Interventions to Address Job Loss and Food Security in Rural Communities During COVID

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COVID-19 in a Rural County near Chapel Hill

More than 50% of Chatham County’s confirmed COVID cases are among Hispanic/Latinx individuals despite this group composing just 12% of the county’s population.
A County with significant geographic disparities

Overall Health Risk

Social Determinants

- Percent poverty
- Zero vehicle households
- Percent minorities
- Access to healthy food
- Access to parks and trails
- Death rates

FIGURE 17: MAP OF PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITY AREAS
Attempting to replicate a successful entrepreneurial model but in a very different environment

Siler City
Large Latinx population
High poverty
High COVID rates
Objective: Design and implement an innovative, sustainable food hub model that combines successful elements of models elsewhere in NC with unique entrepreneurial innovations.

• stimulate and coordinate food system (restaurant and farm) purchasing and donations
• help food supply/distribution systems adapt to COVID-19
• Provide free meals for people in need.
New Chatham Food Hub connects communities with access to local food during COVID-19 pandemic.
Another Approach to Addressing Rural Challenges (Health and Economic)
The Health Impact Pyramid

Changing the Context to Make Individuals’ Default Decisions Healthy

Socioeconomic Factors

Long-Lasting Protective Interventions

Clinical Interventions

Counseling and Education

Increasing Population Impact

Increasing Individual Effort Needed

Thomas Frieden, Former Director of CDC
Challenges

Lack of Access to Healthy Affordable Food -> Obesity, Heart Disease, Diabetes

Rural Poverty -> Limited market opportunities for Small Farmers/Businesses

Food Waste from Farms, Value Chain, Retail Outlets Missed opportunity for Nutrition/Earnings
Potential Solution – Good Bowls

• A healthy meal product based on the Mediterranean diet
  Adapted for southern taste preferences (“Med-South”)
• Frozen
  -> eligible for SNAP (Food Stamp) purchase
  -> longer shelf life
• Made from locally grown food
  -> recipes adapted to the seasons
  -> uses “cosmetically challenged” food often wasted
• Dual price point (cost offset)
  -> subsidized price at blue collar worksites, affordable housing sites
  -> higher price in higher end stores/Co-ops/Retirement communities
• ALL consumers get same high quality product
Good Bowls
Do Good while Eating Well
Equiti Foods

A social venture to improve healthy food access

Small Business Technology Transfer Grant - Phase I – NIMHD
(must be a for-profit company)
Empowering Communities to Achieve Good Food Access and Health Equity

Disclosure – Founder and equity owner, Chief Nutrition Officer
Initial idea to work with local commercial kitchens that would make and sell Good Bowls to corner stores with our help re recipes, packaging, marketing (social franchise model)

BUT, we have learned that:

- Small scale food manufacturing for retail is nearly impossible if products include meat.
- Direct to consumer allows more flexibility.
PIVOT! - to frozen vending machines in rural worksites

Near Princeville – Oldest town incorporated by African Americans in the United States

Hamilton Martin County, NC
Manufacturing plant in Eastern North Carolina - Hamilton
The Lunchroom – only food in the plant for 160 workers. Average “meal” cost $7.50
Good Bowls $4.50 for a 12 oz. bowl Frozen Food Vending Machine
Just completed a “micro RCT” – 30 people, delayed intervention control, “dose” of 2 bowls a day for 5 days
Pre-post diet assessment, attitudes, carotenoids
COVID Supplement (NIMHD):

To address rising rates of food insecurity as well as job loss in restaurant and catering businesses

1. Work with three restaurants/caterers in rural economically distressed communities to test the Good Bowls cost offset model through direct-to-consumer sales

2. Assess nutrition impact on customers in communities adversely affected by COVID-19

3. Assess economic impact on restaurants/caterers, local farmers, and commercial kitchens
Warren County
Long term partnership with Working Landscapes Good Bowls pilot study:

- Sourced sweet potatoes from local farmers
- Tested Good Bowls in rural corner stores
- Used recipes for senior meals
Provide markets for local farmers and jobs for people in the community
Main Street Kitchen
A shared-use commercial kitchen for rent by the hour.

ByWay Foods
Produce from local farms, chopped and bagged in Warrenton for convenient preparation in cafeterias; healthy food on kid's lunch plates.

Working Landscapes will coordinate efforts with local caterers using their shared use commercial kitchen.

Provide food for senior centers and other federally funded programs.
Restaurants in Chatham County supporting Latinx community - food and jobs (participated in the Chatham Food Hub)
In Eastern Chatham County – Reaching higher income customers to support the cost-offset business model

COPELAND SPRINGS Farm & Kitchen

WE STEWARD THE LAND AT COPELAND SPRINGS FARM IN BEAUTIFUL PITTSBORO, NC. WE PREPARE DELICIOUS FARM-FRESH MEALS AT COPELAND SPