-LA project) and Edie Jessup (from the Metro Ministry project). The session covered the projects' major challenges, successes, and lessons learned as well as specific efforts and successes by the two participating projects.

Continuing Education

During the project period, *Network* staff made available to the local project staff continuing education opportunities related to their work in food security. These opportunities were intended to supplement grantees' knowledge and skills base and encourage further networking with those working in food security. An example of one event to which grantees were invited to participate was an *Asset-based Community Development (ABCD) Workshop* held in San Diego on the day prior to the March 2001 Task Force Meeting. This workshop instructed participants on the building blocks of development, drawing on community resources and strengths. It provided practical tips for identifying and mobilizing local assets going beyond theory to practice. Another event attended by task force members was *A Taste of Justice* conference which took place in Los Angeles in November 2001 on the day after the Task Force Meeting. The event was attended by nearly 200 social justice advocates, community gardeners, farmers, farmers' market advocates, teachers, parents, high school students, and food activists. It was co-sponsored by Occidental College and the Community Food Security Coalition and organized to facilitate networking and strategizing on food and justice issues.[6]

PROJECT EVALUATION SUPPORT

Dan Perales, DrPH and Denise Cintron Perales, MS served as the primary evaluation contacts for the eight Food Security Projects. They were available to projects as an evaluation resource and provided evaluation Technical Assistance. They worked in collaboration with the *Network* Evaluation Specialist, Andrew Fourney, DrPH whose primary role was to ensure responsibility for the Food Security Project evaluations and provide projects with suggestions on evaluation methods consistent with the CDHS overall evaluation plan.

Dr. Perales has over 20 years of evaluation experience. He received his MPH and DrPH degrees from the University of Texas School of Public Health. He also teaches a variety of courses including Health Promotion as well as Program Planning and Evaluation at San Jose State University, Department of Health Science, Master of Public Health Program where he is a tenured faculty member.

Ms. Cintron Perales received her Master of Science degree from the University of San Francisco in Organization Development. She brought to the project over fifteen years of management experience in non-profit administration. Her expertise includes tool development and advising on methodologies to ensure that evaluation activities are performed in a timely manner and reflect project objectives.

The Perales evaluation team created a support structure for the food security project which included frequent teleconferences with individual project coordinators, participation in Food Security Task Force teleconferences and meetings, attendance at Social Marketing conferences, and project site visits.

The Perales evaluation team utilized a participatory evaluation methodology which involved project staff in the evaluation design in order to promote relevancy and build future evaluation capacity. The Perales evaluation team was responsible for reviewing all Scopes of Work to identify evaluation technical assistance needs. Additionally, they contacted project coordinators, by phone, email and on-site visits, to discuss their evaluation needs. The evaluation consultants were also available to projects to help identify appropriate evaluation design. They helped design instruments for assessing community needs, assets, and resources; tracking project activities; and measuring project outcomes. They also assisted in suggesting data collection methods, appropriate sampling methods, and data entry tools. After data were collected, the Perales team was available to assist with the interpretation of data analysis. They provided advice on how to report evaluation findings that were consistent with *Network* reporting requirements and CDHS Evaluation Unit needs. Periodically, they monitored projects' evaluation progress and communicated regularly with other *Network* staff, Andrew Fourney, Frank Buck, and Roseanne Stephenson regarding evaluation activities.

Off-site Evaluation Assistance

The majority of evaluation assistance was provided to projects off-site from their project locations. Throughout the contract period, the evaluators communicated regularly via telephone and email correspondence with the food security project coordinators. Early on, the communication gave them an opportunity to offer the projects assistance with the development of their objectives and suitable evaluation designs. Then, as projects got underway, they provided support by means of frequent conference calls with project coordinators to discuss project objectives and evaluation activities. The regular calls provided them with an opportunity to offer individualized assistance to projects with the development of evaluation methods (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, focus groups) or review and comment on evaluation tools (e.g. questionnaires), data analysis, and reports. Between the calls and reviewing projects' progress reports, they moved into a role in which they monitored and tracked progress of individual projects throughout each year. They collected and organized information and materials about the eight projects including contact information, scope of work, progress reports, evaluation instruments, correspondence and meeting notes, fliers, and photo documentation of activities by project and year. Additionally, for those projects that requested the assistance, they provided feedback and guidance on the evaluation portions of their interim and final progress reports.

On-site Evaluation Assistance

The evaluation team participated in site visits to the food security local projects during 2000 and 2001. These visits were integral to their understanding of project activities. Meeting staff in person was important for developing a stronger rapport between evaluation and project staff and enhanced subsequent communication. The visits also provided an opportunity for the evaluators to directly observe the project settings and view the project staff engaged in daily operation activities such as serving clients, providing nutrition education, working in a community garden, and organizing local farmers' markets.

Food Security Task Force (FSTF) Meetings and Network Conferences

The evaluation team participated in the Food Security Task Force meetings held three times per year. In addition to one-on-one evaluation coaching, Dr. Perales presented an evaluation workshop during the August 2000 Task Force meeting. This workshop built on an introductory workshop on program evaluation presented by Dr. Perales at the 1999 meeting, but also provided new grantees with an overview of program evaluation, including why program evaluation is important, types of evaluation, a description of process, transitional and outcome evaluation, and examples of achievable outcomes. Participants were also given handouts of the presentations to refer to in their daily operations. In 2001, the evaluation team presented a matrix that summarized each food security project's nutrition education and food access activities. In 2003, Dr. Perales and Dr. Andrew Fourney, Evaluation Specialist from the *Network* Evaluation unit made a joint presentation to the food security projects on the use of the Logic model as the basis for evaluating interventions.

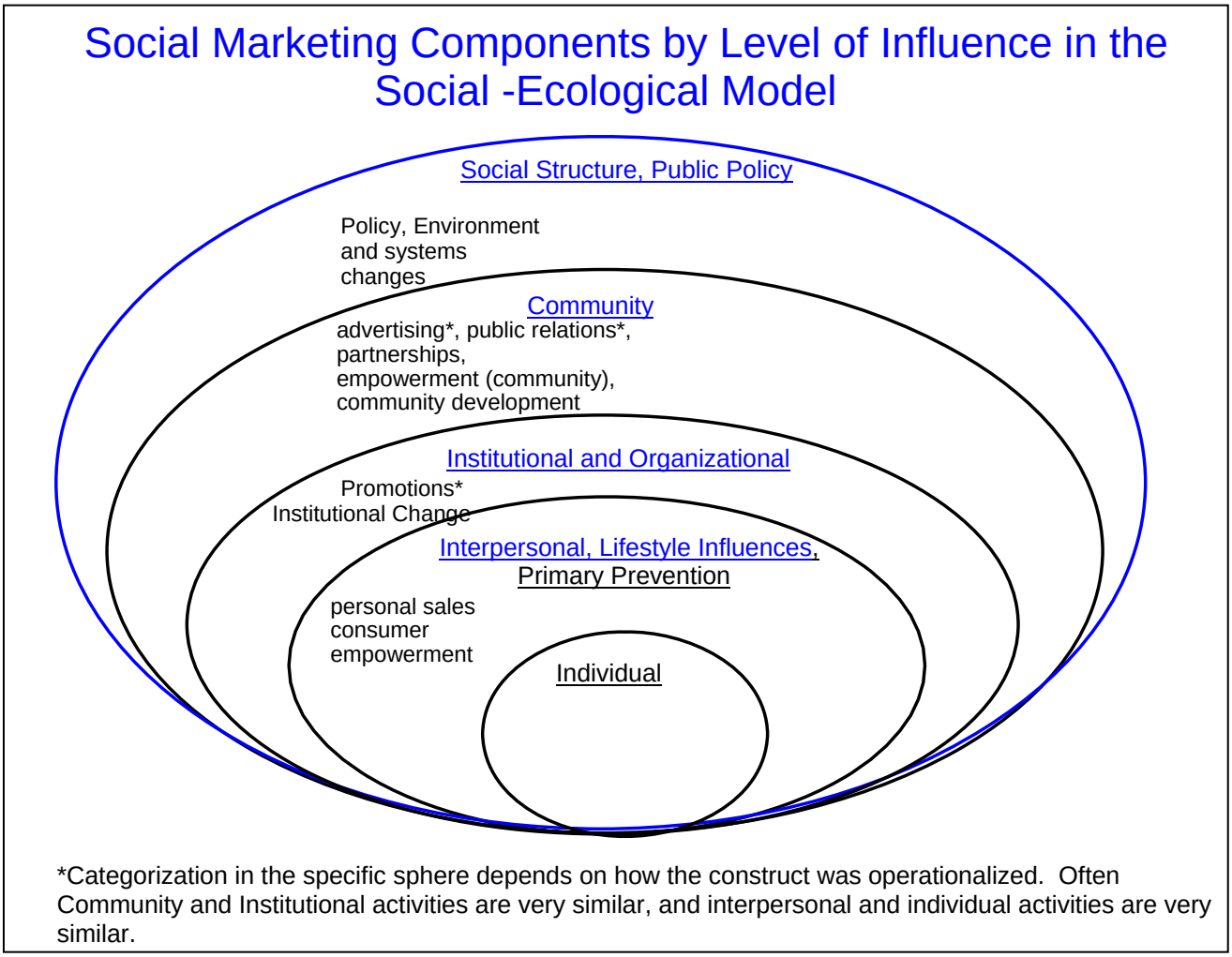
Collaboration

The evaluation team maintained communication with *Network* staff regarding the status of individual project reports and attachments and worked closely with the *Network* program managers to schedule site visits to newly-funded projects annual visits. Additionally, the evaluators worked in partnership with several project coordinators to develop and present project related information at various conferences including the Social Marketing Conference, and the American Public Health Association conference (APHA). In 2004, Dr. Perales and Ms. Cintron Perales made a presentation with Pompea Smith (of the SEE-LA project) and Edie Jessup (of the Fresno Metro Ministry project) at the Social Marketing Conference entitled, *A review of eight California food security projects*. In 2004, Dr. Perales' abstract with co-authors Mr. Buck, Ms. Cintron Perales, and Ms. Stephenson, was accepted for a poster session at the APHA Conference in Washington, D.C. It was titled, *Promoting food security and nutrition education in California urban and rural settings: A case study of two projects.*

Section III: The Social-Ecological Model

Social-Ecological Model

The CDHS has adopted Social Marketing tools as a way to approach the Social-Ecological Model. The CDHS uses the following definition of Social Marketing: " the use of commercial marketing approaches to achieve a goal, … includes the traditional mix of advertising, publicity, promotions, personal sales, consumer empowerment, community development, partnership, environment, systems and policy change, and media advocacy.[1]



The chart above features the individual at the center, and reflects increasingly larger spheres of influence: interpersonal, institutions and organizations, community and policy. It also illustrates the use of Social Marketing tools in the Social-Ecological Model via approaches such as personal sales, promotions, advertising, and public relations. Behavior change theories appropriate to each level of influence are operationalized into program intervention and evaluation measures.

[1] *Source: Social Marketing Program Activities and the Social Ecological Model.* Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section, California Department of Health Services, January 7, 2001.

Evaluation of this model assesses the program activities that are conducted, accounts for non-behavioral outcomes, and provides an analysis of the kinds of activities on which the programs spend significant amount of money- - policy and environmental changes, and interventions[2].

The four Food Security Projects described in this report were not required to incorporate the Social-Ecological Model into their goals and program activities during their 1999 – 2002 scopes of work. However, during this period the CDHS, Cancer Prevention and Nutrition Section (CPNS), adopted this model, and provided annual Social Marketing conferences to integrate these concepts into existing and future projects. The table that appears on the next page is simply for the purposes of illustrating how the four projects and their 2001 – 2002 objectives fit into the Social-Ecological model.

[2] Source: Foerster, S. B., Gregson, J. & Wirtz, S. *Using Social-Ecological Model as a Framework for Evaluating Large-Scale Social Marketing Campaigns.*

SECTION IV: Community Resource Center

Community Resource Center - Encinitas

Project Location and Background

The Community Resource Center (CRC) Project is based in Encinitas, California, a city located on six miles of Pacific coastline approximately twenty-five miles north of San Diego. CRC's service area encompasses the larger region of San Diego's North County, covering over 700 miles and reaching south as far as Del Mar and Solana Beach, north to Carlsbad and Oceanside, and east to San Marcos.

The North County region is prominently known as the center of San Diego County's $1.2 billion agricultural industry and $82.5 million cut-flower industry. According to the City of Encinitas website, many even claim Encinitas as the Flower Growing Capital because of the prominence of the industry.[1] It is not surprising, then that the region is home to many agricultural workers. These workers are predominantly Latino and many are undocumented. Encinitas has approximately 60,000 residents, of which 15% are Latino, 3.1% Asian, 0.6% African American and the remainder White.[2]

The Community Resource Center has been providing comprehensive social services to low-income residents of the San Diego North County region for over twenty-five years. CRC's general services include assistance to the hungry and homeless through their bread room and food pantry, working with the Interfaith Shelter Network, case management, and counseling.[3] The CRC's *Libre* Domestic Violence Program operates services for women and children who are escaping domestic abuse. They provide temporary emergency shelter (30-45 day stay) for approximately 80 women each year and transitional housing units (18-24 month stay) for approximately 20 women and children annually. Of those entering the shelter, 95% are low income and nearly half arrive with their school-aged children. *Libre* also offers counseling to provide emotional and psycho-logical support in addition to case management and other classes such as parenting and life skills classes to empower women and help them get back on their feet. Each year, CRC reaches nearly

10,000 clients through their various programs including a daily bread room, a monthly food commodities program, the Nutrition Now program, and information and referral.

In 2000, CRC was awarded a food security grant from *Network*. With this funding opportunity, CRC established the Nutrition Now program. The program was modeled after and built on an existing CRC nutrition program, Project Grow, which was a smaller scale program that taught nutrition, education, gardening, commitment, cooking, and caring and had been successful in improving the self esteem of participants. As they developed Nutrition Now, CRC formed a nutrition/food security team comprised of staff members representing every department in the agency.

The Nutrition Now program focused on nutrition education and increasing access to fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables through three primary components: (1) nutrition education and gardening in *Libre*, the emergency domestic violence shelter, (2) the food commodities demonstration program, and (3) dissemination of information via their thrift stores, social services, administration, and bread room.

Project Goals

CRC identified two primary goals and corresponding objectives to help guide their activities to improve food security among low-income residents of San Diego's North County region.

Goal 1: *To enhance Libre shelter and transitional housing clients' nutrition knowledge, food security and gardening skills.*

> ***Objective 1:*** *To continue Project Grow by providing 30 low-income women and 50 children residents of Libre at least one hour of nutrition education classes per week, weekly trips to the Farmer's Market, three hours of gardening per week, and a bulletin board updated with current nutrition information and local market flyers.*

Goal 2: *To improve community/public access to nutrition education and local low cost healthy food*

> ***Objective 1:*** *To provide access to and educate at least 5,000 community members about healthy food choices, meal planning, food safety, the need for exercise, and other local low-cost food resources*
>
> ***Objective 2:*** *To provide access to and educate at least 3,000 low income CRS Bread Room Participants about healthy food choices, meal planning, food safety, the need for exercise, and other local low-cost food resources*

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

In order to achieve their nutrition education outcomes, CRC developed a curriculum and provided regular classes focused on nutrition topics, organized trips to the local markets, and taught gardening skills that participants could implement on their own upon transitioning out of the shelter.

Nutrition Education Classes

CRC developed a nutrition education curriculum for the residents of *Libre*, CRC's emergency domestic violence shelter. The classes were offered weekly and were intended to augment participants' nutrition knowledge, improve meal preparation skills, and demonstrate how to eat healthfully on a limited budget. Classes covered a range of nutrition issues and included topics such as the "Importance of Fiber," "Choosing Soy Products," "Stretching Your Food Dollar," and "5 a Day." The classes, which also offered cooking opportunities, became the most popular class for *Libre* residents. The tofu recipes, in particular, were among the best received by participants. Over time, as families transitioned into and out of the shelter, many women were given the opportunity to take part in the classes. Over 350 women and children from *Libre* participated in the nutrition education classes during the four years of the grant period.

Gardening

During the initial year, CRC offered three hours of structured gardening classes each week for residents of *Libre*. The curriculum covered garden planning, preparing, planting, maintenance, and harvesting herb and seasonal vegetables. Ninety women participated in at least one class during that period and they grew and harvested green and red peppers, eggplant, green onions, and herbs such as cilantro, parsley, and basil. In part because the gardening space was reduced considerably during the second year of the project, they focused on container gardening. They instructed the women on how to grow their own herbs and vegetables in a limited amount of space. This change was more representative of the kind of gardening that the women might realistically take on after leaving *Libre* as they moved on to other transitional housing or apartments with limited land use.

Farmers' Market Trips

The original intent of the farmers' market trips was to offer an opportunity to teach participating women about the availability, selection, and use of seasonal fruits and vegetables; the cost savings obtained by shopping at farmers' markets; the ease of increasing their families' fruit and vegetable intake; and the ability to simultaneously support the local economy with their purchases. Thirty-six women and children participated in at least one trip to the local Encinitas Farmers' Market, located within walking distance from the shelter, during the first year. CRC organized a total of thirty-six trips to Encinitas Farmers' Market before it closed. Upon its closure, CRC was forced to seek alternative options. Distance and transportation constraints limited transferring the trips to another regional farmers' market. In the end, they maintained the intent of the trips, but made trips to a low-cost, natural food store in the area.

Food Access Intervention Activities

CRC sought to improve access to fresh and affordable fruits and vegetables for its regular clients as well as other low income residents in their service area. Their primary methods to reach this goal included food distribution and dissemination, improving the donor base and offering fresh produce, and providing community education on a variety of food security issues.

Food Pantry and Commodities Program

Once a month, CRC distributes commodities from the San Diego Food Bank at two different locations to those who can provide proof of residency as part of their government-funded Commodities Program. During the four years of the project, CRC provided those attending the high volume distribution each month with food demonstrations, food samples, and recipes (chosen to reflect price, access, and cultural concerns). They also offered referrals to other services in the community as needed. Throughout, CRC staff who maintained the distribution remained the same so participants could see familiar faces each month when they picked up supplies. This promoted the building of rapport between the staff and the participants and improved the opportunity to address specific dietary needs (i.e. diabetic needs). During the project period approximately 1,500 low-income clients (including duplicate count) received

commodities at the Encinitas site. Those in attendance appreciated the demonstrations and samples.

Bread Room Program

Another component of CRC's project mix was the operation of a bread room. The facility was open daily and distributed bread and other food items to those in need. With an increase in volunteer participation, CRC was able to expand the operational hours for the facility during the project period from five days to seven days a week. CRC staff established and developed relationships with local markets and vendors. They concentrated on acquiring donations of healthier foods to distribute to their clientele. Their efforts resulted in an increase in the amount of healthy goods donated for distribution at the bread room. In particular, Trader Joe's became a regular donor and provided pre-packaged salads, sandwiches and hot meals and the Carlsbad Farmers' Market delivered a variety of surplus fruits and vegetables once a week. Due to a grocery store strike during several months of the project, the bread room experienced a drop in donations as stores that were not participating in the strike saw an increase in their sales and, thus, had fewer surpluses to donate. According to sign-in records, over 8,000 customers accessed the donated goods from the Bread Room during the project period.

Community Education

During the program CRC disseminated nutrition-related material to the community. They distributed flyers and brochures on a myriad of nutrition related topics to those participating in any of their programs. Among the topics distributed were "Eat For Good Health," "Fast, Fun, and Fit," "Choose to Eat Better and Move More," "Teen Eating Tips," "Farmer's Market Schedule," "Why Eat More Fruits and Vegetables," "5 a Day for Kids," "Food Guide Pyramid," "Nutrient Table," and "Food Safety." In total, over 10,000 flyers and brochures were distributed to community members.

Additionally, CRC mounted 11 bulletin boards to support the Nutrition Now program. Twice a month they posted new nutritional information on the boards with information that covered topics such as "Food Safety Tips," "WIC and Food Stamp Information," and "How to Read a Food Label," and "Choosing a Low Fat Diet."

Another forum used by CRC to inform the community was participation in community, health, and street fairs. During the project period they participated in over twenty-five of these events where they displayed and distributed program-related information and attracted volunteers to help run the program's bread room.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

As might be expected, nutrition education was not the top priority for clients entering an emergency domestic violence shelter. This proved a challenge for successful engagement of clients in the Nutrition Now activities. Clients initially expressed negative attitudes and did not see the urgency. Then, after having attended one of the activities, many women changed their

outlook and looked forward to the next groups. Perhaps because the activities were unrelated to urgent needs, the experiences provided a positive outlet and a break from their daily struggles as well as an opportunity for them to spend valued time with their children and other women who shared similar experiences.

Without providing any notice, the Encinitas Farmers' Market closed during the second year of the project. It had been the site for the farmers' market visits since it was within walking distance of the shelter. Because of the great distance to other farmers' markets and transportation limitations, CRC was unable to move the trips to another farmers' market. They did transfer the visits to a local storefront market, Henry's Market, which specialized in natural foods and served the general need and even provided tours and taste tests to the women and children. However, the new market did not accept food stamps which limited the women's' purchasing power at that store.

Another challenge for the project was the limited garden space they had to implement the gardening class component. The CRC's small courtyard was prime space and, besides serving as the location of the community garden, it was where resident children and dogs liked to run around to play. Consequently, after the first year they decided to transition from the larger courtyard garden to container gardens so that they could maintain some play space for the kids and concurrently provide realistic gardening instruction. This seemed like a suitable compromise since most residents moved from the shelter to transitional or apartment-style housing where they would have limited gardening space.

Despite having increased food access for their clients by sourcing additional market and donor vendors, they experienced a challenge that was out of their control. October 11, 2004 marked the beginning of a four month-long grocery store strike by the United Food and Commercial Workers union against three major California supermarkets.[4] Consequently, during that time CRC was unable to pick up from the stores that usually provided goods and the stores that were not part of the strike (including Trader Joe's, Henry's, and Stater Bros) saw their business nearly triple during that period and, thus, had less surplus to give them.

Conclusions

The Community Resource Center project was largely successful in meeting their goals. In part, this may have been because they took on a handful of realistic and attainable goals. They focused on augmenting and improving existing services to better address the nutritional education and food access needs of community members. Consequently, they far exceeded some of their projections. For instance, one objective was to provide 30 *Libre* residents with at least an hour of weekly nutritional education, but by the end of the four years, over 350 women had participated for some time in the weekly classes.

Some of the challenges that the CRC project faced had to do with things beyond their control such as the closing of the farmers' market and the strike of supermarkets. When faced with these

challenges, they regrouped and came up with appropriate solutions which maintained the credibility of their intent. They also showed creativity with the transition of the courtyard gardening program to container gardening. This allowed for multiple-use of the space and, in actuality likely was a better reflection of their clients' needs.

Upon completion of their contract with the *Network* they plan to continue all aspects of the Nutrition Now program. With the opening of a new shelter facility and welcoming new women to their services, they anticipate increasing their reach and doubling their target audience. This will be accomplished in large part by volunteers who, to date, have offered to take on various program components.

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SECTION V: Contra Costa Health Services

Project Location and Background

Contra Costa County is among the nine counties that comprise the San Francisco Bay Area. The county covers approximately 733 square miles extending from the northeastern shore of San Francisco Bay eastward to San Joaquin County. In 2002, the population census of Contra Costa reached nearly one million residents. Out of a total of 58 counties, it is the ninth most populous county in California and has one of the fastest growing work forces, a trend that is attributed to the need to provide services to a growing local population. The interior of the region is primarily suburban/residential, commercial, and light industrial, while the western and northern shorelines tend to be quite industrialized.[1]

Contra Costa Health Services, whose mission is to care for and improve the health of all people in Contra Costa County with special attention to those who are most vulnerable to health problems, carried out the project in Contra Costa funded by the *Network*. The project they developed included a garden component, nutrition education, and food security funding advocacy. The nutrition education and gardening skills were provided as part of the high school curriculum on a multi-acre garden at a youth probation facility. They also provided educational resources about nutrition and food safety to West Contra Costa residents and store owners.

Project Goals

Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) established two main goals to guide their project. They were *to increase knowledge, and improve access to and knowledge about affordable, safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for low residents in Contra Costa County.* They developed objectives each year to provide bench-marks to measure their success. Their strategies were based on the social ecological model promoted by the *Network*. They focused on changing individual behavior change with incarcerated youth, and changing the environment by establishing farm stands in low-income communities.

Year 1

Goal: *To increase access and knowledge about healthy and nutritious food and low-income residents in Contra Costa County.*

> ***Objective 1:*** *By September 20, 2001, a garden-based curriculum will be developed/adapted and implemented among at least 12 Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility (OAYRF) youth and 150 West Contra Costa community members.*
>
> ***Objective 2:*** *By September 30, 2001, the West Contra Costa Food Security Council will establish a sustainable market garden at the OAYRF and a plan for a related food venture.*
>
> ***Objective 3:*** *By September 30, 2001, the West Contra Costa Food Security Council 9WCCFSC) will develop a comprehensive food policy addressing local food issues.*

Year 2

Goal: *improve access to and knowledge about affordable, safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food to the youth at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility (OAYRF) and low-income families of North Richmond and Parchester Village of West Contra Costa County through nutrition education and gardening activities at the East West Market Garden*

> ***Objective 1:*** *By September 30, 2002, the Food Security Project staff will implement the Teams with Intergeneratioal Support (TWIGS) garden and nutrition-based curriculum among at least 15 Orin Allen youth at Delta Vista High School.*
>
> ***Objective 2:*** *By September 30, 2002, the Food Security Project staff will work with Contra Costa Health Service's On the Move with FoodWise! (OMF) staff to provide nutrition education resources on how to access and prepare safe, affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for at least 50 low-income families in North Richmond and Parchester Village of West Contra Costa County.*
>
> ***Objective 3:*** *By September 30, 2002, the Food Security Project staff will arrange for at least one tour of the East West Market Garden by at least six participants to educate community leaders and others on the use of gardens as a nutrition education tool and the importance of food policy and planning.*

Year 3

Goal: *To improve access to and knowledge about affordable, safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food for low-income families of West Contra Costa County through nutrition education and advocacy activities.*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2003,at least 75% of youth at the Orin Allen youth Rehabilitation Facility (OAYRF) participating in the homeroom nutrition program will have increased nutrition knowledge and intentions to eat five daily servings of fruits and vegetables through participation in gardening and nutrition education.*

Objective 2: *By September 30, 2003, at least 100 low income families/individuals in West Contra Costa will increase their fresh fruit and vegetable consumption through access to one or more new retail food sources.*

Objective 3: *By September 30, 2003, at least 80 low income residents will have increased knowledge about the importance of food safety to good health and an increase in skills needed to advocate for safe food through participation in community meetings designed to train residents on food safety practices.*

Year 4

Goal: *To improve access to and knowledge about affordable, safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food for low-income families of Contra Costa County through nutrition education and advocacy activities.*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2004, at least 100 low income families/individuals will increase their fresh fruit and vegetable consumption through access to newly established produce stands.*

Objective 2: *By September 30, 2004, at least 100 individuals will have increases in knowledge by observing/participating in food demonstrations associated with farm stands.*

Objective 3: *By September 30, 2004, expand participation in the West Contra Costa Food Security Council by at least three members and implement a workplan to address at least one Council-identified priority.*

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

Overall, the project focused its efforts on 1) increasing fruit and vegetable production in the garden, 2) integrating nutrition education into the curriculum, and 3) conducting education with consumers and merchants around nutrition and food and consumer safety issues.

Garden at Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility

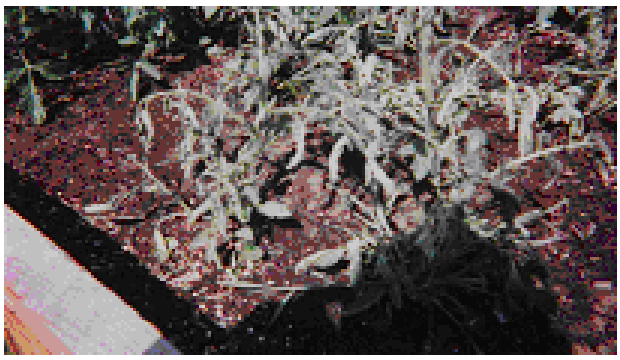
In seeking to establish a new outlet to make quality fresh produce available for low-income West Contra Costa residents, the project hoped that they might find a location that would also allow them to provide nutrition education activities such as cooking demonstrations. As it turned out, the staff member working on this project knew contacts at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation

Facility (OAYRF). The facility, previously known as the Byron Boys Ranch, is a 100-bed ranch home which serves as a minimum security center for juvenile offenders who receive six- or nine-month court-ordered stays.[2] Approximately half of the youth at the facility are from Contra Costa County. The location seemed ideal because it had a large amount of unused land and, moreover, a cadre of on-site youth that could be encouraged to participate in the activities required to sustain the garden. The project enlisted the support of the OAYRF superintendent, the on-site high school principal, and the juvenile justice judge. The three enthusiastically embraced the idea of creating a garden on the premises, but cautioned that they had no funding to contribute to the effort.


Ground Breaking at Orin Allen

The project successfully solicited additional foundation support to fund a garden manager position. During FY 2000/01, they were awarded a grant from the Dean and Margaret Lesher Foundation to employ a garden manager. They had hoped to hire someone full-time, but funding only allowed for a part-time garden manager. Shortly after, the OAYRF boys started construction of garden boxes in their wood shop class and by the end of 2000, they broke ground to start planting. The project was on its way.

However, not long afterwards, the project hit an unexpected roadblock. They noticed that their plants were dying. Prior to planting they had tested the soil, but had failed to test the water that irrigated the plants. Upon investigation, they learned that the problem was the high boron content in the municipal district water.


Vegetables affected by high boron in the water

Undeterred, they found a short-term solution in which they transferred water from an alternate water district via a 100-gallon water tank mounted to a county vehicle. Eventually, they were able to use the same, boron-free water used by local farmers after they purchased and installed a more permanent 5000-gallon water tank. Another challenge surfaced when a storm destroyed the project's temporary greenhouse. The garden manager and on-site principal showed ingenuity and created a new indoor greenhouse located in an unused portable building on the premises.

In addition to the garden boxes, they expanded the garden into a neighboring field. Finding funding assistance to cover the plowing and disking costs became problematic, but by late 2002, they obtained a donated tractor from a local farmer and no longer had to rely on contractual agreements to plow and disk the field.

As the garden grew, they faced another challenge. The individual hired to act as the garden manager had experience in backyard gardening, working with youth, and running a business, however he lacked the know-how to organize a consecutive planting schedule, address winter production, and efficiently utilize the entire space. His lack of agricultural training and inexperience working on a larger scale farm was compounded by his erratic schedule (he worked only 2-3 days each week due to funding constraints and a long commute from his home to the garden). In his absence he left instructions for the youth, but without supervision the tasks often did not get accomplished.


Orin Allen youth tending garden

Unfortunately, the funding for the garden manager position ended after three years. Before it ended, no alternative funding was successfully secured, so they were unable to preserve the garden manager position once funding ended.

During the course of the gardening activities, Contra Costa Health Services created opportunities to celebrate and promote their successes. They had surmounted multiple challenges to create a functioning garden at the probation facility that provided produce and served as a learning ground for the boys. In May 2002, they organized a garden tour and press conference. The tour and press conference were well attended by community leaders, and project collaborative partners. A member of the evaluation consulting team attended the festivities. The agenda consisted of a tour of the gardens guided by two of the youth facility residents, followed by the press conference which featured youth and adult speakers and recognized the project's community partners.


CONTRA COSTA FOCUS

"I'm learning things that I didn't know how to do."

Spadework for Success

Youths detained at boys ranch digging their way out of trouble

Project is featured in Contra Costa Times

Lastly, attendees were treated to a delicious lunch prepared by the youth with produce from the garden. The following May they coordinated a donor recognition event, catered by the boys of OAYRF. The project was successful in catching the attention of the local media, with a news article featured in the *Contra Costa Times*, a Knight Ridder newspaper. Furthermore, an author featured the

garden project in one chapter of her book, *Grace from the Garden,* and agreed to speak in support of the project at their donor recognition event.

Nutrition Education

In conjunction with the gardening, the project provided nutrition education for the boys participating from the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Center. They chose a curriculum entitled TWIGS (Teens with Inter-Generational Support) which the project coordinator and the garden manager administered during the homeroom period. Results from a pre-test administered to participants indicated that a large portion of the boys understood the interplay between nutrition, physical activity, and health, however, fewer knew about portion sizes and recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. The boys seemed amenable to increasing their fruit and vegetable intake; 79% reported they thought they would enjoy a dessert made of fruit and nearly one-third reported feeling they received "too little" amounts of vegetables [with meals].

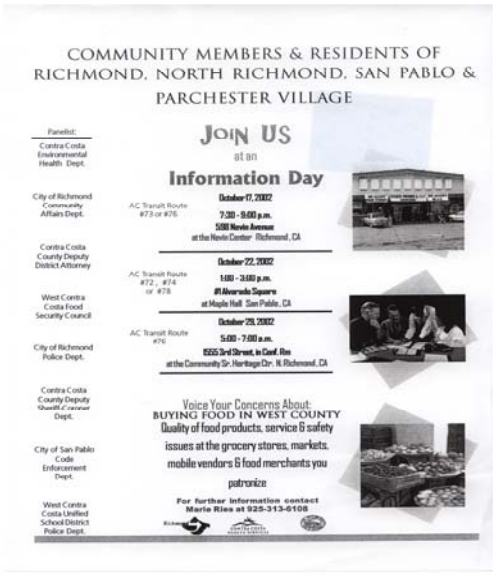
Unfortunately, they were unable to administer the corresponding post-test to measure changes from the nutrition education due to scheduling challenges at the school. In appraising the nutrition component, the program gauged that providing the nutrition education in combination with hands-on application, they were able to both increase the knowledge of and improve acceptance about less familiar foods among the boys who participated in the program.

In the third year of the project, Contra Costa Health Services collaborated with a professor from Cornell University to pilot test a curriculum she had developed with the youth at Orin Allen. Her course integrated nutrition education, cooking skills, and gardening activities. At the same time, the school started a catering training program facilitated by the home economics teacher. This program complemented the nutrition education imparted to the youth participants and the gardening program begun by Contra Costa Health Services. As part of their analysis, the Cornell team produced a report in which they determined that a substantial amount of money could be saved by the school with further development of the garden and increasing its coordination with the school kitchen and culinary program. This robust program could contribute to improving the nourishment of residents.

Youth learning cooking skills

Consumer and Merchant Education

In addition to the gardening and nutrition education conducted at OAYRH, the project aimed to increase knowledge about healthy eating and food safety for the broader population of West Contra Costa County. To do this they facilitated traditional educational workshops for residents and distributed materials on a variety of healthy eating topics during produce giveaway events in priority neighborhoods, North Richmond and Parchester Village. They also created a brochure in cooperation with the County's Environmental Health (CCEH) Department to promote tips on safe shopping, such as looking for food expiration dates. The brochure, which was translated into Spanish, also included instruction about how to contact CCEH as well as how to file a complaint with the CCEH.


COMMUNITY MEMBERS & RESIDENTS OF
RICHMOND, NORTH RICHMOND, SAN PABLO &
PARCHESTER VILLAGE

JOIN US
at an
Information Day

Voice Your Concerns About:
BUYING FOOD IN WEST COUNTY
Quality of food products, service & safety issues at the grocery stores, markets, mobile vendors & food merchants you patronize

For further information contact
Marie Ries at 925-313-6108

Food Safety Workshop Invitation Flyer

On a similar vein, the project worked to increase local merchant knowledge of safe food operations with the intent that their customers, who were residents of the area, could benefit from improved health and safety. Using a tactic similar to that implemented with residents, they assembled hands-on workshops facilitated by an environmental health staff person in one of the neighborhoods. They also organized several "information days" hosted by various officials and experts who at each event answered questions from more than 40 store owners, managers, and consumers about local regulations regarding grocery operations and consumer rights.

The project worked to improve food safety at corner stores

They made progress in improving local grocery stores. For example, after a meeting with the project staff, management from FoodsCo (a store in West Contra Costa County) agreed to implement about recommended changes that included making higher quality produce available and implementing some food safety changes.

Contra Costa Environmental Health was represented regularly at West Contra Costa Food Security Council meetings throughout the duration of this project. They are responsible for

inspecting food businesses and resolving consumer complaints against such businesses. They were instrumental in getting several Richmond markets into better compliance with environmental health regulations.

Food Access Intervention Activities

Originally, the project had hoped that the garden at Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Center would turn out an abundance of produce that could be made available to community members. When the yield did not reach expected levels, they explored other potential sources for produce that could be sold to West Contra Costa residents.

They spent the first year of the project planning activities and conducting an assessment. In conjunction with the West Contra Costa Food Security Council (WCCFSC), they conducted a food resource mapping survey in four target areas of West Contra Costa County (Parchester Village, the Iron Triangle, North Richmond, and San Pablo) and developed a corresponding action plan to guide their activities. They surveyed a range of stores, from corner markets to larger chain stores, according to where residents shopped. They assessed store locations and proximity to public transportation, availability of fresh produce, the general condition of the stores, as well as their distance from food assistance programs. Among the notable findings from the survey, they learned that several neighborhoods in the area lacked grocery stores and where there were stores, they often did not sell fresh fruits and vegetables or they offered poor quality produce. The project hoped to establish new markets to improve availability of fresh produce, educate store owners about food safety and facilities operations regulations, and educate consumers about healthy eating behaviors as well as provide them with information about food and market safety concerns.

It was in the process of looking for alternative fruit and vegetable sources that they joined a local collaborative effort. Beginning in 2003, they worked in partnership with several other organizations that had somewhat different goals, but all shared in the aim to provide fresh food to area residents. For instance, one member of the collaboration focused on increasing low-income West Contra Costa residents' access to affordable produce, another focused on increasing regional farmers' direct marketing venues, and yet another focused on making fruits and vegetables accessible to its members and staff.

Description of Partnership

The Farm Fresh Produce Partnership is committed to improving access to the neighborhoods described above and to increase the number of locations for purchasing fresh produce that is of high quality. Partners include EcoVillage, a project of Earth Island Institute, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), Kaiser Permanente Richmond Medical Center, and Contra Costa Public Health's Community Wellness & Prevention Program. The following is a brief description of the key partners and their contribution to the farm stand effort.

EcoVillage Farm Learning Center: EcoVillage's mission is to "create a healthy sustainable environment and a just society through programs which teach people about the

interconnectedness between all ecological and social systems, and provides them with the knowledge, skills, and encouragement needed to live healthy lives and be responsible citizens."

EcoVillage's role in the produce stand effort included:

- Setting up and operating the weekly produce stands in two Richmond neighborhoods
- Managing the produce stand cash flow
- Procuring the produce for weekly sales
- Distributing the unsold produce to charitable organizations

Kaiser Permanente-Richmond Medical Center: Kaiser Permanente is America's leading integrated health plan, serving 8.2 million members in 9 states and the District of Columbia. The Richmond Medical Center is one of 17 Kaiser Permanente medical centers in the Northern California Region. The Richmond and Oakland Medical Centers together serve the East Bay Area, which encompasses 11 cities and municipalities within Alameda County and the western part of Contra Costa County. The Richmond medical center employs 116 physicians and 960 employees and serves 74,000 members.

Kaiser's role in the produce stand effort includes:

- Providing funding through direct grants and "broccoli bucks" – a promotion to encourage members and staff to shop at the farm stand
- Conducting internal promotion with members and staff
- Problem solving support through provision of space for and attendance at monthly advisory committee meetings

Community Wellness & Prevention Program

The Community Wellness & Prevention Program (CW&PP) of Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) provides staffing, management, and other resources for this project. The philosophy of CW&PP is founded on an interdisciplinary approach to public health that includes policy advocacy, community mobilization, organizational change, coalition building, provider training, and community and individual education. Known as the "Spectrum of Prevention," this framework encourages public health practitioners to address wellness and prevention through multiple channels simultaneously.

Specific roles in the farm stand effort include:

- Staffing the advisory committee
- Bi-lingual outreach - distribution of fliers, presentations at community meetings, articles in newsletters, media publicity, etc.
- Providing significant funding
- Assisting with resource development
- Consumer relations – surveys to determine desired types of produce, satisfaction with farm stand, etc.; and problem solving

Each of these organizations brought differing expertise and actively contributed to a range of tasks in the effort to bring farm stands to the region. For instance, CW&PP helped to evaluate and select the produce stand subcontractor (Eco-Village Farm Learning Center) and

implemented a PR and marketing plan, CAFF served as the fiscal agent and recruited local farmers to sell produce, and KPRMC provided seed funding for the stand and initiated a "Broccoli Bucks" shopping incentive program.

New farm stand in Richmond

By the end of February 2004, the collaborative's hard work came to fruition as it opened two mobile produce stands in priority areas of West Contra Costa County to increase residents' access to fresh fruits and vegetables. One was in North Richmond near the Missionary Baptist Church and the other at the Richmond Kaiser Permanente facility. Since then, the mobile farm stands have been open weekly at the sites to sell produce. Interest was high, as most shoppers reported coming to the stand weekly or two to three times each month.

In July 2004, the project conducted an assessment in which they conducted intercept-surveys of 58 shoppers at the produce stands. As seen in Table 1, 29 shoppers were surveyed in North Richmond and 29 were surveyed at the Richmond Kaiser. At both sites, the majority of those surveyed were female (79% in North Richmond and 62% at Kaiser). The racial/ethnic distribution for the North Richmond survey included mostly African Americans (59%) and Latinos (38%). The distribution for the Richmond Kaiser was more widely distributed among racial groups (41% white, 21% African American, 17% Latino, 14% Asian, and 7% other ethnicity). This range was likely a reflection of Kaiser's staff/patient base. Most shoppers reported that the mobile stands contributed to their increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. When asked about the benefit of the stand, North Richmond stand shoppers frequently cited that the stand's proximity to their home and Kaiser Richmond stand customers repeatedly cited the stands' easy access and the freshness of the produce. Similarly, there was some variation between the sites when shoppers were asked about the importance of various issues when it came to purchasing fruits and vegetables. The most important factors for North Richmond shoppers were taste and price and the least important were the growing method (organic) and where the produce was grown. For Richmond Kaiser shoppers, the most important issue related to a purchase was taste and the least important was where it was grown. The variety of fruits and vegetables available at the stand was of moderate importance to shoppers of both stands.


Farm stand growers and shopper

Table 1: Farm Fresh Produce Shopper Survey Results[3]

Survey Element	North Richmond (NR)		Kaiser Richmond (KP)			
Total Surveys (N)	29 – 100%		29 – 100%			
Female	79%		62%			
Male	21%		38%			
African American	59%		21%			
Asian	0%		14%			
Latino	38%		17%			
White	4%		41%			
Other ethnicity	0%		7%			
# reporting farm stands increased fruit & vegetable intake	86%		76% (22)			
Most frequently cited benefit	Close to home		Easy access, fresh			
Most desired information at stands	Recipes		Recipes			
Interest in attending a cooking demo.	34%		28%			
Importance of issues related to F/V purchase (N=28)	1-2 (most important)		3 (moderate)		4-5 (least important)	
Survey Element	**North Richmond (NR)**		**Kaiser Richmond (KP)**			
	NR	KP	NR	KP	NR	KP
• Taste	**41%**	**38%**	11%	14%	4%	5%
• Variety	9%	14%	57%	34%	13%	19%
• Growing method (organic)	9%	14%	4%	7%	**39.5%**	**33%**
• Where it's grown	0%	10%	21%	28%	**39.5%**	26%
• Price	**41%**	24%	7%	17%	4%	17%
Total	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Source: (Melody Steeples [msteeple@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us] email, August 15, 2005).

They planned to open a third mobile produce stand the following year, 2005, at Parchester Village. As of the writing of this report, the collaborative was "Still problem solving and trying to get better participation at the original two sites", according to the former food security project director, (Melody Steeples [msteeple@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us] email, August 15, 2005).

While the primary focus for the project was creating a regular venue to provide fresh produce, they also participated in several other activities. The project hosted produce donation days in Parchester Village and a seedling giveaway at a Richmond elementary school, and Lincoln Elementary. These events improved food access and also served a related purpose: they provided a forum to promote the farm stands and let residents know about them. Produce donations for these events came from Brentwood area farmers. According to project director Melody Steeples, (Melody Steeples [msteeple@hsd.co.contra-costa.ca.us] email, August 15, 2005), more than 50 families participated at each event and took home at least one grocery bag full of produce[3]. The

first produce give away was in North Richmond, the second in Parchester Village. Advance promotion was in the form of remarks given and posters hung at the events. The seedling give-away was sponsored by Rubicon Programs, which provides housing, mental health, and employment services programs in Richmond, as well as programs in Pittsburg.

Besides reaching their goal of simply making the produce available, the mobile produce stands have proven to be successful over time and it appears they will continue to sustain the effort of making fresh fruits and vegetables more readily available on a weekly basis for neighborhood residents.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Looking back at the end of the funding cycle, Contra Costa Health Services shared a variety of lessons learned in carrying out this project. The advice which they dubbed, "if I had to do it over again..." provides important insights for other groups thinking about or currently tackling similar projects.

As the first activity that they took on, the garden experience at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility offered a myriad of challenges. Reflecting on the events, they identified several contributing factors to a successful experience in such a garden project. For instance, although they had won the support of the OAYRF on-site superintendent, the project staff surmised that their work might have been facilitated had they also acquired the buy-in of administrators in a higher position. Had they sought the support of the chief of the probation department, other staff in the facility might have more fully welcomed the project and helped with the activities. Then, in hiring staff to carry out such a project, they recommended ensuring that there is a good match between the applicant and the skills and competencies required for the job. In their case, the garden manager was competent with backyard gardening, but was ill-equipped to handle some of the challenges of high volume production. And, they advised creating a written record of performance indicators so that expectations are clear and employees are knowledgeable about consequences if the expectations are not met. On a related note, they also recommended negotiating detailed memorandums of understanding (MOU) with partnering agencies to clarify expectations and responsibilities and to outline a process for resolving disputes. While potentially cumbersome, they felt that working out the MOUs and putting this on paper was advisable.

The project also faced several logistical problems that would have been difficult to anticipate. For example, the discovery of high boron content of the water used for irrigation not only killed some of the plants thus delaying growing production, but also meant that they needed to find an alternate source for water. Although there was general support at OAYRF to involve the boys in working on the garden, the residents had quite busy schedules and the gardening was frequently relegated to a lower priority. The gardening time was frequently interrupted as boys were shuttled to counseling appointments, and medical appointments. Throughout, they found that eliciting regular participation from the youth was a challenge. Moreover, when the boys were present, discipline issues sometimes supplanted garden and nutrition education instruction. Then, as funding for the garden project dissipated, attempts were made to procure additional funding to

sustain the garden project, but several proposals were not funded. For instance, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP) had awarded them a grant, but the funds were later withdrawn because the agency was struggling financially and did not have the funds to support the grant.

The original hope was that the garden project at OAYRF would yield sufficient produce to stock the weekly stands. While this did not happen, they did discover an alternative way to stock the stands with fresh produce. Attracting local farmers to participate in the mobile markets was successful due to the collaboration they initiated with other like-minded groups. A successful outcome of this collaboration was the formation of the Farm Fresh Produce Partnership. In thinking about the partnership that was developed to carry out the produce stands, the project reiterated the importance of the relationship in realizing their goal while remembering the challenges it posed. They advised that all parties should clarify and prioritize their common objectives, so all are clear about which objectives are critical to the success and which can be negotiated. They also recommended checking in with project partners periodically as the project unfolds to monitor goals and ascertain if any have progressed over time. In their experience, they found that while partners shared many objectives, there were some notable differences. And, while all of the objectives were worthwhile, they were not always compatible. In their final report the project explained,

> For example, we all agreed on increasing access to fresh produce in limited resource Richmond communities. However, we did not agree on 1) selling produce at the lowest possible price, both to make it more affordable for residence as well as increasing the project's chances for sustainability; 2) procuring produce from sources nearby the organization contracted to manage the produce stands in order to streamline operations, and again, to increase the project's chances for sustainability; 3) using only direct marketing relationships in order to support local farmers and strengthen the local food system; and 4) preference for organic/sustainably grown produce over conventional in order to protect the ecosystem and consumers.

Hence, members of the collaboration needed to prioritize concerns together to make it work. In the end, one of the partners pulled out from the partnership after having achieved their own primary objectives.

Once the produce stands were established, some minor challenges continued. One difficulty involved ensuring consistent variety and affordability of produce at the stands. Another was attempting to conduct on-site "user friendly" cooking demonstrations in accordance with environmental health regulations. The project described a trajectory of "growing pains" for the farm stands, but also noted that every week the operations improved.

The last bit of sage advice Contra Costa Health Services offered to others taking on a similar project was to "plan on projects taking 2-3 times as long and being twice as challenging as you think they should." To address this they recommended that others "Set fewer objectives and pour all you have into them."

Conclusions

The Contra Costa County project was largely successful in their endeavor, but reaching their goal was not without hurdles. Things did not always go as they had anticipated and they were forced to change course several times and make adjustments. Their capacity to assess the needs of the community in conjunction with their ability to work within realistic and evolving parameters were elements that helped them reach their goal of improving food security for West Contra Costa residents. As situations changed, such as when the high-boron content was discovered in the irrigation water or when the garden did not yield sufficient produce to supply residents, the project was quick to search alternatives that solved the problem while keeping an eye to their ultimate goal. And, because the project had a single, over-arching goal, they found themselves in a flexible position whereby they could implement creative solutions that, while changing the course of the project (i.e. from garden to market stands), remained true to improving access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Aside from sheer ingenuity, one element that helped them to surmount several hurdles was their success in leveraging additional foundation, donation, and grant funding. These sources allowed them to solve urgent problems and sometimes go beyond their original scope of work (such as with the purchase of the water tanks or the donation of the tractor or the funds to pay the garden manager).

The project invested a lot of time and energy into the garden and nutrition education components at OAYRF. The "fruits of their labor" were in some ways limited to the boys at the facility. It seems clear that they garnered some important achievements; the boys gained knowledge about gardening practices and learned about the importance and elements of nutritious eating as well as benefited from the produce they were able to grow. And, while the garden never reached a scale of production that would have enabled it to supply area residents, the experience was important for the boys as well as the project. The project learned some important lessons in the process of carrying out the garden activity and they transferred those learnings directly to their other activities. As the project turned toward establishing mobile produce stands, they carried with them lessons realized from the garden project. As a result, the learning curve helped catapult them to quicker successes as they moved forward.

The project collaborated with a range of private and public agencies who became members of the Farm Fresh Produce Partnership. Contra Costa Health Services contributed staffing, management, and resource development to the partnership, while other members contributed funding and procurement of the produce to be sold at the farm stands. The project was not only successful in achieving their outcome of establishing a new venue for produce in the community, but they exceeded their goal. They were able to add **two** mobile produce stands that served the community. The stands remained open on a weekly basis and residents shopped at them regularly. Their efforts added additional food access points for neighborhoods that had limited availability and quality of produce documented. One of the most significant outcomes may be that the majority of the Contra Costa County shoppers reported that the mobile stands contributed to their increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Due to the collaborative effort by multiple engaged agencies, it appears that the stands will be sustained into the future, even as the *Network* funding cycle ends.

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SECTION VI: Farm Fresh Choice

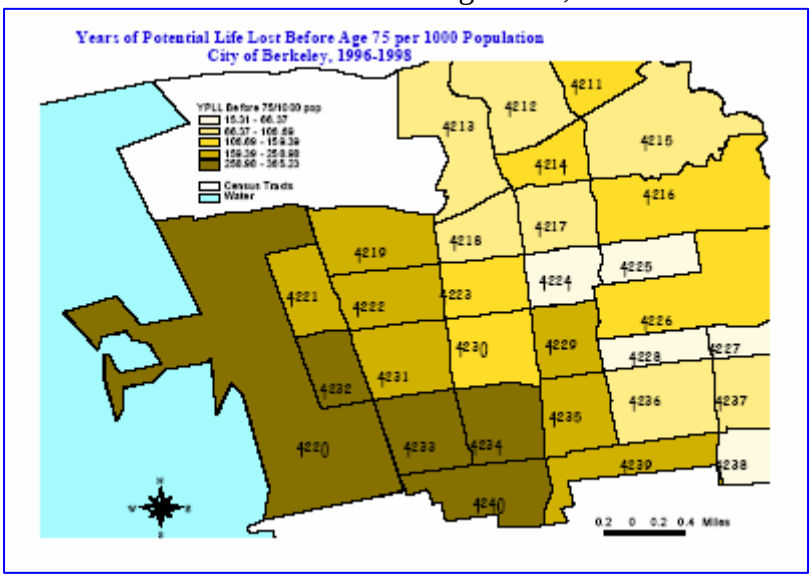
FARM FRESH CHOICE

Project Location and Background

The Farm Fresh Choice (FFC) project based its program in Berkeley, California, a city with a land area of ten square miles located across the bay from San Francisco, and with a population of approximately 100,000 residents.[1] According to the City of Berkeley website, Berkeley residents most enjoy about their city "the cultural diversity, art, beautiful parks, innovative businesses, and friendliness amongst neighbors."[2]

The project focused on the South and West regions of the city. These neighborhoods are known for their diversity of people and diversity of businesses.[3] The majority of South and West Berkeley residents are working class people of color. The neighborhoods are also known for having particularly high poverty rates and limited access to fresh, quality food. Compared to the rest of Berkeley, the South and West areas are dominated by liquor stores, fast food outlets, and low-cost, processed food warehouses. During the course of the project, Farm Fresh Choice discovered that in one eleven block stretch, the liquor stores outnumbered the grocery stores by a ratio of nine to one.

The regions of South and West Berkeley were chosen, not only because their residents have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, but also because of the poor health status of their residents. The map at left, from the City of Berkeley Health Status Report (2001), depicts the years of potential life lost before age 75 per 1000 people in each Berkeley census tract. One can see that the census tracts in South and West Berkeley, which are darkly shaded, are the regions with the highest number of premature deaths each year.[4] The life expectancy of residents living in South and West Berkeley, according to the 1999 City of Berkeley Health Status Report,



was 20 years lower than that of residents in the more affluent neighborhoods of North Berkeley, Claremont Hills, and Berkeley Hills.[5]
Additionally, the 2001 Health Status Report revealed significant health disparities among Berkeley residents based on race. In particular, health data showed that African Americans in Berkeley have significantly higher death rates from preventable diseases like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes which have been linked to nutrition and lifestyle. The age-adjusted death rate (which eliminates the effects of the age distribution of a population) for African Americans living in Berkeley was three times that of the white population. This rate was even higher than the disparity nationwide in which the death rate for African Americans was 1.5 times that of whites.[4]

Farm Fresh Choice evolved from a local community movement dedicated to ensuring food access and whose aim is to address the health disparities affecting South and West Berkeley residents. The program was created by the Berkeley Food Policy Council (BFPC), a coalition founded in 1999 comprised of residents, non-profits, and city agencies committed to changing the local food system and improving food security.

The program was adopted by the Ecology Center in Berkeley. According to their website, the Ecology Center's mission is to address "the public need for unbiased, non-commercial information about household products, ecologically-sensitive methods of living, and large toxic threats to society and alternatives to those threats." They are a non-profit, 501c3 which also oversees the local farmers' markets, operates the Berkeley curbside recycling program, publishes an environmental quarterly magazine and provides a variety of other information for the community.

Early on in the project, in order to better understand the specific barriers to healthy eating, Farm Fresh Choice organized several forums at which South and West Berkeley residents could share their appraisals of the situation. In the process, FFC revealed four community-identified barriers to healthy eating consistently expressed. They were: 1) access and location, 2) choice to meet individual tastes, 3) culturally appropriate options and culturally relevant outreach, and 4) cost. After the forums, FFC volunteers surveyed 300 South Berkeley residents to determine peoples' preferences in food purchasing. FFC incorporated the knowledge of the community-driven barriers and preferences to inform the development of the project going forward.

In meeting the needs of the community, FFC created a hybrid model for their program which combined several effective food distribution and promotion models. They brought together aspects from direct farmers-to-consumer marketing, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), farmers' markets, cooperative buying, and wholesale purchasing.

Project Goals

The Farm Fresh Choice project created a mission statement which encapsulated their core approach. It states, "To improve the health of residents in South and West Berkeley by increasing access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables and to support local, sustainable family farms by linking them to urban communities."

In planning their strategy, Farm Fresh Choice articulated three main goals and corresponding objectives. These provided them the milestones by which to measure their progress and determine success.

Goal 1: To provide and increase access to low-cost culturally appropriate fresh fruits and vegetables among low-income, African American and Latino residents of South and West Berkeley

> **Objective 1:** By September 30, 2004, low-cost, culturally appropriate, regionally grown produce will be available at 3-5 locations in South and West Berkeley for approximately 150 low-income individuals on a weekly basis from at least 7 limited resource farmers of color

Goal 2: To increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among low-income African American and Latino residents of South and West Berkeley through a variety of social marketing techniques

> **Objective 1:** By September 30, 2004, a minimum of 800 low-income African American and Latino residents living in South and West Berkeley will receive nutrition education, referrals, and social and environmental support for increased fresh fruit and vegetable consumption, of whom, at least 15 % (120) will increase their daily fruit and vegetable intake
>
> **Objective 2:** By September 30, 2003, a minimum of 150 low-income residents of South and West Berkeley will increase their consumption of fresh, culturally appropriate, locally grown fruits and vegetables

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

Farm Fresh Choice set out to provide nutrition education to the low-income African American and Latino residents living in South and West Berkeley. FFC expressed this aim in their first objective for their second goal in which they proposed to provide "nutrition education, referrals, and social and environmental support for increased fresh fruit and vegetable consumption."

One component of their project was to provide regular cooking classes each year at four different after-school centers in the priority neighborhoods. The classes were bilingual in English and Spanish and the recipes demonstrated were both healthy and culturally relevant. Examples of

recipes included things like raw vegetable salad with cilantro and lemon vinaigrette, beet-green pasta, potato cabbage soup, seasonal vegetable enchiladas, and hand-made tortillas.

Children and their parents actively participated in creating the recipes and left the classes armed with nutrition information and copies of the recipes they had prepared to enable them to recreate the dishes at home. One child who participated in the classes shared what she discovered about trying new, healthy foods, "Today I made a salad with some lettuce, walnuts, mandarin, and some lemon and I learned that...if you put something [in a recipe that] you think might not taste good....it really tastes good."[6] And, a parent of another participant attested to the changes the class had made in her son's food preferences as well as her own cooking,

> He [Diego, my son] got very excited. He wants me to be here [at the cooking classes] every Friday and the most wonderful thing is that I'm learning too because he always brings something home and says, 'You know what we did today mommy?' and I say, 'Oh good, salad!' That is what I want them to eat and sometimes I find it really difficult, myself, to find recipes to prepare salad. So, I think this is just great.[6]

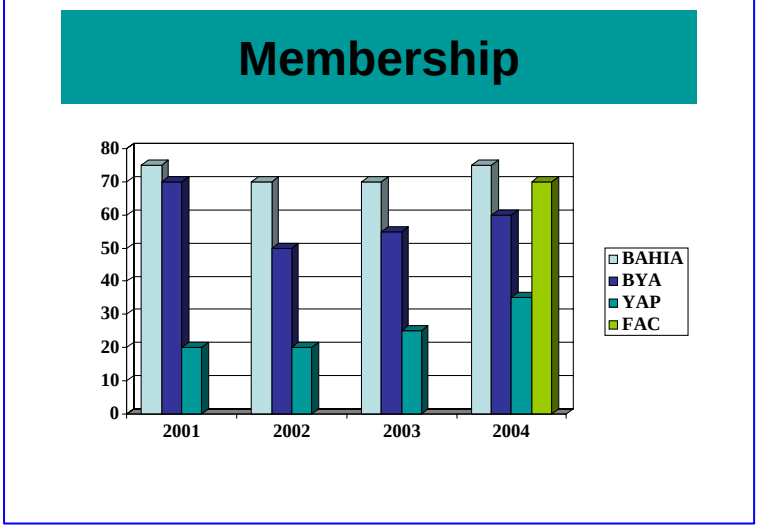
During the project period, over one hundred residents engaged regularly in the cooking classes. And in one month alone, during the March 2004 Nutrition Month, FFC conducted four cooking classes and one food demonstration and in the process were able to reach up to 450 children and adults.

In addition to the cooking classes, FFC offered cooking demonstrations and food tastings to further encourage people to consume fruits and vegetables. In another forum for nutrition education, FFC supplied the staff at after-school programs with instruction about how to integrate nutrition education into their snack programs. During each year of the project they hosted at least six cooking demonstrations.

Food Access Intervention Activities

Membership Program

FFC's main activities involved the provision of fresh, locally-grown produce to residents of South and West Berkeley neighborhoods. They developed a unique approach of sourcing and distributing goods from regional farmers. The model was based on the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) approach in which residents agreed to purchase weekly allotments of



produce, thereby ensuring a regular stream of business for the farmers who, then, passed on reduced prices to members. FFC negotiated an MOU with the farmers to secure the affordable prices for its members.


Farm Fresh Choice membership customers

Those who participated in the program committed to purchasing $7 of produce each week and were asked to contribute an annual sliding scale member membership fee of $0-$35 dollars. In order to encourage residents to participate in the program, they also allowed people to purchase the weekly produce without joining as members, as they found that some people were hesitant to make the regular monetary commitment.

More than 350 households joined the membership program. The chart above shows the increase in membership from 2001 to 2004. In total, more than 500 lbs. of produce was delivered to members as a whole. This respectable volume increased access to low-cost produce for many residents. Over time, the project noted that they were able to sell more fruits and vegetables despite maintaining a level membership. This indicates that the concept caught on for those participating in the program because they increased their purchase amounts, and presumably their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Those who joined as members of FFC's CSA program were offered opportunities to visit farms free of charge to learn more about where their food came from.


Produce Stand Vendor

Moreover, the program helped generate approximately $100,000 in sales in the four years for the participating farmers. The fifteen minority, family farmers supplying produce to the program work small farms within a two hour radius of Berkeley. Consequently, the pesticide-free produce they supply for FFC members is usually picked within a day of when it is sold. Operating a small farm can be a difficult prospect financially, so one incentive for the farmers to participate was the secure customer base. Farmer, Maria Inez, whose parents and grandparents were also farmers explains (translated from Spanish),[7] "Because we are small farmers often without the opportunities to enter into more profitable U.S. markets, which is particularly true of Latino farmers for whom it is even more difficult, we end up working more directly with the community and we need the support of the community." She went on to praise

the Farm Fresh Choice program, "For me it has been a very positive experience, especially getting to know the people who eat the food that I grow and I've also learned a lot more and need to learn more about my community, and the urban communities' food needs so that I can better work to meet the needs."[7] Indeed, the relationship between the farmers and Farm Fresh Choice was one of mutual respect and collaboration, as evidenced by letters of support written by the farmers.

Produce Stands

Farm Fresh Choice's primary produce distribution route for South and West Berkeley neighborhoods was the development of produce stands located at child care centers. Beginning in 2001, they set up contracts with four centers that serve primarily African American and Latino families to permit FFC to operate regular fruit and vegetable stands at the sites and to allow them to conduct outreach to parents and children at the centers. The stands provided fresh produce at below retail prices as well as free nutritional brochures, farm fact sheets, food sampling, cooking demonstrations, and recipes.

The first stand opened in July 2001 at the Bay Area Hispanic Institute for Advancement (BAHIA, Inc.), a bilingual after-school center for children from age two to ten. The Site Supervisor at BAHIA, Inc. stated,


Farm Fresh Choice Produce Stand

> Farm Fresh Choice gives us access to a valuable community resource that provides affordable, convenient, and nutritionally rich produce from local farmers to our child care centers' families and community. The program also promotes awareness of the farmers' market concept and of local food systems to our under-served Latino and Black American community...In other words, FFC has provided a model for our youth and families to identify with our farmers and to appreciate farmers' roles, farmers' labor, our environment, our community, our food system, and especially our own health.

With the BAHIA, Inc. produce stand up and running, in August 2001, FFC started a second stand at the Berkeley Youth Alternatives Center (BYA), a program which serves at-risk Berkeley youth. Then, the following month they opened their third produce stand at the Recreation Center in South Berkeley for the Young Adult Project (YAP). YAP is a community based organization

administered by the City of Berkeley Parks and Recreation and Waterfront Department which aims to create a healthy and safe social environment for youth. Later in May, 2004, they started a fourth stand at the Francis Albrier Community Center in San Pablo Park.

The produce stands at the various child care centers encouraged food security and served to introduce children, youth, parents, and other neighborhood residents to new fruits and vegetables. The produce was easily accessible and affordable, thus encouraging people to buy and consume it. When asked about his favorite foods, one child at an FFC stand neglected the responses one might expect, such as pizza, hot dogs, or ice cream. He provided evidence for the kinds of healthy foods children are willing and interested in eating if only given the opportunity. He responded, "My name is Xavier and my favorite food is [sic] carrots, broccoli, apples, and oranges and I like collard greens too....When you eat the collard greens it puts a little more flavor in it." Similarly, an adult shopping at another FFC stand added his support for healthy greens. When asked about how he planned to use the mustard and collard greens he was purchasing, he responded "I cook them up real good and eat them even faster."

Farm Fresh Choice Shoppers

During each year of the project, FFC served more than 600 residents with fresh, affordable fruits and vegetables via the produce stands. And, any produce that was not sold each week was donated to after-school snack programs or used for FFC's cooking and tasting events for more immediate consumption. The snacks fed 300 children and youth at the school sites. Aside from the youth benefiting, the staff of the centers reported that even within their own families consumption of fruits and vegetables increased in priority, while consumption of "junk foods" diminished.

Outreach and Promotion

Each of the four produce stands were located outdoors and staffed by teams comprised of teens and adults. Farm Fresh Choice hired, trained, and compensated 25 local residents to work as Outreach Workers. As part of a capacity building component for their program, FFC developed the expertise of their Outreach Workers who attended forums on food security, nutrition, marketing strategies, outreach techniques, public speaking, and leadership development. The Outreach Workers also conducted activities including sales at the weekly produce stands, cooking demonstrations, and nutrition education activities. In addition to educating and engaging the community while working the stands, the Outreach Workers, themselves, were altered by their participation in the program. One FFC Youth Outreach Worker recorded in her journal the following tribute, "Farm Fresh Choice has totally raised health awareness in my entire

family...For Thanksgiving we had so many vegetable dishes that I had to question whether or not I was eating with the same family!"[6]

FFC conducted outreach and promotion through regular community presentations, cooking demonstrations, food sampling events, cooking classes, and nutrition education events. They organized a "Party for Your Health" fair as well as other annual celebrations where they provided those in attendance with referrals and information about health and nutrition. They reached over 2,000 residents each year through informational booths and food tables at cultural celebrations, such as Juneteenth Festival, community block parties, Back to School fairs, and Cinco de Mayo celebrations. These events were well attended by members of the community.

In total, FFC reached 6,400 residents through work accomplished as per their outreach plan.

Food Stamps Intervention Activities

A related component to the Farm Fresh Choice program was the Ecology Center's coordination of the California Farmers' Market Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Implementation and Promotion Project. This project received separate funding from the *Network* to carry out their activities. They assisted markets in setting up these systems promoting farmers' market EBT access to EBT Cardholders. In lieu of paper food stamps, California now only issues a debit card (also known as an "EBT card" or a "food stamp card") which offers electronic benefits with the swipe of the card when purchasing food at authorized grocery stores. Farmers' markets have been slower to accept EBT, because they rarely have access to electricity and phone lines, which are necessary for the system to operate. To work around this barrier, farmers' markets have allowed eligible vendors to sell to EBT cardholders using a Central Point of Sale (POS) Device and a scrip system.

The Ecology Center's program facilitated the most successful conversion of paper food stamp coupons to EBT at farmers' markets in the U.S. They have continued to share their expertise in coordinating the conversion of other farmers' markets targeted for their food stamp redemption throughout the state. As of July 2004, 62 farmers markets in 11 California counties made the necessary changes to accept EBT cards using a central POS device and a scrip system. The *Network* funded the production and distribution of guides and templates for EBT redemption at farmers' markets, including mailings to over 400 certified farmers' markets throughout the state and outreach mailings to over 200,000 food stamp households to inform EBT cardholders and food stamp eligible households about access to the markets[8].

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Farm Fresh Choice proved to be quite successful in their project, but their successes came with the inevitable challenges. One of the initial barriers, and reasons for implementing the project in the first place, continued to make the project's work more challenging. FFC found themselves having to compete with the proliferation of fast food restaurants, markets selling primarily junk food, and commercial media that sought residents' attention and promoted unhealthy eating habits. In getting the farm stands off the ground, the project found that they had to solicit the buy-in from the after-school centers that served as hosts. This required them to thoroughly explain and instill enthusiasm for the project. And, once centers signed on to host the stands, the project found they had to seek out additional funding for transportation to shuttle the produce to the distribution sites. FFC found that collecting membership fees for the CSA program was challenging as many families preferred to purchase the fruits and vegetables without paying the fee. In the end, they allowed this practice so the membership program itself would not become a barrier. Once the operational pieces were in place, they faced the difficult task of changing purchasing and consumption habits of residents. Some shoppers readily made the change, but others were accustomed to shopping at local, warehouse stores and were reluctant to shop, instead, at the farm stands. The project found it difficult to reach those families who had not shifted to purchase from the produce stands. Membership levels remained fairly constant during the project period, though purchase amounts had increased, the FFC stands had not yet become a place where most neighborhood residents came for food.

In working through the various challenges, the FFC project learned some vital lessons. At the end of the four year project period, they shared these insights. In retrospect, the FFC team determined that both the evaluation process and any policy advocacy should be initiated early on in the funding cycle to allow enough time to adequately address these activities. Early on, the project found it valuable to spend time to investigate and accurately understand the meaning of food "access" and its corresponding barriers for the residents of South and West Berkeley. When working with food, they reiterated the importance of quality, quantity, and placement for a successful sales program. They also learned the necessity of engaging with potential partners, the after-school sites, and cultivating community buy-in. To reach their objectives, they found that utilizing focus groups and actively participating within collaborations were worthwhile endeavors. Maintaining a knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff, including Project Coordinators who oversaw the essential activities and the twenty-five outreach workers were integral to their success. Another successful strategy, they discovered, was implementing a variety of activities. But, taking on a variety of activities can be challenging to finance, so they leveraged funds to acquire additional grant awards. They supplemented their *Network* funding with grants from the USDA, the S.F. AIDS Foundation, and the City of Berkeley.

Conclusions

Through their various activities, Farm Fresh Choice altered the social and environmental factors that can serve as barriers to good nutrition. They focused their efforts in two neighborhoods, South and West Berkeley, in which food security issues have been documented. They investigated the barriers for local residents utilizing a community-based and community-driven assessment. Then they focused their program on those identified needs in order to improve access to fresh produce for local residents.

One of their project goals was to increase access to low-cost culturally appropriate fruits and vegetables for low-income, African American and Latino residents of South and West Berkeley. They had hoped to make produce available at a few locations weekly for approximately 150 individuals. In fact, they opened four produce stands at after-school programs in the priority neighborhoods. Through their CSA program, they encouraged 250 residents to join as members and over time maintained this consumer base. These residents were provided with weekly produce in exchange for a small fee, thus enabling them access to locally-grown, fresh produce that, previously, had been more difficult to obtain. Additionally, over 600 customers purchased produce from the weekly stands. These numbers provide evidence of their success. Before the existence of the stands, all of these residents would have traveled outside of the neighborhood for produce; purchased poor-quality, expensive produce from markets in the community; or gone without the fruits and vegetables. The access to quality, fresh foods has very likely increased consumption of fruits and vegetables among participating community members. Even the quotes within this report, from participating children, adults, and Outreach Workers, support the extent to which those who participated in the program both tried, and enjoyed their new found access to fresh produce.

Another goal of the project was to increase consumption of produce through the implementation of social marketing techniques. They set out to provide at least 800 residents with nutrition education, referrals, and social and environmental support for increased fruit and vegetable consumption. In fact, they exceeded their goal. They served approximately 1,400 residents each year through their outreach activities.

Throughout the 4-year grant, the project staff worked closely with the *Network* evaluation consultants to develop methods to assess residents' satisfaction with the farm stands, nutrition knowledge, and increase in consumption of fruits and vegetables.

In achieving these goals, Farm Fresh Choice developed a sophisticated system which linked farmers, Outreach Workers, and residents in the communities. They worked with small farmers to find them regular customers, thus ensuring a steady stream of income which, in turn, secured fair prices for customers. They enriched the capacity of the local community by training resident Outreach Workers who worked to engage other residents and provide nutrition education, such as culturally relevant, healthy recipes. They helped residents to access the fresh produce by making bulk purchases and transporting the foods to local sites. In addition, they increased the availability and affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables for residents of South and West Berkeley.

In October 2004, the University of California-Berkeley Chancellor, Robert Birgeneau, honored the Farm Fresh Choice project, during its fifth annual University and Community Partners Recognition reception, as one of six community programs that embody the public service spirit and goals of the University of California, Berkeley. The project was recognized for its efforts to improve access to and choice in fresh produce for families in lower-income areas of Oakland and Berkeley through weekly mini produce stands at childcare centers. The project was also recognized for its partnerships with UC Berkeley's Center for Family and Community Health in the School of Public Health, the Center for Weight and Health in the College of Natural Resources, and the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics in the College of Natural Resources. [9]


Project coordinator Karina Serna (center) at UC-B reception.

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SECTION VII: Fresno Metro Ministry

Fresno Metro Ministry's Hunger and Nutrition Project

Project Location and Background

The Fresno Metro Ministry is located in the city of Fresno and serves those living in the broader region of Fresno County. According the 2000 U.S. Census, Fresno County is home to approximately 800,000 residents.[1] Since that time, the population has grown as Fresno County's growth rate has outpaced the California average growth rate.[1] In fact, it is one of the fastest growing, largest, and most diverse counties in the entire state.[2] Over half of those people living in the county make their homes in the larger cities of Fresno (California's 6th largest city) and Clovis.[2]

Fresno County is situated near the center of the San Joaquin Valley, towards the middle of the state. The valley's climate and fertile soil make it ideal for farming. Because of the array of fruits and vegetables that are grown there, the region is sometimes referred to as "the nation's salad bowl." In fact, it is the most productive agricultural county in the entire country.[2] Yet, paradoxically, many people in Fresno County suffer from food insecurity.

Findings from California's Health Interview Survey (CHIS 2001), California's largest representative health survey, show that the highest rates of food insecurity are in many of California's northern rural counties. (Note: this survey does not include households without telephones nor the homeless population). In fact, among all the counties in the state, data show that Fresno County has the second-highest rate of food insecurity (35.7% of low-income households). Neighboring Tulare County has the highest rate (41.4%).[3] According to Fresno Metro Ministry 83,000 adults in Fresno County are food insecure, and at least 26,000 are also hungry.[4] The high rates of food insecurity in the region are attributed to poverty, disability, unemployment, and underemployment (including seasonal work).

Fresno Metro Ministry, an ecumenical and interfaith nonprofit, has been engaged in problem-solving, advocacy, and community organizing in Fresno County since its founding in 1970. At the time of its inception two congregations merged with the intent "to create ways to serve the population by solving problems and relating the Church and religious institutions to the needs of the population." Since that time, they have molded a new mission statement that asserts, "Fresno Metro Ministry is a faith-based organization that works to create a more respectful, compassionate, and inclusive community that promotes social and economic justice."[5] From their Christian-focused base, they have expanded to work with other faith communities with like-minded values such as love, justice, forgiveness, hope, and value for all humanity. According to Fresno Metro Ministry's website, some of what they do to fill this mission includes:

- increasing health care access for the unserved and underserved that is appropriate medically, geographically, culturally, and linguistically and improve community health;
- decreasing Valley hunger and malnutrition;
- building caring relationships and understanding across diverse cultural and religious backgrounds;

- supporting human services that strengthen families; and
- increasing the role of low-income immigrants and non-immigrants in community advocacy, empowerment, and projects.[5]

Project Goals

Fresno Metro Ministry set out two main goals and six related objectives to complete their project funded by the *Network*. Several of the objectives corresponded with five topic-specific action teams that worked within the Fresno Metro Ministry to dedicate attention and direct activities.

Goal 1: *The Fresno Community Hunger and Nutrition Collaborative will plan, identify, promote, and implement the policy changes and actions needed to see that low-income people in Fresno County will have access to the food and nutrition they need*

> ***Objective 1:*** *Outreach: By October 2003, form a New Leaders for Food Stamps steering committee (composed of at least three Fresnans eligible or using food stamps and seven representatives of community based organizations who work with low-income people) will address barriers and ongoing issues preventing participation in the Food Stamp/EBT Nutrition Program*
>
> ***Objective 2:*** *Community Food Assessment: By November 2003, the Community Food Assessment data will be compiled and a report and recommendations released for review and presentation to Fresno legislators, retailers, agriculture, and community developers. A collaborative will be built from the Community Food Assessment that will become a local Food Policy Council with goals/strategies/and attainable actions for a food secure Fresno by September 2004*
>
> ***Objective 3:*** *Education and Nutrition Access: Through 11 monthly Community Hunger and Nutrition Forums, media releases, and health professional trainings, the public and elected officials will expand their education about the health effects and prevention strategies for obesity, poor diet, and lack of physical activity. This will result in development of administrative and legislative recommendations for the State and Federal government that will result in reducing local barriers to food assistance participation and increase access to fresh produce through Federal Nutrition Programs*
>
> ***Objective 4:*** *Child Nutrition: By September 2004, encourage expansion and utilization of school nutrition programs (including Summer Lunch, School Breakfast, and School Lunch) in both Fresno City and County by at least 10% over 2002-2003 and promote at least 5 new school nutrition policies in 5 school districts that do not have policies. Convene a consortium of Fresno City and Fresno County School Districts that have adopted a School Food/Nutrition Policy in September 2004*
>
> ***Objective 5:*** *By September 2004, expand Child Care Program Nutrition awareness training by targeting 50 low-income child care program.*

Goal 2: *To increase collaborative partnerships to expand nutrition education/physical activity opportunities with food security to low-income families in Fresno*

> ***Objective 1:*** *By September 30, 2004, support community regional and statewide efforts toward nutrition education/physical activity and food security by participating in 1-2 regional coalitions and 3-5 meetings/trainings*

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

Although most of the Fresno Metro Ministry project focused its efforts on advocacy activities, they did provide some nutrition education in Fresno County. For instance, they made speaking engagements and presentations, they engaged print and broadcast media, and they developed and distributed materials about healthy food access, federal nutrition programs, and emergency food to health practitioners. Fresno Metro Ministry expanded education and prevention strategies. They held 11 forums focused on education, nutrition, and the health effects that result from the lack of access to culturally appropriate, nutritious, affordable food.

Food Access Intervention Activities

The Fresno Metro Ministry undertook a multi-dimensional project aimed at improving food security for Fresno County residents. They hosted a total of 47 monthly Forums attended by diverse stakeholders to discuss issues and topics related to hunger and nutrition. The goal of the Forums on Community Hunger and Nutrition was "to increase the utilization of nutritional, culturally appropriate foods in Fresno through collaboration around specific issues and increased access to nutritious food by those who are hungry."[4] Participants in the Forums included over 80 organizations and hundreds of individuals in the region including, but not limited to, consumers, community based organizations, clergy, food policy advocates, providers of emergency food, school personnel, health professionals, elected representatives, as well as low-income persons, youth, and representatives from various ethnic groups.

Figures: Community members of all ages participate in Forums

The Forums led to the development of five organized action teams to more fully address the prominent issues. The teams included the Community Food Assessment (also known as the Fresno Fresh Access Project), the Child Nutrition Task Group, the Senior Nutrition Task Force, the Food Resources (Gleaners) Group, and the Food Stamp Advocacy Group.

Community Food Assessment 'Fresno Fresh Access Project'

The Fresno Metro Ministry set out to conduct a comprehensive Community Food Assessment, called the Fresno Fresh Access Project. They collected data to assess the accessibility and affordability of fresh produce in Fresno County. Early on, as the project got underway, they met with City Council and County Board of Supervisors to solicit their support and they encouraged 30 organizations to pledge their support for the endeavor.

At the writing of their Final Retrospective Progress Report, the Farm Fresh Access Project had conducted two surveys: a retail survey and a consumer survey in two low-income areas in Fresno and in one outlying rural town. Fifty trained neighborhood volunteers and Fresno Metro Ministry's interns administered 75 retail surveys and 375 consumer surveys in five different languages (Russian, Cambodian, Hmong, Spanish, and English). The survey explored where people were getting their food, what kind of food was available, and how much food people were getting on a weekly basis. They also asked about public benefits, transportation, and the kind of changes people would like to see in the food system.

The Fresno Fresh Access Project partnered with the California State University Fresno (CSUF) to form a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team who would analyze their findings. They planned to use the expertise of specialists at CSUF to overlay the retail and consumer survey results onto a base map in order to visually demonstrate how different factors in the food and transportation system affect people's ability and desire to eat fresh produce.

In October 2003, they expanded the project to include, not just select neighborhoods, but all of Fresno County. This expansion, made possible by funding from the USDA Community Food Project, made it the largest Community Food Assessment project in the nation. In November 2003, Fresno Metro Ministry held a press conference to announce the grant award and the Community Food Assessment expansion. They also planned to conduct additional surveys: a pantry survey and a school/community garden survey.

The Fresno Fresh Access Project wrote summaries of provisional findings and three project task groups reviewed the synopses. The project anticipated completing all the surveys in early 2005 (after the *Network* grant funding ended in September 2004) at which time the survey results and recommendations for policy and urban development would be presented to the County Board of Supervisors and the City Council by district. When all the data was analyzed, the project planned to use the findings as a springboard to make publicly known the lack of access to healthy, local produce in Fresno County's low income areas.

At the end of the four year project, in 2004, they had not yet accomplished their goal of building a Food Policy Council. This goal was dependent on the completion of the Community Food Assessment. They expect to achieve this goal with the final recommendations from the Community Food Assessment report projected in September 2005.

Child Nutrition

The Child Nutrition Task Group sought to end child hunger, encourage good nutrition for school-aged children, and increase the use of federal nutrition programs. Participants in the committee represented diverse local stakeholders including school food service representatives, health providers, parents, community groups, the school vendor contractor and, most notably, the Fresno Public Health Officer who participated and supported their efforts.

The task force conducted research. They collected information on the kinds of foods available to children during their school day and they looked into which schools were effectively making the school environment more healthy for kids. They used their findings to determine what they could do to improve child nutrition and develop policies in the local school system.

One of their goals was to encourage the expansion and utilization of school nutrition programs (including the Summer Lunch, School Breakfast, and School Lunch) in Fresno County by at least 10%. They met with several school districts to persuade them to expand their federal breakfast, lunch, and summer lunch programs. Additionally, they held two Summer Lunch Summits and one press conference to publicize the issue.

They were successful in encouraging the expansion of existing school (and after school) meals programs in Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) and in three County school districts, starting new pilot programs, and increasing participation levels for School Breakfast, Lunch, and Summer Lunch. Five county schools started to offer breakfast programs. At the time of their final report, Fresno Metro Ministry was awaiting the final County Department of Education numbers to determine the extent of the expansion of federally-funded school nutrition programs, but they estimated expansion from 25 to 40 sites by Sponsor Fresno County Economic Opportunity Commission Food.

In addition, the Fresno Metro Ministry group of parents, New Leaders for Better Health, provided advocacy and help which resulted in an innovative model program developed at the Burroughs year-round elementary school. The program added an additional meal: brunch. During the project period, schools started innovative Summer Lunch programs through Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission (FCEOC). The Child Nutrition Task Group also worked on a Summer Lunch community partnership at the Sanger City Park in Fresno County, in partnership with the faith community. The event included food stamp outreach, and served 100 children each day.

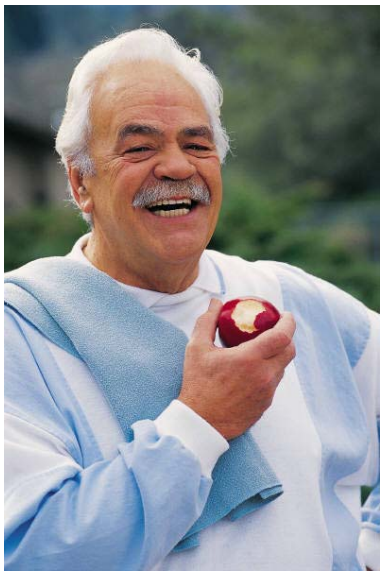
To publicize the location and availability of summer lunch sites, the project created maps of the free Summer Lunch sites and distributed the information to the media. As a result, a local newspaper, the *Fresno Bee*, published the Summer Lunch sites and TV and radio stations made the lists available. Further, the project distributed lists of the sites to local community based organizations, churches, and food pantries.

The Child Nutrition Task Force hosted the Summer Lunch Summits and convened Roundtables with farmers, job developers, USDA, County officials, and consumers to work on solving access to fresh produce and linking it with schools. They identified the need for nutrition policy action at the level of the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD). They realized that this was the most efficient way to address the childhood obesity crisis, so they placed their efforts into establishing the FUSD Healthy School Environment Policy Committee. They were successful in this goal. The School Board approved and appointed a Healthy School Environment Policy Committee and appointed the Fresno Metro Ministry project to convene the committee of 25 stakeholders responsible for developing and recommending a comprehensive nutrition and physical activity policy.

Fresno Metro Ministry encouraged health practitioners to become involved with the Healthy School Environment Policy Committee and these practitioners worked to develop school policy with the community. Among the physicians and dentists involved were Dr. Helen Jones, the Chair, who was well-spoken and at the time was also President of the Fresno/Madera Medical Society; Dr. Ed Moreno, a Fresno County Public Health Officer, who was very helpful and went with them to the Board to have the committee appointed and spent time reviewing the document; Dr. Rob Smith, who participated in forums; and Dr. Clarence Chau, a dentist who presented on behalf of the Committee. Additionally, both the nursing contingent and mental health services were well represented on the Committee. In particular, the mental health practitioners provided a critical role in balancing views and insisting that mental health services be included as part of the policy.

Besides expanding school meal programs and establishing a Healthy School Environment Policy Committee, the Child Nutrition Task Force promoted the use of local farm-to-school produce in the Fresno School District and worked on two programs. In 2004, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) collaborated with the Child Nutrition Task Group on Farm to School, and the development of a garden at Burroughs Elementary School. They also made presentations to child care programs stressing the importance of and providing training in how to implement healthy food environments for children. Fresno Metro Ministry trained multiple child care networks on food security and nutrition including the Children's Services Network, Head Start, the California Council of Churches Child Care Project, and FamiliesFirst. Each year they provided workshops in three different languages to over 300 parents and 60 Head Start sites on "Smart Food, Smart Kids," advocacy training, and EBT Food Stamp use.

Senior Nutrition



The Senior Nutrition Task Group advocated for re-instituting the Fresno-Madera Area Agency on Aging (FMAAA) Brown Bag Program of food distribution that was cancelled in Fresno County in 2002. FMAAA was developed in 1980 through an agreement between the city and county to identify and address the needs of the elderly.[6] Prior to being cancelled, the Brown Bag program, which had been implemented by the Community Food Bank, had expanded to 40 sites at which seniors could pick up groceries on a regular basis. When it was in operation, the program improved access to food for seniors, especially those who avoided other distribution methods because of their perceived stigma as being associated with charity. Then, virtually overnight, the costs of the program were no longer covered, and the Area Agency on Aging contracted with Madera to provide two grocery pick-up sites for seniors. The Senior Nutrition Task Group worked to have this program reinstated.

The Senior Nutrition Task Group also developed policy recommendations with statewide organizations so that California SSI (Supplemental Security Income) recipients would be eligible to receive food stamps. As it stands, California is the only state that does not allow SSI recipients to receive food stamps, despite the fact that an individual's SSI grant is $200 less than the income limit for food stamps. The reason that California's elderly SSI recipients are ineligible for food stamps harkens back to an administrative arrangement that was made between the state and the federal government in the early 1970s when SSI became a federal program which allowed the State Supplemental Payment (SSP) to be added to monthly SSI grants.[7] To date, there has been some reluctance to change this arrangement, because it would bring significant hardship to those households that include SSI recipients and low-income, non-SSI recipients. The Task Group has recommended changes to fix this important issue. They have also done studies on the problem, surveyed SSI recipients to understand their needs, and encouraged SSI recipients to write letters to policy makers about the situation.

The Senior Task Group worked with community-based organizations and the Fresno/Madera (F/M) Area Agency on Aging and conducted focus groups and a survey on hunger in the Hmong and South East Asian senior population. They achieved an incredible turnout for focus groups. They had predicted limited participation of approximately fifteen individuals, but were encouraged when about 100 turned out for the focus groups. The Task Group helped to bring about improvements in cultural competence of Senior Nutrition Sites and Emergency Food Awareness of seniors' nutrition needs. In working with the Area Agency on Aging they looked into how to make the food (types and location) acceptable for Hmong immigrant communities. As a result, at least once per week these emergency food agencies made Asian-based meals available to improve their cultural competency and attract Asian residents to participate in the programs. The Task Group also worked with local restaurants to encourage them to accept the reimbursement rate for meal provision to this community (which was a problem because of the low rate) and also developed nutritional analysis of Asian vegetables to allow these products to

be certified for distribution. Finally, they increased community competence around elder and culture issues by suggesting donation products to the public that would be appropriate for these groups.

Food Resources (Gleaners)

Agriculture remains a prominent commodity in Fresno, but much of the product is unavailable for local consumption because it is either hauled out of the valley for sale or decays because of inadequate distribution networks. The Food Resources Group enabled access to fresh fruits and vegetables through low barrier pantries, gleaning opportunities, community gardens, community food banks, and grower involvement in solutions to fresh produce availability.

The Food Resources group held monthly meetings and examined various food resources including gleaning (the collection of leftover crops from fields after they have been harvested to distribute to the poor and hungry), the Emergency Food Network, farmers' co-ops, and farm-to-school. The group looked into how to make the most of available food and rescue unused food. They determined that the food bank distribution network suffered from a lack of infrastructure, thus making it more difficult to distribute fresh produce. The group collaborated with the Food Bank to discuss how they could salvage fresh local product to make available to food bank customers. The Community Food Bank utilized this Food Resources Task Group as consultants in the development of the Emergency Food System. For instance, they looked into how to improve cold storage facilities and how to help hold produce for distribution at the Community Food Bank in order to increase the shelf-life of the food. They discussed methods to rescue existing produce and worked on developing co-op systems with African-American, Hmong, and Hispanic small farmers groups. They met with pastors and faith leaders to determine the need for emergency food and how to best fill that need. CAFF, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers, worked with this project to develop models to make fresh local produce in the Emergency Food System a benefit to low income families and a benefit to local farmers.

They also participated on an inter-agency task force with the USDA Western Regional Office on the issue of fresh commodities and asked the Department of Defense (DOD) to participate in developing a USDA fresh produce commodity distribution site in Fresno. The development of a distribution hub would help solve the transportation problems and utilize existing infrastructure. The DOD was invited to participate because of their distribution expertise could be used in the Fresno area where there is so much food, but limited infrastructure and distribution to support it. This work was ongoing at the end of the grant period.

In a related effort, they formed a Community Gardens Collaborative to encourage community gardens in the County. The group assessed existing gardens and found that only seven gardens remained, whereas five years ago fifteen were in operation. During the project period, three new gardens were developed in addition to school gardens in Fresno. They established a Hmong friendship garden, a garden near a housing project, and a community garden in the Tower District created by young men from Planned Parenthood. Fresno Metro Ministries was involved with the establishment of all three gardens: conducting a food assessment to inventory gardens, working with faith-based groups to identify available land, and participating in a coalition that worked on the gardens.

With USDA officials in attendance, Burroughs Elementary School celebrated the establishment of its school garden, the piloting of a model Summer Food program, and the effectiveness of low-income parent involvement. Fresno Metro Ministry organized a press conference for the event.

Food Stamp Intervention Activities

Food Stamp Advocacy Task Force

ONGOING, REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS of community based organizations, low income people, and Fresno County HSS E&TA.

•Improved access to Food Stamps: ABAWD Waiver; Quarterly Reporting and new state law rollouts; EBT; Sanction issues.

•Eliminated barriers to Food Stamps: Public Charge Clarification; Outreach tactics; CBO assistance to eligible clients; CBO Food Stamp enrollment training.

•Solved issues around the EBT card. Advocacy for culturally appropriate information and response: languages, homeless, reading level of information. Farmers Markets/Flea Market use.

•Meets every 4th Thursday of each month.

The Food Stamp Advocacy Task Group convened once each month to help improve access to food stamps by eliminating barriers. In Fresno County, only about half of those people eligible to receive food stamps, or 95,000 people, receive food stamps.[8] Representatives from community-based organizations, low income people, and Fresno County Employment and Temporary Assistance Office (who administer Food Stamps) participated in the Food Advocacy Group. Much of their focus involved working on the issues brought about by the transition from the paper food stamp coupons to the EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) card.

The Food Stamp Advocacy Group collected information on Fresno County retail stores, farmers markets, produce stands, and flea markets that accept the EBT Food Stamp card. They performed this to help the community prepare for the introduction to EBT. They also collaborated with food stamp outreach through the Community Food Bank and United Health Centers Food Stamp Outreach projects.

The Food Stamp Advocacy Task Group worked on the California State EBT Project rollout and participated actively in the Client Advocates Forum. As a result, they voiced local consumers' concerns about the process for the EBT rollout and they provided EBT/Food Stamp advocacy training to over 85 low-income multilingual persons. In December 2003, they convened a meeting with Fresno County and ACS/Lockheed-Martin, the agency contracted to do vouchering for clients, to follow-up on consumer complaints. The Food Stamp Advocacy Group continued to revisit this issue each month at their meeting and also addressed problems with ACS that were a result of the lack of a consistent training curriculum on quarterly reporting, budgeting, and single vouchering of CalWorks.

As a result of the work, the Food Stamp Advocacy Task Group expanded EBT cultural competence, reviewed the state materials, and provided local trainings on EBT in multiple languages. For the trainings, they developed a PowerPoint presentation to inform community-based organization (CBO) staff and low-income people about EBT. The trainings were provided in English, Spanish, and Hmong to a Head Start Parents conference of over 300 people, 60 Head Start coordinators, as well as CBO staff and clientele. The Power Point presentation was made available to those who wanted to use it. They also exposed early fraud by businesses who tried to sell the EBT POS machines provided by the state. The project's convening of USDA, state

officials, and local farmers' market owners resulted in new EBT access at local farmers' markets and the first ever USDA authorization for a flea market. Their work helped lead a regional expansion to expand food stamp participation.

New Leaders for Better Health, a group of over 150 low-income parents, started in September 2003 to empower people in the community to better advocate for themselves. Collaborating with other community-based organizations, Fresno Metro Ministry provided them with training in advocacy and media engagement. The group, whose members by and large came from the ESL (English as a Second Language) classes at the local adult schools as well as other community-based organizations, convened once each month. They represented the diversity of the Valley, with members speaking seven primary languages. Interpreters helped ensure full participation and cultural competency by making the meetings accessible to all the membership.

The New Leaders group worked on a variety of issues. For instance, they interviewed public officials on health care and concerns related to healthy food and were trained to do Community Food Assessment and conduct neighborhood food assessments. As a result of their training, several of the participants became quite comfortable talking to the media and spoke about the importance of federal nutrition programs. The group also worked on issues related to food stamps. Specifically, New Leaders addressed access barriers to food stamps. They prioritized barriers and, over time, addressed each one. They participated in focus groups to discuss food stamp program issues. They brought their concerns and recommendations to local, state, and national legislators including the Food Stamp Advocacy Group meeting, the California Food Policy Advocates, the *Network*, local legislators, and the USDA.

Fifty-one of the New Leaders participated in Hunger Action Day on May 12, 2004. This event was described by Metro Ministries as their most important project achievement. This group of low-income, ethnically diverse advocates made their voices and concerns heard. They met with California Assembly member Nicole Parra, advocated in Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante's office, and were available to the press to be interviewed on food stamp issues. During the project period, the New Leaders also conducted trainings to expand food stamp enrollment and they implemented AB231 changes which cut barriers to accessing food stamps. Fresno Metro Ministry determined that the New Leaders were well trained and involved.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

To be sure, the Fresno Metro Ministry project was challenging in the sheer scope of activities that they took on. Although the planning and implementation was distributed among multiple task forces and the various community participants within them, the project was responsible for overseeing the activities and ensuring the goals and objectives were reached. They hired an assistant to the project, upon the receipt of additional funding sources (a Community Food Project grant) who helped oversee the task groups and the expanding number of partners working on the issues. Phoua Moua, whose interest and expertise was in working with immigrant populations, served the assistant to the project. When she left the agency to attend law school, Jeremy Hofer took over as her replacement. Mr. Hofer had previously worked with the CRLA (California Rural Legal Assistance) and was interested in sustainable agriculture, community gardens, and working with farmers. Both assistants played significant roles in the project. In their progress report, Fresno Metro Ministry explained, "as the number of people involved in the task groups grew, the amount of paperwork, email communication, phone calls, mailings, and packets expanded hugely." They noted that more follow through could have been achieved with expansion to the staffing of the project, given the breadth of their work.

The Fresno Metro Ministry Project credits the *Network* for providing the investment that helped to get them started on these critical endeavors. They note that the funding has allowed them to make important strides and has helped them to leverage other funding to sustain the work.

Fresno Metro Ministry had hoped to complete the Community Food Assessment (CFA) and compile a report on findings by November 2003 and build a Food Policy Council to act on the CFA's recommendations by September 2004. They had experienced multiple delays in this objective. In part, they decided to expand the task to include all of Fresno, thereby dramatically increasing their workload. Moreover, the building of a Food Policy Council was dependent upon the completion of the Community Food Assessment. It became a large endeavor that relied on community-wide support, and took longer than they had anticipated.

Summer Lunch sites were expanded from 25-40 through advocacies with the USDA by the Fresno County Economic Opportunities Commission Food Service Sponsor. The Fresno Unified School District slightly decreased their sites. Participation in the program increased in the numbers of children receiving Summer Lunch through the collaborative work with Summer Lunch Summits and the Forum and Task Groups promoting participation. The Project was challenged by retention of sites, and particularly due to the school district's limitations.

Expanding the access to emergency food in the area was limited because of infrastructure problems: the Community Food Bank had no cold storage, so they could not handle any food that needed cold storage; expanding pantry distribution where pantries were operating out of limited space tends to put a "cap" on capacity to distribute and store food. During the project period, there was only one small group working on food rescue/gleaning in the county where so much food is grown, but even this was subsequently lost because there was no infrastructure or organization to rescue the food. The loss of food processing plants in this area also contributed to loss of product that could improve food access problems. However, task groups formed under

this grant brought organizations together to begin to address the lack of infrastructure and funding for this issue.

According to project coordinator Edie Jessup (Edie Jessup [edie@fresnometmin.org] email, August 8, 2005), Fresno County is extremely politically conservative. Public leaders do not seem to believe that people are hungry and malnourished. This became and an interesting facet of the public education about food security for this project. Meanwhile, those trying to address the problem of feeding people tended to be overwhelmed with the need and lack of resources to address food security. Overcoming an attitude that tends to blame the hungry family for their hunger or diet related health problems were truly the starting place for this project with some natural partners. The low enrollment in federal food programs in this high need area was also a significant challenge.

Conclusions

The Fresno Metro Ministry project worked to increase the access to healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate food for the health of low-income Fresno County residents through the coordination of multiple forums and task groups. These groups assembled experts and interested parties to delve into issues related to food security. They researched the issues, examined existing structures and barriers, strategized courses of action, recommended policy, and took action.

As a result of their work, in the 2003-2004 grant year alone the project calculated that they impacted over 55,700 individual persons for all their objectives (not accounting for media exposure). They were able to have this wide-reaching impact in part due to the participation of multiple partners and volunteers that supplemented the funding provided by the *Network*. Additional funding provided by California Food Policy Advocates, Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, USDA: Community Food Project, Kaiser Permanente, The California Endowment, and the Rosenberg Foundation added critical support for this mass undertaking.

The Fresno Metro Ministry has a long history of working collaboratively in the community. In this project alone, they received local support from over 70 diverse community groups. They maintained a mailing list for outreach purposes and made contact with 750 participants each month over the last four years. Strengthening this network has enabled them to bring together multiple community partners for each activity.

Promoting policy for enactment requires consistent and persistent steps that may eventually lead to the goal. But, there are often setbacks and unexpected things that occur. And, more so than some other change strategies, time must be invested before goals are reached. Another challenge comes in evaluating advocacy and policy initiatives. Short of policy enactment, one must take inventory of the milestones that should presumably lead to the goal.

The Fresno Metro Ministry focused most of their efforts on increasing food access by coordinating the work of action teams that pressed for policy changes. They made many strides along the way, and were able to complete most of their proposed objectives. For instance, they developed a group of low-income New Leaders for Better Health, organized them to advocate on

Hunger Action Day, increased access to participation in school lunch programs, and convened Summer Lunch Summits, cut barriers to food stamps, convinced the Fresno Unified School District to establish a Healthy School Environment Policy Committee, among many other accomplishments. They were able to effectively engage groups of diverse representatives and coordinate them so that they could work on these important achievements.

Having received additional funding to continue work on their activities, the Fresno Metro Ministry project planned to continue working on their proposed goals and objectives after their *Network* grant ended. They planned to develop a Food Policy Council; take lead on the Healthy School Environment Policy Committee; work with congressional Hunger Fellows; improve rescue and distribution of local food for low income Fresnans; develop a food co-op with growers to assure local food access in low income neighborhoods, increase food retail sites, and school and FCEOC use of local produce; encourage all farmers markets and flea markets to use EBT for fresh local produce; increase community gardens by organizing and local ordinance changes; assure participation in culturally competent food and nutrition programs (Hmong, Spanish, and Arabic speaking FMM staff have assured work with immigrants in multiple languages); and continue to engage the media to focus on the poor health outcomes of Fresno communities and the local solutions that food access and good nutrition offers.

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SECTION VIII: Pomona Inland Valley of Churches

Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches

Project Location and Background

Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches (PIVCC) is an interfaith network of 89 member churches that seeks to address issues of hunger and homelessness in the community. Their overall mission is "to provide services that empower homeless and low-income individuals to solve problems and create positive life solutions."[1] They operate three housing programs, manage three Hunger Program sites that provide food to low income people, and serve as lead agency for numerous community based programs working on the issues of homelessness, hunger, and education. The work of Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches is supported by roughly 250 community volunteers. PIVCC's vision states that "The board, staff, and volunteers of PIVCC are committed to serving our community in the following ways . . .

- To empower people through positive experiences and opportunities to achieve concrete, life-changing results.
- To encourage people to set and achieve realistic goals of independent living.
- To help people develop a sense of community.[1]

PIVCC's Service Area includes the southern California cities of Chino, Chino Hills, Claremont, Diamond Bar, La Verne, Montclair, Ontario, Pomona, Rancho Cucamonga, San Dimas, Upland, and Walnut. The cities are located in either Los Angeles or San Bernardino counties.

Food insecurity is a problem in the Council's service area as evidenced by a surrogate marker: the number of children who qualify for free or reduced lunch programs. More than half of the schools in the Council's service area have a higher percentage of children receiving free or reduced priced lunches than the average in Los Angeles County where 51% of children qualify.

The Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches recognized that that they could improve food security in Pomona Valley utilizing an integrated service model. The PIVCC project set forth to provide nutrition education to a busy emergency food closet, the Beta Hunger Center (serving residents of Pomona, Diamond Bar, Walnut, Claremont, Montclair and Chino), and the weekly Pomona Valley Certified Farmers Market.

Project Goals

Goal 1a: *To increase knowledge among Pomona Valley residents about the health and savings benefits associated with eating nutritious foods and adopting healthy eating behaviors; to increase participants' awareness of ways to prevent end-of-the-month food shortages.*

> ***Objective 1a:*** *Increase participants' knowledge about the benefits of nutritious foods and learn skills to plan healthy, low-cost meals*

Goal 1: *To increase the knowledge of low-income individuals attending the Farmers' Market of the Food Guide Pyramid (using the University of Illinois Functional Food Guide Pyramid &USDA/USDHHS Food Guide Pyramid with serving sizes) and individually relevant nutrition information.*

> ***Objective 1b****: Increase participants' knowledge about the food guide pyramid*

Goal 2: *To ensure that low-income Pomona Valley residents have access to nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable food through local conventional sources.*

> ***Objective:*** *Increase the number of food stamps and WIC coupons redeemed at the Pomona Valley Certified Farmers' Market by 10%*

Goal 3: *To accurately identify the barriers that occlude low-income Pomona Valley residents from acquiring and maintaining food security.*

> ***Objective:*** *Elicit information from low-income individuals regarding barriers to food security and use information to develop a Basic Needs Questionnaire*

Goal 4: *To promote the attendance of participating Farmers' Market farmers in the nutrition education seminars. Increase the knowledge among the farmers about the nutritional benefits of fresh produce and healthy eating habits.*

> ***Objective:*** *Conduct nutrition education seminars for the Farmers' Market vendors/family farmers*

Goal 5: *To promote the Food Stamp Program among our Farmers Market and Food Security Program clients by training and supervising volunteers to conduct eligibility screenings for food stamps (using software created by the L.A. County Food Bank) and to provide assistance with the application.*

> ***Objective:*** *Screen low-income clients to determine eligibility in the Food Stamp Program*

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

The Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches approached this project with the premise that food security is, to a certain extent, a nutrition education issue. In their previous work, prior to the *Network* funding, they had facilitated nutrition education. Each month at the Pomona Farmers' Market they had organized a "Meet the Dietician" booth hosted by a registered dietician, who gave a nutrition presentation, prepared a sample meal using fresh ingredients from the Farmers' Market, and distributed sample recipes and brochures. They had also provided healthy cooking classes occasionally at the Beta Hunger Center. The Beta Center is a food closet that provides emergency food to low income and homeless residents in the PIVCC community.

It is one component of the multifaceted approach used by PIVCC. Other components include housing assistance, job and employment services and the Pomona Farmers' Market.

In February and March 2001, as the project got underway, they conducted four focus groups. In total, 48 individuals (33 female, 15 male) participated in a focus groups conducted at either Beta Hunger Center or the Pomona Certified Farmers' Market. The project categorized the participants as falling into three main subpopulations: homeless men, single mothers, and men (single or married with children) who were on disability leave from work.

During the course of the focus groups, they learned more about the needs of their clients. When asked about the obstacles and barriers that keep them from having enough food and other resources each month, three main responses were given. Many of the homeless men responded that alcoholism was a problem for them; other participants said that being out of work (due to disability or pregnancy) was a problem, and others (particularly day laborers and construction workers) said that the barriers come and go depending on the time of year. Most participants in the groups said that food assistance should be readily available for people, but other assistance should be conditioned on doing work. Single mothers, in particular, alleged that there is too much dependence on welfare. They also pointed out that having access to quality child care would solve many problems as they reported paying, on average, $560 a month on child care. Nearly all at the Beta Hunger Center groups responded that they would be unable to feed their families without the food provided by the Beta Hunger Center.

Pomona Farmers' Market Nutrition Education

Customers at the Pomona Farmers' Market

The project sought to expand the nutrition education they provided at the Pomona Farmers' Market. The Pomona Farmers' Market attracts diverse shoppers including those of very low-income who were the project's priority population. Approximately 800 low-income individuals attend the Farmers' Market each week. The project created a method by which to target their intervention to this priority group. When shoppers paid for their purchases with food stamps or WIC dollars, the farmers selling their goods were instructed to direct them to the nutrition education instructors who administered a Nutrition Pre and Post Test. In some cases, the farmers, themselves, administered the tests.

PIVCC helped subsidize the fees required for family farmers to host a stall at the market to make it feasible for them to participate in the Farmers' Market. This may have contributed to the willingness of the farmers' to take on this extra task of administering the nutrition surveys in addition to selling their goods. PIVCC provided further assistance to farmers through a quick nutrition education course to increase their knowledge about the nutritional benefits of produce and inform them about how they could use nutritional value as a selling point. The concept was to have farmers transmit the nutritional information to customers. They were encouraged to do so because they benefited from the new sales strategy.

The project set up a mobile kiosk at the weekly Pomona Farmers' Market that prominently displayed nutritional information. They featured kid-friendly information, a food planting display, a Parent/Adult Nutrition Guide (with instructions for making brown bag lunches with food from the market, a food pyramid, fruit and vegetable nutritional information, portion size guide, and recipes) for distribution, and general health information (with material on healthy eating habits and exercise). In order to maintain the focus on the nutrition education, the Market Manager made a strategic choice not to include live music or arts/craft booths at the Farmers' Market, as is common among other markets. The concern was that the entertainment would overshadow their attempts to focus on nutrition education.

During the first year, the project utilized a teaching approach that resembled traditional classrooms in that they taught to groups of participants in Nutrition Information Sessions. However, they learned that this method created challenges in the outdoor, free-form setting of the market, as classes were put on hold until they were able to attract a sufficient number of participants who spoke the same language. So, they revamped the Nutrition Information Sessions. The result, which they titled "Nutrition Camp," was brief and more efficient and could be provided in a one-on-one teaching session.

Once they updated the nutrition education curriculum for the Farmers' Market, the project faced the challenge of how to evaluate their efforts. PIVCC staff member, Harry Brown-Hiegel, who was also the Pomona Farmers' Market Manager, conferred with Dr. Dan Perales, the *Network* evaluation consultant on how best to assess the project's outcomes, given that the outdoor setting, combined with the fact that many shoppers brought along their children, combined with the time demanded of participants made it problematic to administer pretest and posttest surveys. To respond to these needs, while also trying to better understand participants' nutrition awareness and behavior, they limited the survey to what they called a "bare-boned" 3-question survey.

Over the course of the project, they administered the short survey to 195 respondents (71.3% female, 28.7% male). They asked the three predetermined questions. One was about the number of fruits and vegetable servings participants consumed daily, another asked about whether a list of diseases could be caused by obesity, and the third asked whether the participant had used a shopping list for their trip to the market. In analyzing the results, they found that 75% of all low-income participants did not eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. When they separated the question by gender, they found some interesting differences. On average, females reported eating 4.1 servings of fruits and vegetables per day compared to men who reportedly ate only 2.5 servings each day. Moreover, the survey found that 69.7% of women and 90% of men reported eating less than the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Slightly fewer males reported that there was a link between various diseases (diabetes, heart disease, and cancer) and obesity. It seems that the finding that men were less aware of health risks associated with obesity might explain why they reported eating fewer servings of fruits and vegetables. These results had important implications for the development of further programs. Although the findings were based on a small sample (56 men and 139 women) in a particular setting, it seems worthwhile to address possible gender differences in nutrition knowledge to deliberately target the needs of males and females.

In addition, the project learned that approximately 19%, or less than one in five, of those surveyed made a shopping list before going to the market. Food planning, such as intentional purchases driven by the making of a shopping list, is important, if not critical, for many individuals with limited resources. This finding provided insight on how to customize subsequent nutrition education curriculums. For example, in response to the needs of low-income clients, projects could offer instruction about how to make use of limited resources by creating shopping lists and utilize the seasonal bounty of the market (e.g. buying when prices are lowest and freezing for a later date).

The project also added a program they called “Lifelong 5-A-Dayers”. This program was intended to teach children attending the market the importance of eating five fruits and vegetables each day. They came up with activities geared towards children and created a space for children to color food pyramids. Then, they laminated the artwork to create placemats the children could take home to remind them of the pyramid’s recommendations. Another fun learning activity they provided for children was a food “scavenger hunt” in which they gave children brown paper bags and instructed them to make a balanced lunch by filling it with the correct serving sizes of healthy foods.

In February 2003, the project encountered a setback when the trailer which housed their supplies was burglarized while parked in the church parking lot where the Farmers’ Market convenes. They were forced to replace a laptop, tables and chairs for their kiosk, a portable sink (mandatory for Farmers’ Markets), a laminator, Food Stamp Eligibility Test screening software, nutrition

education materials, and other supplies. While they worked to secure donations for the stolen items, they were able to resume the Nutrition Camp and the Lifelong 5-A-Dayers programs. One month later, after they received a donated laptop, they were able to resume administering Food Stamp Eligibility Tests.

Later, in 2003, a few Cal Poly University-Pomona students volunteered to help with the nutrition education activities and one conducted an independent research project using different evaluation materials. The students collected 94 test sets, 58 using the Farmers' Market pyramid tests and 36 using the student's own instrument. The Farmers' Market pyramid tests asked children to color-code a food pyramid to reflect the food groups and their corresponding servings in the correct areas of the food pyramid.

With so much attention to and discussion of nutrition education, the project described the market as becoming "infused with nutrition and health awareness." They noted that, "a shopper (low-income or not) could not help but take away some nutrition information because it was everywhere!"

The Beta Hunger Center

Implementing this successful nutrition education model at the Beta Hunger Center proved to be very difficult. The Beta Hunger Center is a daily food distribution center operated by PIVCC. They provide donated, non-perishable food as well as produce to hungry, low-income individuals in Pomona.

The project supplemented the Beta Hunger Center's other services with the provision of nutrition education. The design of the program was inventive in that it took advantage of a "captive audience" of clients waiting to be called for intake. While clients waited, the instructor administered the one-on-one course which encouraged participants to be comfortable in participating and asking questions. First, participants completed a pre-course survey which the instructor used to personalize the instruction to meet the needs of participants. The instructor gave participants a functional food pyramid packet, recipe books, and information about the Pomona Farmers' Market. Then, they were administered post-course survey. Those waiting were appreciative to have something do occupy them during their wait and they were interested in the nutrition course. Findings from data showed the sessions were successful at increasing participants' short-term knowledge about the benefits of healthy food as they demonstrated improved recall from pre-test to post-test on every question. In analyzing the findings, the project discovered that prior to the nutrition course participants were least knowledgeable about prenatal nutrition, the function of nutrition in cancer prevention, food-handling safety, and familiarity with Pomona Farmers' Market. The sessions were most successful in increasing knowledge on these topics.

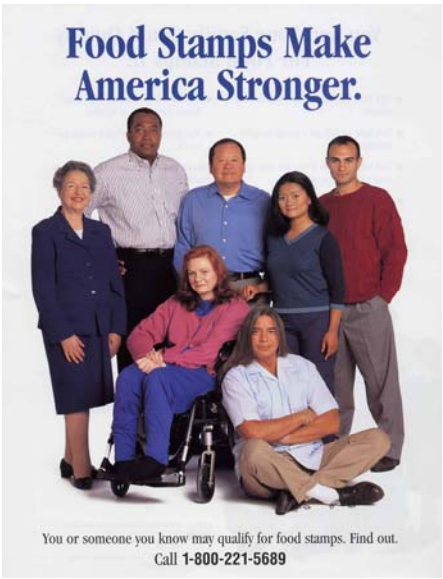
Food Access Intervention Activities

Although the premise of Pomona Inland Valley Council of Church's program was based in the belief that food security is a nutrition education issue, they also believed in the importance of access to nutritious foods. They worked to promote the local Pomona Farmers' Market to inform residents in targeted low-income communities that it was a place in the community where they could purchase a variety of fresh produce (with cash, WIC vouchers, or food stamps).

They promoted the market to clients accessing services at two of the PIVCC emergency food pantries. The project also posted flyers and conducted targeted mailings of approximately 10,000 Penny Saver Flyers in community laundromats, congregations, library, and City Hall and WIC and DPSS offices. They also increased the visibility of the Farmers' Market through printed advertising in two local newspapers, the Pomona *Courier* and the *Daily Bulletin*. They created a video which explained the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. The video promoted the Pomona Farmers' Market as being the only local market able to accept both WIC and food stamps.

Additionally, the Market Manager enhanced access for those participating in the WIC Program. He communicated with the local WIC administrators to make a change to their redemption policy to make it easier for people to use WIC at the Farmers' Market, and thus access fresh food.

Food Stamp Intervention Activities



Another facet of the PIVCC project was the promotion of food stamp redemption at the Pomona Farmers' Market. By March 2003, the procedures were in place to operate the Food Stamp Outreach Program at the market to help conduct food stamp screening tests among people circulating at the market to determine whether they qualified to receive food stamps.

The Market Manager met with the local Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to establish a system whereby food stamp applications completed at the Farmers' Market were submitted to one DPSS contact that could facilitate the application process.

The Market Manager obtained the Food Stamp eligibility software and received training in it from the Los Angeles Regional Foodbank. Then, the project recruited volunteers to be trained on the software so that they could administer the Food Stamp Eligibility Tests on-site at the Farmers' Market. The manager of the Beta Hunger Center also obtained a copy of the Food Stamp Eligibility Test software to enable similar outreach at the Beta Hunger Center.

Besides being able to determine eligibility, those administering the test were able to predict how much applicants would likely receive if they enrolled in the program. This process encouraged people to check their eligibility and expedited the process by starting the paperwork at the market.

Food stamp promotion is important to food security because so many people, who qualify for the program and may need the food, do not enroll. Only 49% of those eligible for food stamps participate in the program; approximately 1.8 million, people.[2] In addition, to providing families' with increased food purchase power, USDA research has shown that every food stamp dollar spent creates $1.84 in local economic activity.[3] Informing people of its availability and making the application process convenient and easy encourages people to see if they qualify.

As of September 2003, PIVCC had screened 1,143 low-income individuals (975 at the Beta Hunger Center and 168 at the Farmers' Market) for food stamp eligibility. Of these, 487 (414 at the Beta Hunger Center and 73 at the Farmers' Market) received on-site assistance in completing an application for food stamps. The project attributed the lower numbers for the Farmers' Market to the difficulty of administering the tests at the weekly market dependent on market attendance. The total number of Food Stamp Eligibility Tests administered fell below the quantity the project had projected. They were short of their goal due to delays incurred from the burglary of supplies from the Market trailer as well as a problem incurred with the installation of the eligibility software. Statistics on the number of individuals and families screened during fiscal year 2003-2004 were not available for inclusion in this report.

The project conducted a related assessment over the four years of the project. They tracked the Farmers' Market income statistics to examine the market's gross income compared to total income from food stamps and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program voucher payments. This allowed them to see what portion of the total amount of money spent at the market each year was supported by food assistance programs. At the end of each year over the four years, they saw incremental increases in the amounts of assistance as compared to gross. The percentage of annual purchases made possible by food assistance programs rose from 13.7% to 26.6%. This increase provides support for the efforts made by the project to promote the Farmers' Market and to assist with screening for and enrollment into the Food Stamp Program.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Perhaps the most significant challenge during this four year venture for the Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches project was the result of changes to their organization. In early 2004, PIVCC experienced severe financial instability. Consequently, to save the organization, the Board of Directors removed the Executive Director, the Finance Manager resigned, and more than half of the Council's staff was let go. These changes affected PIVCC's performance, including their required reporting to the *Network*.

Despite this organizational disruption, the Farmers' Market activities continued unabated. Those attending the market received nutrition education and continued to be screened for food stamp eligibility. Their ability to carry on with only minimal changes might well be a testament to the strength of the program. It also reflects on the guidance provided by the Market Manager/PIVCC staff member, Harry Brown-Hiegel, who ensured that activities at the market continued. The situation presented an opportunity to view the program's ability to operate successfully within a pressurized environment, thus reinforcing the likelihood that the activities can be replicated at other Farmers' Markets.

The success of the program at the Farmers' Market also provides confirmation that the goals and activities were an appropriate fit for the venue. The Beta Hunger Center program experienced other difficulties. The difference could be attributed to the fact that it was one of many services offered to clients and did not receive adequate attention by the project. Moreover, it relied, in part, on volunteers who were less consistent and were extended to cover services at the seven day a week facility. Looking back at the end of the grant period, the project speculated whether it would have been more effective had there been one staff person at the Beta Hunger Center dedicated to nutrition education.

Oversight of the Beta Program was a challenge as well. Intermittently during the project, the Beta Manager suffered from critical heart problems that required hospitalizations and prolonged recoveries. In her absence, other PIVCC staff members took on tasks to fill the gap, but given their other duties, their ability to cover was not consistent.

The PIVCC project experienced a further setback with the burglary of the Farmers' Market trailer which contained materials and equipment for carrying out the project which had been purchased with *Network* funding. They spent several weeks recouping the materials that were stolen before they were fully functional again.

While they faced these challenges, the project learned some important lessons. In retrospect, PIVCC indicated that they had been overly optimistic in their proposed goals and objectives given their limited resources. Each year they attempted to expand the program activities with little change to the budget, and, thus overextended the staff and short-changed the program. Had they focused their energies and resources on one major goal, instead of five, they alleged that they could have better served the communities' nutritional needs.

PIVCC also learned some lessons about data collection. They found that the social service providers in their agency, who conducted some of the project's data collection, were unfamiliar with the process and needed extensive training to conduct measurement tests. Moreover, they felt that the procedure caused them unnecessary stress. In retrospect, they would have collected alternative qualitative measures more in line with the service providers' experience, such as periodic interviews in a video diary, creating a photo journal, or holding focus groups.

Conclusions

The Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches project took on nutrition education and promotion activities that grew organically out of their agency's mission and their experience. They took a small program involving a registered dietician who provided nutrition advice at a booth at the Pomona Farmers' Market and expanded it to include a variety of nutrition education activities at two sites, promotion of the Farmers' Market, and facilitation of the food stamp eligibility process.

For the most part, they found that the operations and the logistics were easier to implement at the Farmers' Market, than at the Beta Center. They surmised that this had to do with the infrequency of the market (once a week, compared to every day at the Beta Hunger Center), competing activities at the Beta Hunger Center, infirmity of the Beta Manager, and the reliance on volunteers who could not always be depended upon. They also felt that the activities they chose to carry out were a more appropriate fit for the Farmers' Market. However, they were not without successes at the Beta Hunger Center, because they were able to conduct a vast number of food stamp eligibility screening tests for the clients at the Beta Hunger Center.

The project worked in close collaboration with the Farmers' Market manager who turned out to be a valuable asset in ensuring their success. He showed commitment with a choice he made early on not to include music or arts/crafts booth entertainment which could easily have competed with the nutrition activities. He was active in bringing the food stamp eligibility screening process to the market. And, when the project experienced difficulties at the administrative level, he ensured that the nutrition activities that had been started at the Farmers' Market were sustained. The farmers, too, proved to be important assets for the delivery of the program. They participated in a course provided by the program about the nutritional value of produce and how it could be used as a selling point. They also helped to refer WIC and food stamp customers to project volunteers so that they could participate in the nutrition education curriculum. In addition to their roles as vendors at the market, they periodically administered the 3-question survey with customers when needed. It is clear that the project had the buy-in from the Market's farmers and that they contributed to ensuring a smooth process. This was due in part because PIVCC subsidized the market booth fees for family farmers, thus providing an incentive for the farmers to be involved in assisting the project by administering the Nutrition surveys.

The project struggled throughout with gathering the data to substantiate the outcomes of their goals and objectives. From year to year, they changed measurement methods to respond to the needs of the program and developed tools and procedures that could be easily administered. These changes for some measures resulted lack of comprehensive results that could be compared from baseline through the four years.

The PIVCC project faced some exceptional challenges and setbacks, most notably the burglary of their supplies and the organizational turmoil at their agency. Despite this, the PIVCC project accomplished at least a portion of each of their objectives. They created structures for providing nutrition education to clients Farmers' Market Shoppers, and farmers. They increased food stamp and WIC voucher redemption at the Farmers' Market; they identified barriers to food access for

residents through focus groups; and they promoted the food stamp program by conducting eligibility screenings and enrollment assistance at the Farmers' Market.

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SECTION IX: Sacramento Hunger Commission

Project Location and Background

The Sacramento Hunger Commission conducted a project to reduce barriers to food insecurity and improve access to healthy food in two neighborhoods, zip codes 95815 (North Sacramento) and 95838 (Del Paso Heights), in Sacramento County. These Sacramento neighborhoods were chosen because of the high poverty rate identified in the Commission's *Breaking Barriers*[1] report completed in 2000 [the report used 1990 census data]. At that time 27% of residents of those two neighborhoods lived below the poverty line, compared to 12.5% for the county as a whole. The neighborhoods also had a diverse cultural and ethnic population, especially in Del Paso Heights, where large numbers of Southeast Asian families relocated in the 1990s. For example, the Commission's report indicated that in 1990, the population of Del Paso Heights was 49% African American and 16% Asian. Several years later, in the 1998-99 school year, 36% of the children in preschool through Grade 6 were African American and the number of Asian youth had reached 42% (Peggy Roark [PRoark@communitycouncil.org] email, August 26, 2005).

The Sacramento Hunger Commission was founded with funding from the City and County of Sacramento in 1990 in response to an extensive study commissioned by the Community Services Planning Council. The two-year study identified the scope of hunger in Sacramento County and presented recommendations about how to improve food access drawing on existing resources and mobilizing new ones.

The Sacramento Hunger Commission boasts diverse representation among its members including community nutrition programs, religious organizations, emergency food sites, media, businesses and advocacy groups. Commissioners volunteer to serve as a member of the voting body for one-year terms that are renewable for up to five years. The driving principle of the group is a belief that hunger is both unacceptable and preventable. They address the root causes of hunger and food insecurity in the goal to ensure that everyone is able to supply themselves with sufficient food for an active and healthy life.

The *Network* funded project was based, in part, on results from a 1999-2000 food assessment study that the Hunger Commission with support of community groups carried out in North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights. The assessment and corresponding report, entitled, *Breaking Barriers: A Road to Improved Food Access* focused on food access issues. In investigating the issues, the project conducted focus groups and meetings with residents who voiced their opinion of accessibility barriers and recommendations for improvement. Many residents expressed concern about lack of healthy food options, specifically a dearth of accessible produce. In particular, residents said they wanted a full-service supermarket located in their neighborhood; there was also support for the re-establishment of a Farmers' Market. Residents explained that they depended on smaller neighborhood stores (with limited selection and higher prices) for food because inadequate transportation was an issue. Another theme that surfaced from the focus

groups was widespread interest in the sharing information and ideas about food resources and healthy eating on a budget. The Hunger Commission summarized the findings; residents most needed access to nutritious food, information about healthy eating and preparation, and resources (transportation, cash, food stamps, and WIC vouchers) to improve their food security.

Project Goals

Goal 1: *To empower community residents by increasing their level of awareness and knowledge of healthy eating and opportunities to enhance their access to nutritious food.*

> ***Objective:*** *Plan and implement a small-scale community-based food assessment study in a South Sacramento neighborhood, possibly Glen Elder/Avondale (Lemon Hill).*
>
> ***Objective****: To expand the use of the revised "Hunger 101" with low-income youth/school groups a tool for raising awareness of importance of food assistance programs (WIC, Food Stamps, Summer Food) and nutritional and cost implications of food choices.*
>
> ***Objective:*** *Strengthen collaborations that will enable the Hunger Commission to share information and skills for healthy eating with youth and adults in low-income areas more effectively and with a greater degree of sustainability.*

Goal 2**:** *To create an edible landscaping project to promote better nutrition and health and a stronger sense of community among low-income residents of a Mercy Housing complex.*
[Please note: Although the contract amendment has not yet been signed, we are briefly reporting on what has been done to date for this goal.]

> ***Objective:*** *Provide the opportunity for residents from at least 75% of the Mercy Housing households to improve and share knowledge of good nutrition, healthy eating and food preparation.*
>
> ***Objective:*** *Human infrastructure: develop "buy-in" and working collaboration with key players, most important the residents, but also Mercy Housing staff, local universities and others – a total of at least 10-15 active collaborators.*
>
> ***Objective:*** *Physical infrastructure: implement and maintain the agreed-upon edible landscaping site development plan and project, as resources allow, actively involving at least 15% of the Mercy Housing complex.*

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

Nutrition Education Workshops

North Sacramento community members expressed interest in learning more about healthy eating in a convenient, informal class setting in the Hunger Commission's *Breaking the Barriers* food assessment study. In response, the Hunger Commission developed a series of interactive nutrition education sessions adapted from existing materials and based the classes loosely on the food guide pyramid. In 2001, one of the Hunger Commission's Americorps*VISTA (Volunteers

in Service to America, a national community service program) volunteers who had a B.A. in Nutrition developed the curriculum and created a corresponding Nutrition Education Manual in collaboration with the Hunger Commissioner ENFNEP Supervisor. They designed the curriculum to be flexible so that it could be adapted for a wide range of aged participants and so that the classes could be taught either as individual components or together as a full series of six classes. The class facilitators brought the classes to life using a large 3-D model of the food pyramid and array of artificial food (which they said was "a huge hit" with children's classes and at health fairs). The class content addressed food safety issues and also included a food preparation component.

Originally, they offered the nutrition education classes only in the target neighborhoods of North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights, but later expanded to other sites (such as Learning Center in North Highlands, and Birth and Beyond programs) as interest grew. During the project period, the classes were taught to a diverse assortment of low-income participants including children, teens, developmentally disabled, ESL classes, and Birth and Beyond programs. In total, 418 North Sacramento/Del Paso Heights residents (unduplicated count) attended at least one nutrition education session. The classes were most popular with one group of developmentally disabled adults who were especially enthusiastic about them, and with English as a Second Language (ESL) adults.

Train the Trainers

In attempting to increase the reach of their nutrition education, the Hunger Commission implemented a type of "train the trainers" model. They noticed that many of their nutrition workshop participants were receiving services from community social service programs, so they approached the staff of these agencies to gage their interest in attending a brief nutrition training.

In 2003, in response to the interest, the Hunger Commission conducted a workshop designed to increase social service providers' ability to respond to their client's nutritional issues. The training was attended by staff from eighteen different community agencies. Those attending the class identified the question and answer session as the highlight of the class. The Hunger Commission's Americorps*VISTA volunteer facilitated the training in collaboration with a Hunger Commissioner nutritionist and they distributed copies of the Hunger Commission's Nutrition Education Manual so that participants had the resource at their disposal when working with their own clients. The project staff collaborated with the *Network* evaluation consultants to produce a training satisfaction survey. Initial results indicated participants were mostly satisfied with the training. In addition, survey respondents offered suggestions to improve the workshop, and some commented on the Nutrition Education Curriculum Handbook. One participant said, "Manual is great! Will be used! Thank you."

In 2004, the Program Associate facilitated three additional classes. Twenty attendees representing 12 agencies attended including Birth and Beyond, Boys and Girls Club, Sacramento Area Emergency Housing Center, Senior Citizen Services, and CARES (an HIV/AIDS program) participated in the workshops.

The project was hesitant to call the group of social service providers "trainers" because, in all likelihood, the providers did not organize nutrition classes at their respective agencies, but instead acted as a resource for their clients. A total of 57 participants attended the classes in 2003 and 2004. Looking back, the project expressed disappointment that they had not collected follow-up data from the service providers in the months after the workshop to learn if and how the workshop material was communicated to clients.

Money Management Workshops

In conducting their food access study, the Hunger Commission found that residents wanted to know about healthy eating, but were concerned about how to "stretch" their food dollars and wanted to learn about basic money management. In response to this desire, the Hunger Commission set out to create a money management series, they called Money Sense, to offer to residents. Like the nutrition education classes, these workshops were created by of the program's Americorps*VISTA volunteers in consultation with the Hunger Commissioner ENFNEP Supervisor. The class content covered basic money management and focused on strategies for making the most of a food budget. A local branch of Wells Fargo donated calculators that the project distributed to workshop participants.

At the beginning, the project found a lot of interest by individuals and organizations in the Money Sense Workshops, but interest tapered off over time and remained lower than that for the nutrition education classes. The Money Sense class was structured to cover two sessions, later expanded to four sessions, and then later retracted again to two sessions to respond to class interest and to focus more narrowly on teaching strategies for how to get the best value nutritionally and monetarily. Over time, the Money Sense curriculum was essentially incorporated into the nutrition education series, but the classes continued to be taught separately as well. By the end of the funding cycle, the Hunger Commission had taught Money Sense to 166 residents in 14 workshops.

Community Food Newsletter

The Hunger Commission created and distributed a free, bilingual (Spanish/English) newsletter aimed at a 4th to 5th grade reading level to promote nutrition education. The Hunger Commission encouraged readers to provide input as to the contents as well as submit articles. Most submissions they accrued were recipes. They also received some articles including one particularly interesting about World War II Victory Gardens. However, the majority of the content was written by Americorps*VISTA volunteers. Each issue focused on available food resources and programs, tips for healthy eating, and food-related news items (such as the possibility of supermarket and Farmers' Market moving to the neighborhood). An article about the Food Stamp Program garnered more attention than any other newsletter articles. People said they appreciated the recipes, too. Americorps*VISTA volunteers distributed 3000-3500 copies of each issue to approximately 70 neighborhood distribution sites.

The project found that creating and distributing the newsletter was time consuming and not financially feasible without sustained grant funding. In 2003, they sought out another group to take on the production. The North Sacramento Union agreed to continue hosting a health and

nutrition page in their free monthly newspaper if, in exchange, the project agreed to continue writing articles for it. This arrangement eased the burden of creating a newsletter from start to finish, however it posed a few disadvantages because the North Sacramento Union's distribution area was more limited, the content was monolingual (English), and the articles were aimed for an audience with a higher level of literacy. These concessions were not ideal, but the arrangement ensured that the nutrition education articles would be continued after grant funding ceased.

Nutrition Education for Youth Garden Project

For numerous months, the Hunger Commission provided monthly nutrition education for a group of youth participating in a youth garden project. Asian Resources, another community non-profit organization, acted as the lead agency for the Weed and Seed garden project in the Avondale/Glen Elder neighborhoods where fifteen low-income youth designed, created, and maintained a large plot in an existing community garden. They had asked the Hunger Commission to supplement the gardening activities with interactive nutrition education and cooking classes for the youth. Each month, under the guidance of the Hunger Commission, the youth chose the dinner menus in which they made healthier versions of traditional favorites, helped prepare the meals, and cleaned up. Eight months after beginning work on this project, Asian Resources lost their funding and ended the nutrition education/cooking component.

Web-Based Nutrition Education

The Hunger Commission developed a curriculum aimed at empowering people to use the Internet to seek out nutrition-related information. The intent of the classes was to bridge the "digital divide" in low-income areas and help people become more comfortable with computers and the Internet. As part of the curriculum, the project distributed handouts of recommended nutrition information websites to guide the participants to reputable sources. In teaching the classes, the Hunger Commission facilitators found that the initial curriculum was too basic, as most people had general familiarity with the Internet, and others were more comfortable asking the facilitator their nutrition questions than searching online. In response to this finding, they redesigned the curriculum to teach to a more advanced level.

Nutrition Education for SRO Residents

The Hunger Commission collaborated with three other agencies to create an interactive 8-class curriculum offered bi-monthly to address the nutritional needs of the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residents. This project was not funded by the *Network*, but it was consistent with the goal of providing nutrition education to low-income communities conducted as a part of this grant. Each week, the class focused on a different segment of the food pyramid. They based the content of the classes to reflect and make the most of SRO residents' living circumstances, such as limited food resources and compromised cooking facilities. The instruction provided to this group took into consideration the fact that SRO residents do not have kitchens and only have access to communal microwaves or crockpots for cooking. Moreover, the recipes they taught used ingredients available at the Downtown Food Closet. The biggest challenge for this project was persuading the residents to participate consistently throughout the eight class series. Eventually, the project transferred oversight to the UC Co-operative Extension Program nutrition

education staff.

Food Access Intervention Activities

In carrying out the nutrition education activities, the project came to appreciate that their target audience also required access to healthy foods as well as the resources to acquire them in order to really improve their food security.

Transportation

One of the findings from the Hunger Commission's 1999-2000 assessment was that residents of North Sacramento lacked adequate transportation to food resources. During the project period (but not funded by the Food Security grant), the Hunger Commission participated in the "Neighborhood Ride" community advisory group in which they advocated for an affordable Neighborhood Ride shuttle system in North Sacramento to increase residents' ability to get to grocery stores. They recommended to the advisory group that the shuttle routes take into consideration the location of food resources including neighborhood stores, food closets, and a supermarket north of town. Once the shuttle was in operation, the Hunger Commission conducted outreach through flyer distribution and the Community Food Newsletter to publicize the shuttle and its three routes. As the project's grant came to completion, the neighborhood Ride program was still in place, transporting low-income and disabled residents to the grocery store, and providing a needed benefit to the community (Jake Salcone phone interview, August 29, 2005).

Sacrament Neighborhood Ride Shuttle

Farmers' Market/Supermarket

In 2001 and 2002, the Hunger Commission also supported the work of a local Community Development Corporation that was trying to bring a Farmers' Market to North Sacramento. The Sacramento area supports 10 Certified Farmers' Markets (CFM) all run by the same family and administered by one market manager. These markets have repeatedly refused to accept food stamps. The manager of the Sacramento Certified Farmers' Markets (CFM) opposed the idea of a North Sacramento CFM invoking the argument that there had been a farmers' market in the area in the past, but it did not receive sufficient support from the community to survive.

Throughout the remainder of the project, Hunger Commission staff continued to advocate to the CFM manager to establish a farmers' market in North Sacramento, and to include the acceptance of food stamps as a means for making the market accessible for low-income residents. In 2005, a newly funded *Network* food security project was successful in opening a farmers' market in the

area. The new market established by the Health Education Council in partnership with Soilborn Farms features produce grown by local community gardeners and accepts food stamps (Jake Salcone phone interview, August 29, 2005).

The Hunger Commission supported a similar effort that attempted to attract a major supermarket to the area, but that effort, too, failed. According to a Hunger Commission staff member the supermarket concept received "little support from the Sacramento City Council member from the district." Thus, without the support of community officials, the concept was left without a champion. At the time of this report, it seemed unlikely that a supermarket would open in the near future in North Sacramento (Jake Salcone phone interview, August 29, 2005).

Community Food Assessment

In 2003, The Hunger Commission created a plan to conduct a community food assessment in the low-income, South Sacramento neighborhood of Avondale/Glen Elder, in which they analyzed food resources available and surveyed residents to better understand their barriers to access. The intent of the project was to increase awareness for and promote action to address food insecurity issues in the community. They carried out the project in collaboration with a network of organizations, most notably the Food Security Coalition.

This assessment was more comprehensive and targeted to a more restricted geographical area than the large-scale assessment the Hunger Commission performed prior to funding. They chose the Avondale/Glen Elder neighborhood because it offered a manageable size (1.6 square miles), clear neighborhood boundaries, a well-organized neighborhood community, and support from the region's City Council member. The Avondale/Glen Elder neighborhood is home to approximately 15,200 people, 37.1% of whom live at or below the poverty level. The ethnic composition of the neighborhood is primarily Asian or Pacific Islander (41%) or Latino (27%). Much of the neighborhood is foreign-born (37%), nearly 15% speak little or no English, and 43% do not have a high school diploma.[2]

In December 2003, the project assembled a diverse, active steering committee to promote community representation and guide the assessment. From January through May 2004, they utilized a variety of research and evaluation methods to conduct the assessment. They enlisted the help of 65 residents to participate in focus group surveys (administered orally, with a translator when needed) and individual surveys conducted at food closets and other locations. They utilized tools to evaluate and compare the food selection and prices offered as well as locations of community food resources including community gardens, farmers' markets/produce stands, food closets, hot meal programs/senior congregate meals, grocers, restaurants/fast-food, school food service, buying co-operatives. To this analysis, they added an examination of the role of other related factors such as transportation systems, policies, and government programs.

In the summer of 2004, they produced their findings in the Avondale/Glen Elder Community Food Assessment Report. In the report, they separated the effects of access to nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate food into three categories: (1) the community, (2) food resources, (3) influential factors (organizations, infrastructure, policy, etc.).

Edible Landscaping

The Hunger Commission took part in an ambitious project which transformed the traditional landscaping around a low-income housing development and converted it into a veritable edible garden. The original inspiration for the idea came from a trip by members of the Hunger Commission to the successful edible landscape at Park Williams apartments in Pomona, a project envisioned and created by a professor at Cal Poly-Pomona, Paul Sommers, and his students. The intent was to improve a sustainable food resource for residents by growing fruits and vegetables in the immediate vicinity of the development.

To accomplish this activity, the Hunger Commission worked in collaboration with a variety of other partners including the founder of the Sacramento Area Community Garden Coalition, Mercy Housing, Professor Paul Sommers, and the *Network*.

The project site they chose was the Kennedy Estates apartments, a 100 unit low-income housing development, home to approximately 340 diverse, multi-ethnic residents with average household incomes of $18,000. Many of the residents were Chinese, Hmong, Mien, and Vietnamese and fewer than 30% of the development's households spoke English at home.

Before planting, the Hunger Commission sought to engage residents, secure their buy-in, and ascertain their preferences. They traveled door-to-door to survey the inhabitants of the apartments. With translation assistance from other residents, they asked people what fruits and vegetables they most frequently purchased and enjoyed, what they would like to have growing, as well as whether or not they were interested in helping with the project. They determined what would be grown according to the survey results (as well as feasibility and cost).


Breaking ground on the Edible Landscape Project

In March 2004, with the help of volunteers, residents, and donors, they planted trees, vines, and other plants in place of the traditional landscaping. Determining what was to go where and designing around the existing landscaping, they found to be more difficult than if had they started with a clear, unplanted location. A month later, in April, they added herbs, vegetables, grapevines, as well as blueberry bushes.

The project faced a setback later in April when they discovered that eleven of the citrus trees had been stolen from where they had been planted. After filing an insurance claim, they were able to replace the trees and replant them. The facility residents supported the project and vowed to keep watch over the newly planted trees so they would not be stolen again.

The success of the Kennedy Estates project can be measured by the 80 fruit trees, bushes, vines, vegetables, and herbs thriving around the facility. Furthermore, many of 100 Kennedy Estates households have begun to grow herbs and vegetables in their small courtyard. The novelty and success of the project garnered media attention with two features in the regional newspaper, the *Sacramento Bee*.

Once the garden was in place, they added nutrition education components to supplement the program. They created informational placards for the trees which listed the name (in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese), the harvest season, and the FDA nutrition information. They also obtained a variety of curricula from the *Network* for working with children. They planned to teach youth residents at the Kennedy Estates after-school program about healthfulness of fruits and vegetables using the community garden as hands-on educational tool.

Looking into the future, the Hunger Commission hoped to organize harvest celebrations, cooking classes, and a multi-cultural edible landscaping cookbook to commemorate the success of the edible landscaping project at Kennedy Estates. The housing developer for Kennedy Estates, Mercy Housing, expressed interest in participating in more edible landscaping projects. Likewise, the Hunger Commission was looking into other possible sites for edible landscaping and other opportunities to collaborate with other low-income housing entities, such as Habitat for Humanity.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

A discussion of the challenges and lessons learned experienced by the Hunger Commission is broken down into the project's three main focuses: nutrition education, community assessment, and edible landscaping.

Nutrition Education

In conducting the nutrition education, the Hunger Commission found that the greatest challenge, especially during the first year, was sustaining attendance to multi-session workshops by participants. Although participants were interested, many of them led stressed, busy lives which made it more difficult for them to attend consecutively. For instance, a woman might attend a class and be unable to attend the next one due to lack of child care. This caused the Hunger Commission to question the amount of impact they were making with those participants who only attended a few of the sessions. They struggled with how to reach more people and how to increase the breadth and depth of the nutrition classes. Another concern for the project was not knowing the level of impact their classes may have had on participants. They did not conduct any follow-up with participants in the weeks and months after the classes to assess if they recalled what they had learned and had changed behaviors as a result of the classes.

Overall, the Hunger Commission learned some important lessons. They gained an appreciation for the "importance of flexibility." The number of sessions in the nutrition education classes and the Smart Money workshops were both designed to provide flexibility. The type and amount of content could expand or retract to best meet the needs of various participant groups. Additionally, the curriculums offered adaptability with regards to the participants' age and circumstances (e.g. ESL classes and developmentally disabled groups).

Despite their successes in conducting nutrition education, at the end of the project, the Hunger Commission came to feel that nutrition education alone was not sufficient to solve food security. They learned to appreciate the importance of linking with other activities such as increasing access to and participation in Food Stamps to complement the nutrition education.

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Food Assessment

The greatest challenges confronted by the Hunger Commission in carrying out the Food Assessment study in Avondale/Glen Elder were related to the variety of cultures and languages represented in the area. In their final report, the Hunger Commission explained, "While the plurality of cultures, languages, and ethnic groups in Avondale/Glen Elder is one of the neighborhood's greatest attributes, this diversity created many barriers to our research; cultural barriers were possibly at the forefront." They found that many residents were skeptical of their intentions. For instance, one group of Mien seniors were reluctant to speak openly about their food habits and could not comprehend the Hunger Commission's questions about the food access barriers they faced, even with the help of an interpreter. The language and cultural barriers were made even greater due to the fact that most of those volunteers and agencies assisting with the surveys frequently did not represent members of the community (by race or language). Therefore, the report suffered from an under representation of non-English speakers (Hispanic, Russian, Ukrainian, South-East Asian). They attempted to ensure representation of the community, but felt they were not as successful as they would have liked due, in part, to limited time and resources. They also found that those residents who were most willing to talk (usually English speakers, assimilated into mainstream American society) were more frequently represented.

Language and cultural differences were not the only obstacles the Hunger Commission faced. While conducting the assessment, a community organization (Weed and Seed) that had served as a central link to the community endured changes in management which resulted in more trying communication. Looking back, they also wished they had conducted more extensive testing of measurement and evaluation tools prior to implementation. More precise tools might have been more efficient and resulted in improved data.

Edible Landscaping

Edible landscaping, as a method for combating food insecurity, is a long-term approach. Considering the multiple tasks of planning, gaining the trust of skeptical residents, planting, waiting for growth, and ongoing maintenance, the approach does not offer immediate solutions nor rewards.

Carrying out the edible landscaping project at Kennedy Estates, the Hunger Commission faced numerous challenges. They spent a lot of time working with the residents to determine their wishes for the garden and building their trust for the project. They understood that residents needed to be involved and feel like they were responsible for the gardens in order to instill ownership so that they would maintain care for the trees and plants over time and harvest and eat the produce. This process was complicated by significant cultural and language barriers. Moreover, the fact that the apartment complex had a high turnover rate as residents moved in an out, they found that a regular promotion strategy was needed to sustain the project.

The Hunger Commission received thousands of dollars worth of donated plants and trees to carry out the project. They were grateful for the donations that, essentially, made the project possible, but they realized that such donations do not always come through and this would have to be a consideration if they took on other edible landscape project.

In thinking about the process, the Hunger Commission commented that it would have been preferable to have started with an edible landscape instead of having to transition from a traditional landscape. Conversely, had the land had been clear and had they planted before involving the community, they might not have been able to get residents “on board.”

It goes without saying that the theft of the citrus trees within months of their planting was another major setback for the project. Fortunately, they were able to recoup the trees and were encouraged by residents to replant them.

Another lesson for the project was the important role played by resident youth. They served as interpreters in the door-to-door interviews to explain the project and ask what plants residents wanted. With approximately 30% of residents speaking a language other than English at home, their cooperation was critical to communication. The project found that the youth were more easily engaged in the project and showed much more enthusiasm than adult residents on the first planting day. By involving and engaging youth, they took better care of the plants than they might have otherwise.

Conclusions

The Hunger Commission took on a variety of activities in carrying out their project. They conducted nutrition education using multiple curriculums aimed at various audiences, trained other social service providers, offered money management workshops, distributed newsletters on nutrition issues, advocated for improved transportation and new grocery stores/farmers’ market in the community, researched and produced a food assessment survey, and developed an

innovative edible landscape for a housing development. They experimented with a variety of strategies (e.g. train the trainer, web-based nutrition education, money management) with various populations (e.g. housing development residents, SRO residents, teen gardeners).

Most of their innovative ideas for addressing food insecurity were successful and led to improved outcomes. Nonetheless, a few of the programs were less successful. As in all experimentation processes, some ideas work better than others. In this project, some did not reach a large audience and others suffered from external challenges that were difficult to overcome. Examples of this latter category were the advocacy to bring a grocery store/farmers' market to the neighborhood, the SRO classes, and the web-based classes. All in all, though, the Hunger Commission achieved successful outcomes in those projects in which they invested the most time and energy.

One key to success in many of the activities was the Hunger Commission's strategic use of collaboration. Perhaps in part because the agency itself is comprised of members representing other entities, the Hunger Commission proved to be effective at partnering with other organizations seeking similar goals. Multiple times, they proved to implement this strategy, drawing on their own resources and abilities and complementing that with what other agencies were able to bring to the table.

Another resource they used to their advantage was the skills offered by the agency's Americorps*VISTA volunteers. These volunteers proved to be a dynamic, committed, cost-effective resource. They did everything from developing curriculums, making presentations, teaching classes, writing newsletter articles, and distributing newsletters.

One challenge that seemed to carry over between multiple projects was the difference in language and culture of the community members. To their credit, the Hunger Project did try to bridge this gap in the production of their newsletter by translating each issue into English and Spanish. However, in other projects, most notably the community food assessment and the edible landscaping venture, language and culture differences proved to be sizeable barriers. Perhaps they could have improved communication by drawing on bilingual/bicultural skills of community members and collaborating agencies. Given more extensive resources, engaging help from others to act as interpreters probably would have been less demanding and more fruitful for the project.

While the Hunger Commission project reached a variety of audiences, it was not always clear how much impact they made. With regards to evaluation, they often tracked the number of people who attended the classes, but seldom conducted any kind of formal assessment, such as pre- and post-testing or interviews to measure any change in knowledge or behavior. Not only would more extensive evaluation have provided documentation of their efforts, but process evaluation would have given them strategies for improving programs as they were being implemented.

The Hunger Commission conducted a variety of projects, and they all appeared to be grounded in the findings from their assessment activities. They spent significant time and energy to understand the communities in which they worked. They involved the community in guiding

their assessments and actively solicited their input so that they could understand the barriers they faced and the solutions they proposed. Utilizing a community-driven process ensured that the project addressed those needs most pertinent for the community in a manner that was likely to lead to improved food security.

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SECTION X: Sustainable Economic Enterprise of Los Angeles

Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles

Project Location and Background

Hollywood is a district located in the northwest region of Los Angeles in Southern California. Historically, the district is best known for its association with the movie industry, although many of the entertainment industry companies have since moved to the neighboring town of Burbank.

The Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA) conducted the *Network*-funded food security project. SEE-LA is a private, non-profit community development corporation that was established in 1996 and evolved from the accomplishments of a local commercial street revitalization project, the Hollywood Revitalization Effort (HERE). HERE played a significant role in starting the Hollywood Farmers' Market, currently a thriving 13-year old institution and one of the largest farmers' markets in Southern California. SEE-LA took over support for the operation of the market located in West Hollywood which boasts weekly attendance by approximately 90 farmers, 30 local artisans, and 30 baked goods and prepared food vendors.[1]

SEE-LA's stated mission is "to promote and engage in self-sustaining community and economic development activities within the city of Los Angeles, including sustainable food systems, social and cultural programs, and economic revitalization."[2]

In this project they proposed to improve nutrition prospects for the densely populated, low-income residents of Hollywood in a program designed to increase fresh produce consumption, encourage more healthful choices to promote health and prevent disease, and improve access to fresh produce. They facilitated access to affordable fresh fruits and vegetables primarily through the provision of nutrition education classes and the establishment of satellite farmers' markets in the neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles.

When SEE-LA started the project, they focused on the population of 1.2 million people living within the five mile radius surrounding the Hollywood Farmers' Market. Socioeconomically, sixty-five percent of this group had a low to moderate income (compared to 50% nationwide) and 22% lived below the federal poverty level (compared to 15% nationwide). The ethnic composition of this population included 44% Latino, 33% White, 16% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 7% African American. Aside from the demographic profile of this group, perhaps the most compelling reason for initiating their project in this area was that the leading causes of death in Hollywood at the time they started were heart disease, cancer, cardiovascular disease (diseases linked to nutrition and lifestyle).[3]

Project Goals

Listed below are SEE-LA's goals and objectives for the entire four year grant period.

Goal: *To increase fruit and vegetable consumption and encourage healthier food choices overall by Hollywood's low-income families to promote health and prevent disease.*

Year 1 Objectives:

1. *Develop and pilot test at least six cooking and healthy eating classes for 60 families' primarily meal preparers and food shoppers that teach fresh produce selection, preparation, and general healthy eating principles*
2. *Build operations infrastructure and specify procedures for implementing cooking and healthy eating classes*

Year 2 Objectives:

1. *Expand pilot class curriculum from three to six classes and deliver four six-week class series at four different community partners' sites (15-20 participants per class)*
2. *Recruit and train four area residents to assist in teaching*
3. *Screen and qualify additional class sites*

Year 3 Objectives:

1. *Conduct a focus group session to include at least 5-10 partners, mentors, class participants, and stakeholders, and obtain program comments. Qualify and identify three additional sites for "Good Cooking" classes. Recruit and train one additional team teacher. Host a potluck or Fall Festival Cook-Off at Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market for class participants and community at large.*
2. *By March 31, 2003, deliver three sessions of six-week classes (15 students per class) for a total of 18 classes at three locations. Revise curriculum and assess class material on an ongoing basis. Recruit and provide training for one or more Team Teachers.*
3. *By June 31, 2003, deliver three series of six-week classes. Revise curriculum and assess class material. Recruit and provide training for one or more Team Teachers.*
4. *By September 30, 2003, deliver three series of six-week classes. Revise curriculum and assess class material. Recruit and provide training for one or more Team Teachers.*

Year 4 Objectives:

1. *Conduct a focus group session to include at least 5-10 partners, mentors, class participants, and stakeholders, and obtain program comments. Qualify and identify three additional sites for "Good Cooking" classes. Recruit and train one additional team teachers. Host a potluck or cooking contest at one or more farm stands for class participants and community at large.*
2. *By March 31, 2004, deliver three series of six-week classes (15 students per class) for a total of 18 classes at three locations. Revise curriculum and assess class material on an ongoing basis. Recruit and provide training for one or more Team Teachers.*

3. *By June 30, 2004, deliver three series of six-week classes. Revise curriculum and assess class material. Recruit and provide training for one or more Team Teachers.*

Goal: *To improve low-income shoppers' access to farmers' markets and locally grown, affordable fresh produce.*

Year 1 Objectives:

1. *Devise a plan to operate weekly "farm stands" at agencies or locations convenient to cooking class participants and the populations they are drawn from*

Year 2 Objectives:

1. *Secure sites, recruit farmers, and pilot test farm stands near partners' facilities*
2. *Recruit a minimum of 100 families, 75% low-income, to shop at farm stands*
3. *Identify three new potential farm stand sites*

Year 3 Objectives:

1. *Continue to plan the start-up of Central Avenue Farmers' Market, developing marketing materials and planning for the grant shopping. Continue to operate and make necessary adjustments for Hollywood-Sears and Media District Farmers' Markets. Assess markets for year-round or seasonal operation, and if seasonal, plan reopening the markets when the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program begins distributing Senior FMNP and WIC coupons.*
2. *Continue planning and coordinating with at least three partners and promoting Central Avenue Farmers' Market start-up and opening day, March 22, 2003. Continue operation, promotion, and outreach for SEE-LA operated farmer to Table farmers' markets.*
3. *Continue development of the new Central Avenue Farmers' Market. Continue operation, promotion, and outreach for SEE-LA operated Farm to Table farmers' markets.*

Year 4 Objectives:

1. *By September 30, 2004, continue operation, promotion and outreach for SEE-LA operated Farm to Table farmers' markets.*
2. *By December 31, 2003, initiate resource development plan for start-up and operation expenses, carry out initial customers' survey and access feasibility for new Farmers' Market. Continue operation, promotion and outreach for SEE-LA operated Farm to Table Farmers' Markets.*
3. *By March 31, 2004, meet with local community organizations to plan the farmers' market start-up/opening. Continue operations, promotion and outreach for SEE-LA operated Farm to Table farmers' markets.*
4. *By June 2004, open a new farmers' market. Continue operation, promotion and outreach for SEE-LA-operated Farm to Table farmers' markets.*

Goal: *To increase collaborative partnerships to expand nutrition education opportunities to low-income families in South Central Los Angeles and Hollywood areas.*

Objectives:

1. *Support community, regional, and statewide efforts towards nutrition education promotion by participating with local coalition and collaborative partner activities and 1-2 regional coalitions and 3-5 meetings/trainings.*
2. *Attend Network-sponsored trainings and conferences*

Goal: *To promote health and prevent disease for food stamp/EBT recipients by encouraging them to shop for fresh fruits and vegetables at SEE-LA's farmers' markets: Hollywood FM, Hollywood-Sears FM, and Central Avenue FM.*

Objectives:

1. *By March 2004, train staff and volunteers in the use of handheld EBT machines*
2. *By September 2004, conduct outreach and promotion to all residents in neighborhoods surrounding the farmers' markets.*

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

Good Cooking/Buena Cocina Cooking Classes

SEE-LA offered a cooking class in the target community with the intent to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and improve food choices among low-income families to promote health and prevent disease.


Good Cooking Class Instructor Cynthia Agustin

In developing the Good Cooking class curriculum, the SEE-LA Project Coordinator/Instructor considered various models in use by other programs. The Coordinator/Instructor not only reviewed materials, but also observed classes in operation at the Sustainable Food Center in Austin, Texas. Through the process, the project learned important considerations from operating successful programs such as the concept of offering a series of classes (compared to one dose) and having two facilitators teach the class (instead of limiting it to one).

They chose the Sustainable Food Center's *Cocina Alegra* as the primary model for the program and created a pilot cooking series of three classes which they planned to eventually expand to six classes.

During the first year of funding, the Coordinator/Instructor conducted the three-session pilot at three different locations: a Hollywood WIC office, a community room of a subsidized housing complex, and a classroom for parenting teens at McAlister High School. They found that marketing the class as a cooking class rather than a nutrition class helped to improved recruitment and reception to the concept. Nutrition was naturally incorporated into each lesson. SEE-LA recruited class facilitators from a local health promotion program, Hathaway Family Services, and trained them to co-facilitate the classes with the Instructor/Coordinator. For each class they taught, SEE-LA provided participants with stipends ($15 cash and $10 in coupons redeemable at the Hollywood Farmers' Market). SEE-LA solicited feedback from pilot class participants and evaluated the sessions to drive program changes.

At the end of the first year, they reached 135 individuals (15 women participated in each series of classes), 95% of whom were mothers (many brought their children), each had an average of four low-income individuals living in their household, and 90% were Latina. Most of the participants in the series were parents of school aged children and "promotoras" (community health promoters). Participating "promotoras" expressed interest in adding what they had learned in the classes to their own programs, thus ensuring that the messages continued to permeate the community.

The course covered the basics of healthy eating and each class focused on a key topic such as the food pyramid, understanding nutrition labels, portion sizes, or the health implications of various foods. The interactive and participatory classes used ingredients from the farmers' market for cooking demonstrations. They chose recipes designed to fit into the budget and schedule of working families. SEE-LA encouraged participants to prepare the recipes at home and facilitated this outcome by providing them with the ingredients for the day's recipe at the end of each class. They emphasized the farmers' market in each of the classes by offering sampling opportunities to introduce "new" produce, linking the foods to their nutritive value, and taking a "field trip" to the market for the last class to further increase produce consumption.


Good Cooking Class Instruction

As a further incentive to try fruits and vegetables, SEE-LA distributed "Market Money," coupons redeemable at the Hollywood Farmers' Market to Good Cooking class participants. They dispersed the coupons at the last class of each series. In the first year $170 coupons were given out, but at reporting time only $8 had been redeemed at the market. SEE-LA surmised that

the low redemption rate might have been due to the lack of behavior change, but might have more accurately reflected other barriers participants faced in attending Farmers' Markets.

SEE-LA received positive feedback on the class content and most participants reported enjoying the classes in the pilot series. Of particular interest were the recipes and the opportunity to learn about alternative ways of cooking fruits and vegetables. Class participation fluctuated and declined over the three-sessions even though they offered classes to groups that already met at scheduled times. They re-examined the scheduling and venue types to ensure they were a good match for participants' lives.

Introducing the Food Pyramid

Some participants suggested that others may have dropped out of the class due to the absence of meat in the menu repertoire. To improve the class, participants suggested offering more opportunities to take part in food preparation, allowing participants to share their own recipes, teaching meal planning techniques, and using meat in demonstration recipes.

Findings from the three-class pilot were promising. Participants retained an understanding about the concept of balanced eating, were able to recall food groups and some recommended portion sizes, and reported having tried new fruits and vegetables, read nutritional labels, and cooked with less fat as a result of the class. They also learned that participants had a hard time retaining some detailed information (such as dietary fiber and portion sizes) and providing only three classes did not offer sufficient repetition of the material to foster long-term learning. Attesting to participants' interest in Good Cooking, after the classes ended, a number of participants called SEE-LA to inquire about when the series would start again.

As SEE-LA gained experience in teaching the classes, they found that transferring some of the ownership of the class to participants was an effective strategy. As a result, participants were more adventurous and they revealed they were more knowledgeable and proficient than had been assumed because of cultural expectations about some healthy cooking techniques such as cooking with oils like olive oil and canola oil. When participants requested they make dishes that were not as healthy, the instructor honored the requests, but taught them to cook healthier versions (such as carrot cake or fruit crisp in the case of a dessert request).

SEE-LA also worked to build and strengthen the operational infrastructure to support the class including developing linkages with Farmers' Market farmers; defining clear roles and responsibilities early; outlining systems for communication, coordination, and reporting; and determining outreach and marketing strategies to promote the classes.

After the pilot, SEE-LA sought out venues to host the expanded six-series program. Among their

criteria for selecting sites, they investigated organizations that would benefit from the program, venues with adequate facilities for conducting food demonstration, and organizations that expressed interest in the collaboration. They decided to continue with the three existing pilot sites and add a fourth site, Walden House, a transitional house for women. Walden House is a non-profit, comprehensive substance abuse treatment center with locations throughout California.[4]

They revised the curriculum in response to feedback from participants and evaluation learnings from the pilot classes to better reflect the community's needs. The Sustainable Food Center in Austin, Texas advised them in the process of how to expand the program. The SEE-LA Instructor/Coordinator divided the six class content according to the six USDA food pyramid components: grains, fruit, vegetables, protein, dairy, and fats. Compared to the pilot, the expanded curriculum provided additional opportunities for repetition of primary messages to improve recall.

In the second year of the project, SEE-LA developed several evaluation methods to monitor the classes and measure outcomes. These methods included pre- and post-testing, last-class evaluations, and a worksheet that recorded data (including class attendance, lifestyle habits, income, and WIC/food stamp usage). At the end of each class, SEE-LA compiled and summarized the classes' findings and frequently shared them with the hosting organization.

Twice during the funding period, SEE-LA conducted focus groups to solicit feedback about how the classes were going. The first groups were held in December 2002 to review the classes with ten Good Cooking stakeholders (including a WIC representative, the Director of Parents Programs at Santa Monica Boulevard Elementary School, community organizers, three dieticians from DHS, and a former student-turned Team Teacher). *Network* evaluation consultants, Dan and Denise Perales, assisted the project with developing the focus group questions. Most of the feedback provided was positive and the focus group participants offered some suggestions for improving the program. Members recommended SEE-LA provide Team Teachers with a script of the class content in English and Spanish including a vocabulary list to have on hand to facilitate translation, streamline the format of the class to simplify messages, and enhance recruitment of Team Teachers by marketing the position as a paid internship. The Instructor/Coordinator incorporated the suggestions into the existing curriculum, with special attention to simplifying messages. An example of the simplified messages for the first lesson, entitled "Grains," consisted of a food group message (whole grains), a health message (fiber), a cooking message (cooking whole grains), and a food safety message (cleanliness).

In 2004, SEE-LA held another focus group, this one comprised primarily of former students and Team Teachers so they could learn about how to enrich the Team Teacher component. The participants recommended that SEE-LA offer classes, stipends, and full-time work for the Team Teachers. With regards to the class, the focus group participants had good things to say and suggested a few modifications: further expand the class and teach in private homes; target participants receiving welfare, DPSS, and WIC call lists; and provide childcare for participants.

In the third year of the program, SEE-LA expanded the classes in East Hollywood and South

Central Los Angeles, conducting sessions at six new sites. During this time, they continued to revise and improve the class curriculum in response to feedback and evaluation results. The Instructor/Coordinator worked with a Registered Dietician who helped revise the Good Cooking curriculum and analyze the recipes classifying composition of calories, protein, fat, and fiber. They also started to offer graduation diplomas at the end of each series which served as an effective incentive to improve class enthusiasm and attendance.

To promote the Farmers' Market and promote healthy cooking, in November 2002, Good Cooking sponsored a cooking contest called "Calabasa Cook-Off" at the Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market. Contestants, including some past class participants and other members of the community, submitted dishes they made with butternut, acorn, and spaghetti squashes provided to them. Dishes included empanadas, soup, pies, and "pizzas" made from the squash.

SEE-LA's presence in the community and at weekly farm stands helped to boost demand for the classes. As the number of classes and participants multiplied, the project found that their program statistics became more robust and more strongly reflected the health and needs of those served. In the third year, the Instructor/Coordinator taught nine series (54 classes) at sites that ranged from elementary and high schools, to senior and HIV-resident housing and free clinics.

In the fourth year, the Instructor/Coordinator provided another nine series of Good Cooking to approximately 135 individuals including parents of elementary school children, Latina community health promoters, and special needs individuals. They offered the classes at some venues that had previously hosted classes due to demand, impact, and proximity to farm stands including Vine Street Elementary, Wadsworth Elementary, Korean Health Education. And, they added new programs at Hooper Elementary School's Healthy Start and West Hollywood Elementary.

In the final year of funding, SEE-LA turned towards continuing expansion and ensuring the sustainability of the Good Cooking classes. They focused their efforts on the Team Teachers to help in this goal because they were effective community leaders and could mobilize people. To outreach to this group, the Instructor/Coordinator presented and demonstrated at a conference, Opportunities Without Limits/Opportunidades Sin Limites, sponsored by EsperanSalud, a community health promoter agency in Los Angeles.

The Korean Health, Education, Information and Research (KHEIR) Center's community health promoters, who were familiar with the Good Cooking curriculum, also helped to widen the reach and impact of the program. Another outreach opportunity surfaced when, after teaching a class at Wadsworth Elementary, the Instructor/Coordinator was invited to teach a monthly demonstration for Project CAFÉ (Community Action of Food Environments), a grassroots collaboration between schools communities, and health organizations.

Food Access Intervention Activities

Farm Stands

SEE-LA embarked on an effort to expand the reach of the Hollywood Farmers' Market and improve access to locally grown, fresh, affordable produce for low-income residents who lack quality food resources, do not have adequate transportation, and suffer from disproportionate rates of hunger and diet-related diseases. Essentially, they facilitated bringing the farmers to neighborhoods in the form of farm stands, mini-certified farmers' markets that were satellites of the larger Hollywood Farmers' Market, each with five to six vendors. The participating vendors accepted payment in WIC or senior farmers' market nutrition program coupons, cash, or food stamps/EBT.

SEE-LA used the neighborhoods surrounding the Good Cooking class sites as a starting point for determining farm stand sites. They chose locations taking into consideration farmers' sales expectations (approximately $500 per farmer per week), peak traffic hours, and property owners' concerns. At the end of the first year, after investigating several sites, SEE-LA narrowed their decision and initiated negotiations with two sites.

SEE-LA learned that the permit requirements for the farm stands matched those of larger farmers' markets, so they obtained permits for each farm stand site from the California Department of Agriculture, the County Health Department, and the City of Los Angeles. In the process, they also learned that the permission requirements could be avoided in the case of operating at public schools because they are on public property and have jurisdiction over their property.

In November 2001, SEE-LA launched the Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market in the lot of Sears department store in East Hollywood. SEE-LA had created an MOU with Sears to detail the arrangement for operating on their property. Local community organizations and health education groups attended the opening event. Neighboring youth and volunteers helped set up the market and six farmers sold their goods each week. Using an informal assessment method based on sales and revenues, SEE-LA estimated that they attracted approximately 75-100 weekly shoppers at the Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market.


Vendors and customers at Farmers' Market

In October 2002, the Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market held the first annual Fall Family Festival to encourage attendance at the market.

Approximately 900 people attended the event which offered a pumpkin decorating contest, the Good Cooking Calabasa Cook-Off, and booths sponsored by community groups.

The market struggled with low sales and minimal farmer participation through December, in part, due to the end of the WIC coupon distribution. SEE-LA conducted outreach to stakeholders to monitor interest in continuing the market through the winter. They unanimously supported keeping the market open.

SEE-LA also secured the site for the new Media District Farmers' Market, which opened in April 2002, with financial assistance to cover start-up and opening costs from the Media District Business Improvement District (BID). Likewise, the City of Los Angeles provided funding to support the project. Given the difficulties getting the Sears Market off the ground, the project turned to the *Network*'s evaluation consultants to assist them with revising their existing Farmers' Market "Customer Stakeholder Survey" to better gather information on what would attract more clientele, including what products they would like to see at the market, and what day and time to host the market.

SEE-LA CEO Pompea Smith (right), cuts cake to open Media District Market

Attendance at the farm stands by local residents was initially lower than had been anticipated. Consequently, the sales were poor which was a concern to justify farmers' participation in the endeavor. Lower sales were further influenced by an end to WIC farmers' market coupons as well as cooler winter days and less produce. In response, SEE-LA continued to publicize the markets and reminded themselves that more often than not, markets took some time to get established as shoppers discovered where they were and grew accustomed to the concept of a once-a-week market. As the markets struggled, SEE-LA looked into initiating activities to boost participation and purchases at the market including a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program called The Market Basket and an institutional buying program. SEE-LA realized the need to improve the link between the farm stands and the cooking classes, so they began purchasing cooking class ingredients from the farm stand farmers.

Despite their efforts, that November, the Media District Farmers' Market closed due to low customer participation, low sales, limited WIC farmers' market coupons, bad weather, and a general lack of community support.

SEE-LA conducted an assessment in the community to determine further support for reopening a market. They conducted outreach to the local Business Improvement District (BID) organization,

offices of City Council Districts 4 and 13, an elementary school parents' group, and the local Department of Water and Power (located adjacent to the market location). With cooperation from school officials, they also surveyed the parents of the local elementary school, Vine Street Elementary, and received more than 400 returned surveys. They also solicited funds from the City of Los Angeles' "Fresh Food Access" program and HUD's Community Development Block Grants to supplement farm stand operation for the next year. Although the community reacted positively to the Media District Farmers' Market moving onto the newly proposed site, the Vine Street Elementary School campus, SEE-LA lacked the endorsement of other agencies. The Los Angeles Unified School District legal department discouraged it, citing that the market was an "attractive nuisance." Additionally, with construction occurring on school grounds for the next two years, school administrators were worried that the market would impede traffic flow around the school if market hours were to extend into the afternoon. Reopening of the market was postponed indefinitely.

SEE-LA helped plan for the establishment of the Central Avenue Farmers' Market. They selected farmers and vendors so that the product mix was appropriate for the community and helped vendors with the permit applications. Once the Central Avenue Farmers' Market opened in March 2003, they worked with the City of Los Angeles Council District Office 9 to promote the market and encourage local restaurants to make purchases from the market. They also started events to increase outreach such as "Spring into Health," Master Gardner visits, and an "Ask the Dietician" booth.

In the third year of the project, there seemed to be a change in the tide for support of the markets. Communities started to view the market days as regular weekly events. The farm stands served to facilitate community connections. For instance, vendors' reliable participation at the market meant that shoppers could count on the availability of their produce. Moreover, they could get to know one another and vendors frequently hired community members to help on market days. Accordingly, community members began to express ownership of the farm stands and their success.


Farmers' Market shoppers

Although the farm stands were slow in getting established, by the fourth year SEE-LA could measure noteworthy success. The Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market celebrated three consecutive years in operation and the Central Avenue Farmers' Market celebrated its first anniversary.

SEE-LA helped to increase access to the markets for people who received federal assistance. In part because of SEE-LA's letter of endorsement of South Central WIC's application for Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons and its promise to open the Central Avenue Farmers' Market, the residents of South Central LA received coupons for the first time in history. The South LA Health Projects' WIC clinic in South Central, which was a strong supporter of the Central Avenue farm stand, was approved by the WIC Supplement Nutrition Branch of the California Department of Health Services for Farmers' Market Nutrition Program coupons. WIC coupon redemption increased significantly at both the Hollywood-Sears and the Central Avenue Farmers' Markets, with redemption more than doubling at the Central Avenue Farmers' Market (from $18,000 to $38,000). During the fourth year of the project, SEE-LA made the markets more accessible for residents through enabling markets with EBT technology and providing incentives to patrons to encourage their use.

SEE-LA continued to investigate potential satellite market site locations. To seek support from and discuss collaboration in this endeavor, they met with several community organizations and local representatives including the Los Angeles Food Justice Networ*k*, the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness, Community Build of Leimert Park, the Department of Water and Power, the Office of the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles, and City Council deputies. They solicited funding for the project from the Community Development Block Grants (City of Los Angeles-HUD funds), the City of Inglewood, and the Los Angeles Conservation Corps.

These activities, along with the leveraging of additional funds, points to the continued support to open new satellite markets.

Collaborative Partnerships

In their community development work, SEE-LA has an active history of pursuing and managing partnerships with organizations serving related purposes. They have continued this trend through this current project in which they participated in community, regional, and statewide collaborative efforts working towards nutrition education promotion and the opening of farm stands. A portion of their success can be attributed to the results born out of these relationships. Following is a list of their collaborative partnerships:

1. Founding member of the Food Justice Network (aided in the formation of the mayoral taskforce to address the issues of food security in Los Angeles)
2. Attended regional Food Security Taskforce meetings, *Network*'s ABCD Social Marketing conferences, media, and focus groups sponsored by *Network*
3. Teamed up with LAUSD Network to coordinate and to bring an understanding of farming to urban schools through the "Bring the Farmer to Your School" program
4. Partnered with LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness and Public Health Foundation Enterprises WIC clinics (to pilot community-supported agriculture program, The Market Basket)
5. Joined with the County of Los Angeles Department of Health Services (through programs such as Project Lean and "Ask the Dietician" at the markets)
6. Worked with DHS dieticians (who donated time to develop and analyze the Good

Cooking curriculum)

7. Collaborated with other partners in their network to promote nutrition education including: UCCE's 5-A-Day Power Play!, Food Stamp Program, Master Gardener Program, local WIC clinics, elementary schools and parent centers, senior centers, the Santa Monica/Western Residents Group, the Los Angeles Police Department Hollywood Division, the Department of Aging, Friends of the Certified Farmers' Markets, The American Cancer Society, Los Angeles Council Districts (4, 8, 9, & 13), Dunbar Economic Development Corporation, Hollywood Community Housing Corporation, and EsperanSalud

Food Stamp Intervention Activities

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Promotion

SEE-LA recognized the importance of promoting and facilitating food stamp/EBT at the local farmers' markets as a means to encourage shopping for and consumption of fresh produce. In September 2003, six SEE-LA staffers attended a training workshop at SEE-LA offices to learn new EBT technology that would encourage farmers' market shopping by food stamp recipients. This was feasible because they worked with the central DPSS office in order to offer the new technology.

SEE-LA worked to help those who qualified for food stamps to enroll in the program. They met with the DPSS Director of the Food Stamp Program to discuss the development of a prescreening flyer to facilitate enrollment and an outreach strategy to distribute the flyers. They broadcasted their message about EBT to the community with presentations at local partner organizations, displays of EBT information at each of the markets, and posters positioned near and buttons worn by each vendor at the market. And, under a separate contract with the Berkeley Ecology Center, SEE-LA acted as the lead agency in the promotion of EBT at farmers' markets throughout Los Angeles County.

SEE-LA actively promoted the availability of food stamps/EBT acceptance at the market with the distribution of flyers at strategic locations. They created and distributed Farmers' Market flyers informing people about the availability of EBT at 22 markets in Los Angeles County in the community at the markets, community organizations, food banks, food lines, food pantries, health fairs, and schools in South Central and East Hollywood. Each week the Assistant Market Manager of the Hollywood-Sears Farmers' Market distributed roughly 100-200 flyers at the Wilshire Special Family, South Central, Metro North, and PATH Family DPSS offices. In the area surrounding the Central Avenue Farmers' Market, members of L.A. Clean & Green distributed 1,000 additional flyers. As a result of their outreach efforts, EBT redemption increased from $0 to $70-$200 dollars per day at the farm stands.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

In carrying out this project, SEE-LA experienced multiple successes, but their work was not without challenges. Things did not always happen as they envisioned and results did not always happen as quickly as they would have liked.

In the first year of offering the Good Cooking nutrition classes, SEE-LA experimented with methods to offer bilingual (English/Spanish) classes. In the process, they found that simultaneous English/Spanish instruction was cumbersome and time consuming. Moreover, they learned that the logistics were much easier if the two facilitators were bilingual in both languages.

Although the cooking classes became popular, encouraging sustained attendance for the entire series was a challenge. The classes were most popular with stay-at-home mothers and caregivers. The interaction and "liveliness" of each class was dependent on class participation. SEE-LA felt the need to continually develop new and creative attendance incentives. They experimented with a variety of inducements including, but not limited to, cookbooks, educational aids, free groceries at end of the end of a series, Market Money (vouchers to use at the farmers' market), class diplomas from city deputies, and graduation parties with opportunities for participants to show off their culinary talent. On the subject of incentives, SEE-LA found it helpful to ensure the retention of and encourage Team Teachers with the provision of a stipend for each class they co-facilitated.

In terms of logistics, the Coordinator/Instructor found that, overall, the mobile cooking equipment used for the cooking classes worked well, but it proved to be more challenging in those venues with multi-story facilities and small workspaces. The Coordinator/Instructor noted that the ideal facility would have had first-floor workspace and access to a standard-sized refrigerator and sink.

They made minor alterations to the cooking class curriculum over the project period to reflect participant feedback, evaluation findings, and lived experiences. Communicating the nutrition concepts was a fairly straightforward task, but they really struggled with conveying what they described as the "farmers' market concept" to class participants. They found that, the participants were frequently not aware of the social and economic importance of supporting farmers' markets. They theorized that this may have been because class time constraints limited them from communicating the message thoroughly, because urban residents lack a connection to the land, or perhaps class participants struggle daily with food insecurity, trying to choose between purchasing food and other necessities. To address this issue, SEE-LA scheduled the cooking classes within five miles of farm stands to help encourage the use of the markets. They also provided samples of produce from the farm stands and allowed participants to compare the taste and quality to that from a traditional grocery store. Participants noted a difference between them. Other ideas they considered included class visits to farm stands, farmer visits to the classroom, and distribution of seeds and small plants to participants.

One challenge for developing the farm stands was surmounting the logistics of obtaining support. Community input and involvement was essential, but required effort to attract and maintain that support. And once they developed partners, the project found it important to develop mutual

understanding for one another's' role in the project. In particular, they found that local government involvement was helpful with regards to farm stand site permits, publicity, and funding.

One of the biggest challenges when it came to collaborations for SEE-LA, was finding time to meet with the various stakeholders on the issues. The partnerships required regular monitoring and attention. SEE-LA staff, therefore, acted diligently in scheduling time to meet on the issues. They found that working in these collaborations, partners often had individual agendas and there were inevitable conflicts of interest. To address this, they found it helpful to be open to different perspectives. It was important to separate an individual organization's issues from those of the collaborative. They needed to be patient and move beyond individual agendas for the good of the partnership as well as clearly define each organization's role and communicate to all (using an MOU if necessary).

Once EBT acceptance was operational at the markets, SEE-LA found it challenging to reach people who needed the program to inform them it was available. They combined various approaches to tackle challenges from multiple directions. In short, they standardized the process, created publicity in the community, and outreached to farmers and managers. They worked closely with DPSS to promote the EBT availability at markets, facilitate qualification process, create rapid screening processes to employ at the markets, and arrange to have reps at the markets. They gradually built relationships with food stamp representatives and developed processes in order to break through the bureaucracy of the system. They created easy-to-read promotional material that explained the program and distributed directly at DPSS offices and farm stands. Plus, they constantly informed farmers and vendors that food stamp recipients wanted to shop at farmers' markets.

Conclusions

Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles accomplished many of their goals and objectives. They set out reasonable expectations about what they could accomplish and worked diligently to meet those goals and objectives. Most of their effort was expended in providing Good Cooking nutrition classes and opening satellite farm stands to improve access to produce. They also facilitated the acceptance and promotion of EBT at their markets to improve access for food stamp recipients. They offered programs and activities that complement one another, involved stakeholders, worked with local organizations and institutions, and educated and empowered the community. They utilized an integrated approach to improve food security and sustainability.

SEE-LA spent time to assess possible cooking class curricula before they settled on a model course. They even went so far as to observe classes at the Sustainable Food Center in Texas. With so many differing curricula, for different audiences, and with differing outcomes, they spent time to assess the options. They said that it was "important that we create a meaningful and universal curriculum for all groups."[5] And, once the curriculum was set, they created opportunities to further shape the classes to fit the needs of participants in any particular class.

For instance, from responses to in-take surveys, the class Instructor learned about participants' (and their families') health status, and hence could mold the established contents of each class to address their needs (e.g. focus on heart disease and diabetes if prevalence was high).

SEE-LA was strategic in recruiting participants and Team Teachers to help facilitate the Good Cooking classes. They targeted participants who were mothers of young children, thus increasing the likelihood that they will pass along their knowledge and behaviors to their children, and encouraged inclusion of "promotoras," who serve as community health workers in the community and expressed that they would incorporate what they learned into their own teaching.

SEE-LA can be commended for working so hard to develop the series of classes, however it is unclear to what extent they assessed the needs of the community prior to creating the curriculum. They had compiled some demographic figures which helped describe the community, but it does not appear that any formal assessment (such as focus groups or interviews) were conducted to ascertain the needs and desires of the community. As it turned out, once teaching the classes, the project was surprised that some of the participants were more knowledgeable about some healthy behaviors than they had expected (having relied on general cultural expectations). For instance, participants knew that olive oil was healthier than other fat sources such as lard or hydrogenated oils and, in fact, used them in their cooking.

SEE-LA worked closely with the community and the *Network* evaluation consultants to conduct assessments for the farm stands. They identified the community's needs with market surveys distributed at schools, WIC clinics, and other institutions, as well as door-to-door canvassing. They felt it was important to understand the unique economic, behavioral, and cultural influences at work within each particular area.

Like the classes, SEE-LA proved to be quite capable in opening and operating the satellite farm stands. They opened three stands, only two of which were able to sustain themselves. Probably the most significant challenge for the development of the satellite farm stands was ensuring their survival once they were operational. SEE-LA seemed to be proficient in finding sites and taking the necessary steps to get them up and running. But, attracting shoppers to them turned out to be more difficult. Although, in their experience establishing the markets took time, they found that some external factors such as unseasonably cold weather and an end to WIC farmers' market vouchers made their task more difficult. Even with these factors, they found it difficult to get neighbors to switch their established shopping habits and utilize the market. It seems improbable that there was not sufficient interest in the market in the community, and more likely that the other factors discussed here contributed to a slow start in attendance. Perhaps, a more aggressive incentive program, improved publicity, or working with a task force of residents on the issues would have helped to draw people to the market

Throughout, SEE-LA called on and maintained community involvement and grassroots methods. They worked with stakeholders and partnering agencies to negotiate relationships that met identified collaborative goals. Although this process was not always easy, they recognized their role in moving the process along, being patient, and clarifying roles and responsibilities with other organizations. Certainly, having a history of working collaboratively in the community was

an asset for them.

In addition to the *Network* funding, SEE-LA was successful in obtaining support and financial backing from local, state, and federal government representatives. They leveraged contracts with two city council districts (including subsidies for existing markets and seed monies to open new markets) to help augment the development of the farm stands. They secured supplemental funding from local Business Improvement District, the City of LA Community Development Block Grants, and the Community Redevelopment Agency which was used for the promotion, outreach, permits, insurance, and site equipment for farm stands.

In part because of the sustained funding, at the end of the project period, SEE-LA continued their plans to open additional farm stands in the community. They had active plans for two new farm stands: Atwater Village Farmers' Market (in a racially diverse, mixed income community) and Leimert Park Farmers' Market (in a historic, predominantly African American community).

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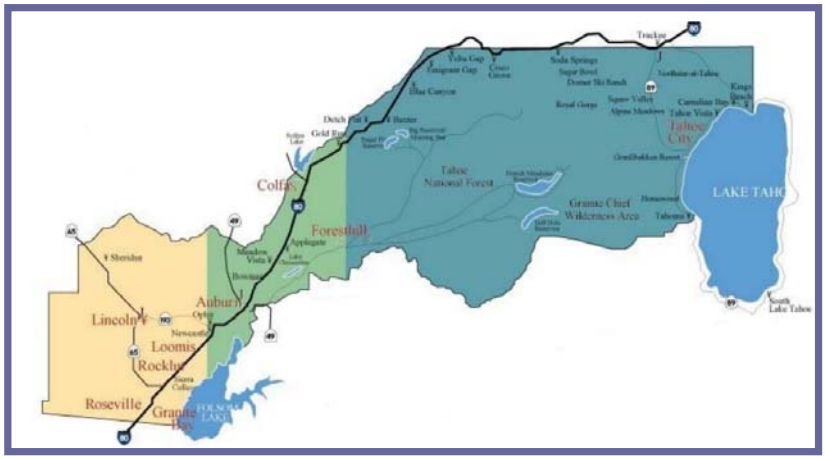
SECTION XI: University of California Cooperative Extension - Placer County

Project Location and Background

The University of California (UC) Cooperative Extension in Placer County is one of 64 Cooperative Extension centers in the state which concentrate on local issues. The UC Cooperative Extension centers work to bring the University's research-based information to Californians by linking the research with educational outreach. Partnering with federal, state, county, and private resources, the various UC specialists and county-based farm, home, and youth advisors customize the information to meet the needs in communities. They provide conferences, workshops, demonstrations, field days as well as outreach programs collaborating with 4-H youth, Master Gardeners, Master Food Shoppers, and others.[1]

The UC Cooperative Extension is situated in Auburn, California in Placer County. Placer County borders Sacramento County and the Nevada state line, extending from the valley floor through the Sierra foothills and mountains. Historically, it has served as a bedroom community to Sacramento County, though in recent years it has transitioned towards becoming a thriving retail, electronic, and telecommunication industry center and boasts a plethora of recreational activities for residents and visitors. Placer County is also among the more affluent counties in California and its residents enjoy average household incomes that are higher than the average for the state.[2]

According to the Sacramento Regional Research Institute (2001)[2] Placer County is the fastest growing county in the state.[2] In 2000, Placer County's population reached 248,399, reflecting a staggering 43.8% change from the previous 1990 U.S. Census.[3] The Sacramento Regional Research Institute projects an additional increase of 37% by the year 2010.[2] Some of the population increase has been fueled by a shift in the local economy as more jobs in retail, restaurant, hotel, and recreation industries have become available and lured people to the area.



Map of Placer County

Placer County is less ethnically diverse than many other regions in California, but in recent years the ethnic composition of the community has changed. In the 2000 Census, people of Hispanic or Latino origin only comprised 9.7% of the population, as compared to 32.4% statewide.[3] Over the

last five years, though, Latino, primarily Spanish-speaking families have increasingly moved to the County and this trend is expected to continue.

The high growth rate and increasing urbanization of the County has led to significant increases in housing and land prices. Moreover, land that had been devoted to agriculture has been converted for development, thus negatively impacting the once prosperous agricultural industry.[4] Furthermore, the increase in jobs in Placer County has not translated into improved food security, as many of the new jobs have been low-paying, service-oriented jobs. In fact, local emergency food agencies report an increase in the need for emergency food. The UC Cooperative Extension found that in 1998, 2,216 households in the County received food stamp assistance, an indicator of food insecurity.[5]

Prior to receiving funding from the *Network*, the issues that contributed to the increase in food insecurity in Placer County had not been adequately assessed nor had any organized or comprehensive plan been developed to address them. In this project, UC Cooperative Extension set out to attend to Placer County's need for better planning with regards to issues of food security, nutrition education, and community food systems. Their goal was to mobilize and coordinate existing resources and services to improve food security needs for County residents.

They started off by developing a Placer County Food Policy Council to assemble food system services and better link existing community resources. Early on they also conducted a thorough food system assessment to drive subsequent activities. They developed a comprehensive food security plan for Placer County which focused on five primary areas: access to food, hunger and nutrition, local agriculture, community resources, and policy. Throughout the project they solicited the active participation of community members including low-income residents, public agencies, non-profits, social service groups, the faith community, governmental policy makers, and the agricultural industry.

UC Cooperative Extension adopted a prevention approach in addressing the food security issues that moved beyond the simple provision of education, which they deemed as necessary but insufficient on its own to combat the complex problems that lead to hunger. They utilized the *Spectrum of Prevention* framework which integrates a six-level, multifaceted approach to prevention to create a synergistic effect to improve food security.[6]

Project Goals

In their project plan, UC Cooperative Extension in Placer County set out multiple goals and corresponding objectives for each year of the four-year project to accomplish their target of developing effective solutions to Placer County's food security issues. The goals and objectives are listed below.

YEAR 1

Goal 1: *Establish a Food Policy Council in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By July 31, 2001, formalize the establishment of a Food Policy Council or similar entity in Placer County that includes broad participation of individuals and agencies committed to assuring that all residents of Placer County meet their nutritional and related needs*

Goal 2: *Develop a plan to address food security and nutrition issues in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By July 200, assess the needs and assets of Placer County communities and individuals that will be incorporated into a county food security plan*

Objective 2: *By August 2001, develop and adopt a food security plan or similar document that will guide the food security efforts of the Food Policy Council and build the capacity of local Placer County communities to address their food system and security needs*

Objective 3: *By August 2001, publicize the efforts of the Food Policy Council and rally community support for the development and implementation of a county food security plan*

Goal 3: *Develop strategies to increase access to locally produced fresh produce and agricultural products in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By August 31, 2001, identify at least three strategies to increase access to locally grown agricultural produce and products by low-income families*

Goal 4: *Explore the feasibility of developing greater access to fresh produce through the establishment of community, school, senior or private gardens*

Objective 1: *By September 1, 2001, compile data on the interest and feasibility of establishing new gardening projects in areas serving low-income Placer county families*

YEAR 2

Goal 1: *Maintain the Food Policy Council in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2002, strengthen and institutionalize a Food Policy Council that includes a broad participation of at least 15 individuals and at least 10 agencies committed to assuring that all low income residents of Placer County meet their food security and nutritional needs*

Goal 2: *Promote and gain community support for food security issues in Placer County*

Objective 1: *Develop and implement a strategy to publicize the findings of the Placer County Food Security Plan and Needs Assessment*

Goal 3: *Increase community awareness of Placer County food security resources and programs*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2002, develop strategies and publicize existing food access and nutritional community resources and programs that are available for Placer County low income consumers through a directory of resources and programs*

Goal 4: *Improve nutrition through greater utilization of food distributed at food banks and closets*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2002, increase nutritional and food storage and preparation information distributed at Placer County food banks and closets and provide at least four classes*

Goal 5: *Improve food access through greater self-sufficiency*

Objective 1: *By September 2002, train at least 40 low income consumers on how to grow produce in limited spaces and to prepare nutritious meals using the produce through at least four workshops*

YEAR 3

Goal 1: *Maintain the Food Policy Council in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2003, strengthen and maintain the Food Policy Council which includes broad participation of at least 15 individuals and at least 10 agencies committed to assuring that all low-income residents of Placer County meet their food security and nutritional needs*

Goal 2: *Promote and gain community support for food security issues in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2003, develop and implement strategies to publicize the Placer County Food Security Plan and Needs Assessment and the efforts of the Food Policy Council*

Goal 3: *Increase community awareness of Placer County Food Security Resources and Programs*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2003, develop and update strategies and publicize existing food access and nutritional community resources and programs that are available for 40-50 Placer County agencies that serve low-income consumers through a directory of food security and nutrition resources and programs*

Objective 2: *By September 30, 2003, develop an interactive food security display and present at least three free public events attended by low income families*

Goal 4: *Increase low-income schoolchildren's knowledge and awareness of the importance of healthy nutrition*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2003, at least 50% of the students (70 students) at Rock Creek School will increase their knowledge of the importance of consuming five fruits and vegetables a day and ill improve their access to better nutrition through the opportunity to grow their own vegetables; and will increase their awareness of Federal nutrition assistance programs*

Goal 5: *Improve food access through greater self-sufficiency*

Objective 1: *By September 2003, train at least 40 low-income consumer/preschool parents on how to grow fruits and vegetables and how to prepare nutritious meals using the produce through workshops and consultations*

Objective 2: *By September 2003, low-income preschool students (100) and their Early Childhood Educators (10) will increase their knowledge of nutrition and the importance of the consumption of eating locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables*

Goal 6: *To increase collaborative partnerships to expand nutrition education/physical activity opportunities to low-income families in Placer County local area*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2003, support community, regional, and statewide efforts toward nutrition education/physical activity promotion by participating in 1-2 regional coalitions and 3-5 meetings/trainings*

YEAR 4

Goal 1: *Maintain the Food Policy Council in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2004, strengthen and maintain the Food Policy Council, which includes broad participation of at least 15 individuals and at least 10 agencies committed to assuring that all low-income residents of Placer County meet their food security and nutritional needs*

Goal 2: *Promote and gain community support for food security issues in Placer County*

Objective 1: *By September30, 2004, develop and implement strategies to publicize the Placer County Food Security Plan and Needs Assessment and the efforts of the Food Policy Council*

Goal 3: *Increase community awareness of Placer County food security resources and programs*

Objective 1: *By September, 30, 2004, develop and update strategies and publicize existing food access and nutritional community resources and programs that are available for Placer County low-income consumers through a directory of food security and nutrition resources and programs*

Objective 2: *By September 30, 2004, develop an interactive food security display and present at least three free public events attended by low-income families*

Goal 4: *Increase low-income schoolchildren's knowledge and awareness of the importance of healthy nutrition*

Objective 1: *By September 30, 2004, at least 50% of the students at Woodbridge Fundamental School will increase their knowledge of the importance of consuming five fruits and vegetables a day and will improve their access to better nutrition through the opportunity to grow their own vegetables, and will increase their awareness of federal nutrition assistance programs*

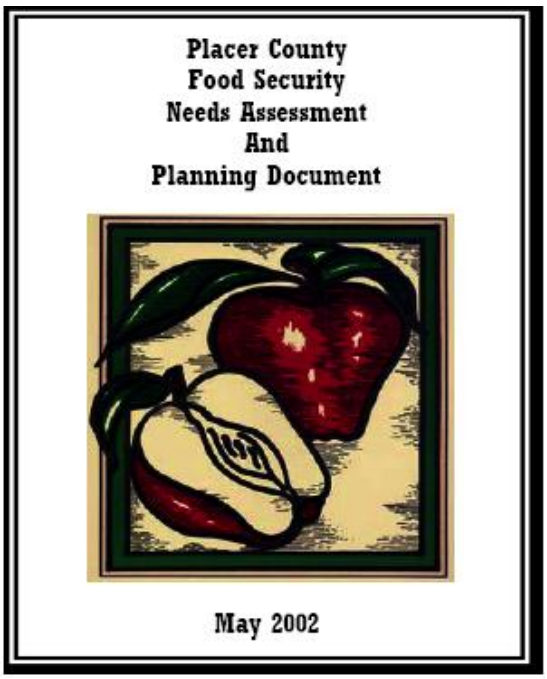
Goal 5: *Improve food access through greater self-sufficiency*

Objective 1: *By September 2004, train at least 40 low-income consumers on how to grow produce in limited spaces, and to prepare nutritious meals using the produce through at least four workshops*

Goal 6: *Increase capacity and knowledge of social service organizations and agencies in addressing food security issues*

> ***Objective 1:*** *By September 2004, participants in the food security planning meeting or the Network Social Marketing Conference will increase their knowledge in undertaking a countywide needs assessment and planning document on issues related to food security*

Food System Assessment and Plan



From January through September of 2001, the project forged a baseline, countywide needs assessment to identify the strengths and gaps in the region's food security and food system infrastructure. They used a variety of data collection and analysis methods including surveys and focus groups. Sources for the data integrated food insecurity proxy measures such as geographic residence of low-income families, poverty data, and food consumption statistics. They also incorporated data from federal programs, nutrition services, emergency food sources, community gardens, and agricultural production and distribution data. They investigated the demographic profile of those most affected by food insecurity in Placer County, outlined the attributes of food insecure communities, and analyzed existing food and nutrition resources.

In the *Needs Assessment and Planning Document*, they identified the principle elements of the project as being multidisciplinary, using a systems approach, emphasizing the community as the focus of action, utilizing community based planning, conducting needs assessments, collaborating with the community, building coalitions, making multi-sector linkages, and integrating the local food system. The plan focused primarily on issues related to access to food, hunger and nutrition, local agriculture, community resources, and policy.

UC Cooperative Extension compiled the data and their analysis into the form of a formal written Food Security Plan and widely disseminated the report to others in the community. The report served to inform community planners and policy makers and rally public support for improved food access, increased availability of locally grown foods, and enhanced nutrition for all county residents. The assessment served to drive subsequent plans for addressing food security issues in Placer County.

Food Access Intervention Activities

After UC Cooperative Extension conducted the comprehensive food security assessment and developed corresponding strategies for improving food access for Placer County residents, they helped mobilize resources to address the issues.

Food Policy Council

In the first year of the project, UC Cooperative Extension established the Food Policy Council to develop long-term, sustainable solutions to address food insecurity in Placer County. They identified potential collaborators and brought together a diverse group of community representatives from community-based organizations such as Adult System of Care, Family Resources Center, Farmers' Market, First Five Placer County Children & Families Commission, and the Food Bank to serve on the Council.

The Council engaged the regular participation of over fifteen individuals from ten agencies dedicated to meeting the food security and nutritional needs of low-income Placer County residents. Once they identified members, UC Cooperative Extension reviewed other Food Policy Council organizations and formats, conducted a round table meeting to begin the formation and planning process, and formalized the Food Policy Council. In the first year, the group developed and initiated work on a Food Security Plan born out of the needs assessment in order to guide food security efforts and build capacity among the local community to address the needs. Members of the Food Policy Council determined the focus of the plan, offered recommendations, and served an advisory role in reviewing results.

After the first year, the Food Policy Council focused on efforts to strengthen and institutionalize the group, itself, so it could sustain its efforts in the years following project funding. To reinforce collaboration, improve coordination of local resources, and involve members in creating change, the Council reviewed their organizational structure, goals, objectives, and plan. UC Cooperative Extension held quarterly meetings to facilitate communication and provide a sense of community. Their activities led to enhanced commitment among the Council members who continued to grow more empowered as they enacted changes to meet their goals. The Council members agreed to maintain their collaboration to continue to reduce food access barriers for low-income community members.

The Food Policy Council continued to provide technical assistance and monitored the development and progress of the Food Security Plan. They reviewed and updated elements of the plan. Finally, after completing the Placer County Food Security Needs Assessment and Planning Document, the Food Policy Council disseminated the results which described the hunger and food security issues specific to Placer County. The release of the plan to the public was made in the second year of the project, in 2002, at a UC Cooperative Extension sponsored Hunger Forum and Resource Fair (attended by approximately 65 individuals). They publicized the plan to inform the community about the findings, solicit public interest and support, and mobilize implementation of plan strategies. Their efforts led to an increased awareness of food security needs and strategies in the community.

Through the remaining years of the project, the Food Policy Council continued to share resources, provide educational opportunities, and mobilize implementation of activities to improve food security. They assumed responsibility for implementing the findings and recommendations in the Food Security Plan. In particular, they devoted attention to increasing the consumption of fresh, local, in-season foods by low-income residents through better linkages to local farmers and increased home production of fruits and vegetables. They developed a resource directory of food system services, offered EBT trainings, provided food preparation demonstrations, offered nutrition classes, and promoted the campaign for improved food security through the Hunger Forum, Resource Faire, Food Game, news articles, news releases, and the UC Cooperative Extension web site. These activities are discussed in further detail below.

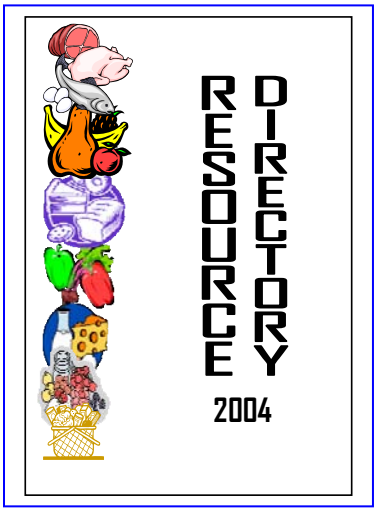
Workgroups

In the first year of the project, the UC Cooperative Extension formed a workgroup to identify strategies for increasing low-income families' access to locally grown agricultural produce. The workgroup consisted of representatives from an agricultural marketing program, a farmers' market, and local farmers. Their strategies included improving access through produce wagons, farm stands, and farmers' markets in low income areas. They also proposed the creation of an educational program focused on the benefits of seasonal, local produce. They added their strategies to the larger Food Security Plan.

UC Cooperative Extension workgroup

Additionally, the workgroup conducted a gardening needs assessment of Placer County communities. Food service departments, Master Gardeners, a non-profit school garden program, and school life lab instructors collaborated on the gardening assessment with information sharing and identification of local needs and options for school and community gardens. The evaluation was done in order to assess the interest and feasibility of taking on new gardening projects, particularly in low-income communities.

In the fourth year of the project, UC Cooperative Extension conducted a presentation about their food security work in Placer County at the Food Security Task Force meeting in order to impart strategies that led to project outcomes and increase the capacity of colleagues within their network. They provided meeting participants with copies of an annotated outline of the presentation and posted a copy of the report on the UC Cooperative Extension website.



Resource Directory

UC Cooperative Extension took on the task of improving the awareness among service providers of resources and services available to low-income clients. They also worked actively to enhance the coordination among agencies and increase assistance to clients of the food system. They accomplished these goals during the second and third year of the project with the development of a comprehensive directory of Placer County food security resources and programs. The food security directory, which was made available in hard copy and was posted online on their website, identified 42 agency resources including corresponding services, hours of operation, and contact information. They issued news releases to announce and publicize the new directory.

UC Cooperative Extension continued to update the directory, but found that maintaining the directory to ensure it was current turned out to be a challenge due to frequent changes in services offered and staff turn-over among the agencies listed. Despite this difficulty, the directory promoted information sharing and multiple agencies adopted its use for referring clients to services. This led to greater collaboration, more knowledgeable agency staff, and improved referrals.

Reasons for the Seasons Campaign and Vouchers

UC Cooperative Extension developed monthly food bulletins and tip sheets to encourage the purchase and preparation of in-season, locally grown produce. They provided useful information including produce nutritional benefits, food safety, serving tips, and recipes. They also collaborated with farmers' markets and promoted the use of Placer County produce vouchers. The later activity was not part of the project's food security grant. However, all of these activities promoted local produce and resulted in greater attendance at farmers' markets by low-income families, increased purchases of local fresh produce, and enhanced willingness among those attending farmers' markets to try new foods or prepare them in new ways.


4-H Junior Gleaners

Junior Gleaners

The Junior Gleaners, a 4-H youth project, encouraged the public to grow an extra row in their garden and then collected the extra produce from home-owners and farmers. They also collected surplus produce at the close of the farmers' market and at other commercial outlets such as Costco. In all, they gathered 10 tons of fresh fruits

and vegetables which they donated to food banks, the Auburn Interfaith Food Closet, the Senior Nutrition Center, and other sites. The donations addressed the need for fresh produce as noted in the project's assessment and plan.

Farmers' Market Demonstrations

At local farmers' markets, UC Cooperative Extension further promoted access to fresh produce with farmers' market demonstrations. They publicized federal nutrition programs [food stamps and WIC] and provided hands-on gardening and nutrition activities for attending children.

Placer County Farmers' Market

Publicity and Promotion

The Food Policy Council identified strategies for increasing public interest and participation in reducing hunger and food insecurity through the development of an "Idea Book" which identified simple ways individuals could contribute to the effort. Ideas included sponsoring a day at a food closet; growing an extra row of fruits and vegetables; opening one's yard to gleaning; creating simple, low-cost recipes; volunteering as a Vegetable and Fruit Docent; and encouraging the use of USDA school breakfast and summer food programs. Members of the Council also developed a draft brochure entitled *Hungry?* That provided a general understanding of hunger and food insecurity and suggested ways the public could help.

The project participated in community events where they presented interactive displays in which they provided information on food security and federal nutrition assistance programs. These free community events included health fairs, Head Start events, "Turn off the TV" week, Harvest festivals, literacy festivals, and school open houses. They created an interactive display, a version of the *Food Game*, which they used at community events to inform low-income communities about the programs and services available to them. The display presented food security issues, resources, and information. As a result of UC Cooperative Extension's promotion, 1,969 community members engaged in their display activities and were informed about the topic.

UC Food Security webpage

UC Cooperative Extension used their website to post a variety of materials to inform the public about food security issues. The site improved access to information, eased the updating of resources, and improved sustainability of materials developed during the project. During the course of the project they received over 2,000 "hits" to their web pages which

included the needs assessment and planning document, the resource directory, Reasons for Seasons tip sheets and newsletters, a food security slide presentation, *VegOut* workshops, *Growing Healthy Food, Minds, and Bodies*, and a news article series on food security.

Nutrition Education Intervention Activities

School and Community Gardens

The UC Cooperative Extension engaged in nutrition education provision at two low-resource Placer County elementary schools, Rock Creek School and Woodbridge Fundamental School, in order to increase children's knowledge about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables and to improve their diets. They conducted nutrition education and garden-based classes. They also hosted a nutrition booth at both of the schools' open house events and worked to engage parents by publicizing the federal nutrition assistance programs at two school events attended by parents.

Using the California Department of Education's *Nutrition to Grow On* activity guide that links nutrition education to garden-based education, the *Reading up the Food Guide Pyramid* curriculum that aims to improve children's healthy food choices, and the Junior Master Gardener curricula, they conducted nutrition education and garden-based classes that reached 517 Placer County students.

Youth enjoying gardening

The project was also instrumental in increasing school gardening activities. In collaboration with UC Master Gardeners, they provided 12 vegetable workshops to 125 attendees. Sixty-seven percent of workshop attendees reported they were likely to eat more fruits and vegetables and 33% said they were very likely to start a vegetable garden at home.

As a result of serving on an advisory committee for the Western Placer Unified School District committee, UC Cooperative Extension worked to develop district wide nutrition policy that linked education, activity, and food. The formal policy was adopted by the School District.

Using funds from another grant, they also developed a curriculum for early childhood educators called *Growing Healthy Foods, Minds, and Bodies.* They collaborated with Head Start to conduct a garden-based nutrition training class which focused on the importance of consuming of fresh, seasonal produce. As a result of working in partnership with the farmers' market, the project distributed vouchers redeemable at the market to participating schools. In total, they reached 450 preschool children with the nutrition class. Those who attended the workshops enhanced their nutritional knowledge, their

familiarity with growing fruits and vegetables, and, according to survey results, increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables.

UC Cooperative Extension developed an additional training to instruct participants about how to grow produce in limited spaces. They "selected target areas for training" and developed lesson plans. Master Gardener volunteers from the community facilitated the gardening training programs which focused on utilizing small spaces or containers. Although they found that attracting low-income consumers to the workshops was challenging, UC Cooperative Extension exceeded their second year goal of providing four of the workshops to 40 people by offering eight sessions to 112 low-income individuals. At the end of the project period, they had provided a total of 12 workshops to 125 participants. The participants learned new practices and indicated they would use the new practices, attend future workshops, and share information with others

During the fourth year of the project, they conducted two nutrition training programs on how to utilize the produce and prepare nutrition meals as well as six vegetable gardening workshops and clinics. As a result of their collaboration, two agencies engaged in institutional change; Applegate Men's Facility established an in-ground garden and Alta Progress House established a container garden on their premises. Participants who attend these programs are low income food stamp recipients. They were taught garden skills to help them grow some of their families' produce.

UC Cooperative Extension collaborated with community, regional, and statewide partners to learn more about and support other successful nutrition education and physical activity efforts and allow for a mutual exchange of information between them. For instance, they participated with local and statewide groups, Regional 5-A-Day, the *Network*'s Food Security Task Force, the Placer County Nutrition Coalition, the Gold Country Collaborative, and the State Food Security Task Force to support their work. They also served on the advisory committee of a local school district to develop a formal nutrition and physical fitness policy which was ultimately adopted. They attended *Network* sponsored trainings and conferences.

Placer County Food Pantry

Food Banks and Food Closets

UC Cooperative Extension developed materials to distribute to food banks and food pantries/closets. Materials included safe handling of food, preparation tips, selecting foods from the pantry to create balanced meals, simple one pot recipes to use food pantry foods, etc. They collaborated on the development of binder of resources, brochures, and other materials and offered two nutrition and food safety workshops for the volunteers and staff of food banks and closets as well as related food safety

classes and demonstrations for clients. Suffering from limited resources, food banks/closets were hesitant to encourage their staff/volunteers to attend the trainings which took them away from their required activities; however seven did attend and were trained. Similarly, few clients were willing to participate in the workshops or demonstrations. Those who did attend the trainings enhanced their knowledge about food safety and handling policies. They also reported a willingness to change practices, change their handling of food, and improve the types of foods distributed (Sharon Junge [skjunge@ucdavis.edu] email, August 31, 2005).

Challenges and Lessons Learned

UC Cooperative Extension took on a comprehensive plan to address food security in Placer County. Early on in the project, they focused on conducting a needs assessment to better understand and document the needs and gaps within the existing infrastructure. Then, they incorporated the data and analysis into a report which they disseminated throughout the community. One of the major challenges that the project faced was moving from planning to implementation. Once they determined the scope of the problem, they had to figure out an effective strategy for addressing it and turn it into an actionable plan.

One of the activities they conducted was nutrition and garden-based training. In this activity, they encountered several specific challenges. For instance, they found it challenging to obtain "teacher support for multiple in-class lessons and demonstrations." It was difficult to get teachers to commit to more than 1 or 2 class lessons, rather than a series. Also, the garden-based classes at the Rock Creek School were originally held in the schools' garden, however when the school initiated a remodeling project that eliminated access to the school's garden, the project transitioned to container gardening and provided containers, soil, and seeds in order to continue the classes. They encountered an additional obstacle to conducting the gardening component when the school ended the Life Lab staff position, which had been responsible for overseeing the school's garden.

Throughout several of the planned activities, the project found it difficult to sustain interest among all participants. It was difficult to get participants to attend multiple training sessions, some agency staff continued with the council others would only attend a few sessions, teachers would commit to only 1 or 2 lessons. Some of the issues they came up against included turn over in agency staff at collaborating agencies, limited resources of other agencies that could focus on these issues, as well as changes in policy difficult to make policy changes that could impact the issues (such as reduce barriers to getting food stamps, improved transportations, etc.

One of the lessons identified by the project was the importance of establishing support for their endeavor. They focused on eliciting buy-in for the implementation by publicizing the issues and soliciting the help of others including the public at large. Using this process, they engaged multi-sector allies who came together to address food security issues.

Another lesson learned was the strategy of involving the entire food system. Instead of focusing on a narrow intervention, they approached food security using multiple tactics. They determined

this method from the start, as evidenced by the Food Security Needs Assessment and Planning Document which focused on five elements: food access, hunger and nutrition, local agriculture, community resources, and policy.

Conclusions

The UC Cooperative Extension conducted a food security project with significant breadth and depth. Each year of the four year project, they set out between four and six primary goals as well as corresponding objectives to improve the food security needs of Placer County residents. They were successful in determining goals that were both reachable and sufficient in that they contributed towards their overall goal of coordinating and mobilizing resources to improve food security.

UC Cooperative Extension had the forethought to conduct a needs assessment to adequately understand the scope of the issue before they determined all of the specific activities they would undertake. This strategy served to give them the flexibility to identify the needs and gaps that most needed attention. The plan that they developed, with contributions from the Food Policy Council, was driven directly be the data and analysis from the needs assessment.

Another important element of the UC Cooperative Extension project was their focus on the sustainability of the project. They kept their sights on how to prolong activities after the formal funding for the project ended. For instance, even as early as the second year of the project, the Food Policy Council strategize about how to ensure its sustainability. Another example of this was that they put most of their materials on their website, so that they could continue to be accessed by those interested in the issue in subsequent years. Finally, they provided training to individuals, staff, and teachers who could continue to pass along the nutrition and garden-based information in the curriculums.

As a result of their careful planning, comprehensive strategy, and thorough attention throughout, US Cooperative Extension's food security project accomplished all of its proposed goals and subsequently improved the food security for county residents. As of the writing of this report, the agency was no longer receiving grant funding to support their food security work. However, they remained committed to the cause. In an interview with Sharon Junge, County Director, she said, "We are trying to institutionalize the planning and implementation as much as possible"(Sharon Junge [skjunge@ucdavis.edu**]** email, August, 2005).

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SECTION XII: Overall Conclusions

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The eight projects described in this report comprise the second major phase of the *Network's* Food Security Channel's funding of special projects. Despite their different approaches, the projects shared many things in common. As shown in Table 1, many projects addressed most levels of the social-ecological model under which the *Network* functions. The model recognizes that there are multiple determinants of health, and not just the behaviors of individuals. In this respect, the projects exemplify the importance of addressing nutrition education and food security issues on multiple levels. This intersectoral approach is recognized by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) as "…critical to effective health action."[1]

Across these levels, all of the projects developed interventions that incorporated various approaches to individual nutrition education. Indeed, each site found ways to uniquely tailor the education to the characteristics and location of their priority populations. For example, the Pomona Inland Council of Churches conducted their educational interventions during the weekly farmers market and adapted it to fit the needs of fast moving shoppers. The Placer County UC-Cooperative Extension incorporated nutrition education into a school-based garden project. The SEE-LA project developed cooking demonstrations and recipes that fit the tastes of it's mostly Latino population. In each case, the projects carefully developed relationships with their constituents and delivered nutrition education that was meaningful and inclusive. The lesson learned here is that nutrition education must first begin with the population in mind. Traditional cookie-cutter curriculums may not work well in some settings. Better yet, as done by the Ecology Center's Farm Fresh Choice Project, it is very appropriate to involve the priority population in the planning and implementation of the nutrition education activities.

In addition to individual nutrition education, some of the projects conducted activities that provided community level education. These activities included a broad distribution of thousands of nutrition education flyers by the Community Resource Center in Encinitas, nutrition community forums by the Fresno Metro Ministry project, and educating residents and food merchants about food safety by the Contra County project. Uniquely, the Pomona Inland Council of Churches also educated farmers on how to point out the nutritious aspects of fruits and

vegetables to their customers. The community level intervention is very essential, because it tends to create social-environment messages which reinforce the individual level messages. This concept has long been used by business marketing professionals and has more recently been adapted in the public health sector by social marketers[2], including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention[3].

Several of the projects created structures in the social environment that improved community access to fresh fruits and vegetables. For example, the Contra County Health Services project created two new produce venues and two mobile produce stands in the low income community areas of Richmond, California. The Farm Fresh Choice project established four easily accessible farm stands that serviced over 600 people weekly. These kinds of social structures are very important in community settings where people have poor access to grocery stores and other food retail outlets that are commonly found in middle income and above neighborhoods. The Sacramento Hunger Commission started a very unique project in which they are changing the structural environment in a large public housing apartment complex by planting edible foods such as fruit trees and vegetables, as part of the landscape. This approach involves the apartment community in planning, planting, and caring for the edible landscape. These types of structural changes have the potential for creating social norms in which easy access to nutritious foods is seen by community members and policy makers as a right and not just a privilege.

Another approach to influencing the social and policy implementation environment were the efforts by several projects to promote enrollment of low income people into the Food Stamp Program (FSP). Indeed, the simple act of increasing awareness about FSP eligibility can be easily incorporated during individual and community level nutrition education activities. The places where FSP promotion occurred included farmer's markets and schools. Continued promotion in these venues may prove very helpful to FSP social service agencies, because they may not have direct access to all of the eligible populations.

At the heart of many interventions was collaboration with community partners. Indeed, it is unlikely that any of these projects could have accomplished as much as they did on such small funding, if they had not cultivated and interacted with their partners. The Fresno Metro Ministry

project worked with community based organizations and non-profit volunteer agencies so effectively that at the end of the fourth year, they were very close to completing a community wide food assessment as a step towards creating a Food Policy Council. Once this is in place, they will work with their partners to develop and implement food policies that can create social and environmental changes that can improve access to nutritious foods for children and adults. Their efforts are critical in an area where child obesity is higher than the state average[4].

Collaboration also resulted in food assessments in the Avondale/Glen Elder community of Sacramento and in Placer County. The latter assessment resulted in the creation of a Food Policy Council which will endeavor to improve the food security needs of Placer County residents. These types of assessments are very important for building a sustainable and nutritious food environment in any community. Indeed, changes in the social environment are often necessary precursors to changes in personal behavior.

In many respects, the true value of the *Network* funding for each of these projects does not lie in the amount they were given, which in many cases was very small compared to their other funding sources; it lies in how they leveraged those funds. Although a complex cost-benefit economically analysis is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the evaluators' years of insight into how these projects operated allows them to say that the funding dollar was judiciously complemented with other agency resources and the in-kind contributions of many partners. This synergistic effect allowed most of the projects to achieve more than expected.

As these projects ended, it appeared that most will continue the efforts that were supported by the *Network* funding. Indeed, the Placer County UC-Cooperative Extension is actively seeking ways to institutionalize many of their project activities into their existing work. Nearly all of the structural changes created by theses projects (e.g., farm stands) are still in place one-year after funding ended.

Overall, what these projects point out is the need to approach individual changes in nutrition behavior from an ecological perspective. Individual behavior change cannot be achieved unless there are also changes in the family, community, social, and policy environment that create

social norms and structural changes that promote healthy behaviors. This is best exemplified by the changes in tobacco use in America. Over the last 20 years, tobacco consumption has dropped considerably in the U.S. As noted by the IOM, this could not have been done without "…multidimensional interventions involving several aspects of prevention and control"[1] that included social marketing campaigns and tobacco policies that created healthier environments. Improving the nutritional status of Americans will require similar efforts, and these eight projects exemplify the multidimensional approaches necessary to create long term changes in our communities that can impact individual nutrition behaviors.

Table 1: Eight 4th Year Projects' activities in relation to the Social-Ecological Model

Food Security Project	Individual	Interpersonal, Lifestyle Influences, Primary Prevention	Institutional & Organizational	Community	Social Structure, Public Policy
Community Resource Center: Project Name: Nutrition Now: Location: Encinitas, San Diego County	Reached over 350 women and children who were victims of domestic violence from *Libre* participated in the nutrition education and gardening classes during the four years of the grant period	Taught participants how to do container gardening, in preparation for their future apartment-based lifestyle.	Collaborated with local Farmer's Market and natural food store, to provide women with practical shopping and food selection experience.	Monthly distribution of San Diego Food Bank food commodities and food samples, and recipes to approximately 1,500 low-income clients. Reached over 8,000 customers via their Bread Room activity. Also disseminated over 10,000 nutrition-related materials to the community.	

Food Security Project	Individual	Interpersonal, Lifestyle Influences, Primary Prevention	Institutional & Organizational	Community	Social Structure, Public Policy
Contra Costa Health Services: Project name: The East West Market Garden Project; Location: Contra Costa County	Implemented gardening, project and the TWIGS nutrition education curriculum to boys in the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Center.		Collaborated with private and public agencies to create more access to fresh fruits and vegetables.	Increased knowledge about healthy eating, safe shopping, and food safety to residents of West Contra Costa County and food merchants, via educational workshops and distribution of educational materials.	Established two new produce venues and two mobile produce stands that served the community.
Ecology Center Project name: Farm Fresh Choice. Location: Berkeley, Alameda County	Provided regular healthy and culturally relevant cooking classes at four different after-school centers to children and their parents.	Enrolled more than 350 households in their Community Supported Agriculture membership program and delivered more than 500 lbs. of	Collaborated with local organic minority farmers and CBO-based after-school programs to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables.	Used outreach workers to conduct community presentations, cooking demonstrations, food sampling, cooking classes, and nutrition education and reached over 2,000 residents at cultural	Established four farm stands that provided access to over 600 customers weekly. Facilitated the enrollment

Food Security Project	Individual	Interpersonal, Lifestyle Influences, Primary Prevention	Institutional & Organizational	Community	Social Structure, Public Policy
		produce to members.		celebrations, such as Juneteenth[1], community block parties, Back to School fairs, and Cinco de Mayo celebrations.	of 62 farmers markets in the EBT program.
Pomona Inland Valley Council of Churches Project name: Pomona Valley Food Security & Nutrition Outreach Initiative Location: Pomona, Los Angeles County	Provided nutrition education to parents and children during the farmers market.		Collaborated with local farmer's market to provide nutrition education and a food stamp eligibility screening. Involved farmers in providing information about the nutritional value of produce to customers.		Screened at least 1,200 low-income individuals (975 at the Beta Hunger Center and 168 at the Farmers' Market) for food stamp eligibility. Of these, 487 received on-site assistance in completing an application for food stamps.
Fresno Metro Ministry Project name: Hunger and Nutrition Project Location: Fresno County	Provided some nutrition education in Fresno County via speaking engagements and presentations. Distributed materials about healthy food access, federal nutrition programs, and emergency food to health practitioners.		Collaborated with at least 70 diverse community groups and involved over 750 participants each month over the last four years.	Developed a group of low-income *New Leaders for Better Health* and organized them to advocate on Hunger Action Day. Held 11 forums focused on education, nutrition, and the health effects of culturally appropriate, nutritious, and affordable food. Facilitated a retail survey and a consumer survey, in two low-income areas in Fresno, to assess food access.	Increased access to school lunch programs. Cut barriers to food stamps access. Convinced Fresno USD to establish a Healthy School Environment Policy Committee

Food Security Project	Individual	Interpersonal, Lifestyle Influences, Primary Prevention	Institutional & Organizational	Community	Social Structure, Public Policy
Sacramento Hunger Commission Project name: Sacramento Nutrition and Access Project (SNAP): Location: Sacramento County	Reached 418 low income residents with at least one nutrition education session that also addressed food safety issues and food preparation. Participants included children, teens, the developmentally disabled, ESL classes, and Birth and Beyond programs.	Taught food money management to 166 residents in 14 workshops.	Trained a total of 57 participants from 30 service agencies in workshops designed to increase social service providers' ability to respond to their client's nutritional issues.	Supported Asian youth community garden project by facilitating food preparation component. Conducted the 2004 Avondale/Glen Elder Community Food Assessment and developed a report.	Facilitated the planting of 80 fruit trees, bushes, vines, vegetables, and herbs at the Kennedy Estates public housing apartments.
Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles Project name: Healthy Hollywood Location: Hollywood, Los Angeles County	Reached more than five hundred people with their hands-on and culturally relevant nutrition education classes		Collaborated with numerous community members, including the Food Justice Network, the LAUSD Nutrition Network, and the LA Coalition to End Hunger and Homelessness, among others.		Actively promoted the availability of food stamps/EBT acceptance at 22 farmers markets in Los Angeles County by distributing flyers at strategic locations, such as community organizations, food banks, food lines, food pantries, health fairs, and schools in South Central and East Hollywood. EBT redemption increased from $0 to $70-$200 dollars per day at the farm stands.

Food Security Project	Individual	Interpersonal, Lifestyle Influences, Primary Prevention	Institutional & Organizational	Community	Social Structure, Public Policy
U.C. Cooperative Extension Project name: Building Partnerships to Address Community Food Security and System Needs Location: Placer County	Provided garden-based nutrition education at two low-income elementary schools.	Promoted federal nutrition assistance programs at two school events attended by parents.	Collaborated with representatives from community-based organizations such as Adult System of Care, Family Resources Center, Farmers' Market, First Five Placer County Children & Families Commission, and the Food Bank to serve on the Council.	At local farmers' markets, they further promoted access to fresh produce with food demonstrations and publicized food stamps and WIC, and provided hands-on gardening and nutrition activities for children.	Created a Food Policy Council which implemented the Food Security Plan. They also developed a resource directory of food system services, offered EBT trainings, provided food preparation demonstrations, offered nutrition classes, and promoted the campaign for improved food security through the Hunger Forum, Resource Faire, Food Game, news articles, news releases, and the UC Cooperative Extension web site.

[1] *Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. Note that this was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation – which had become official January 1, 1863. Juneteenth today, celebrates African American freedom through community festivals and events.*

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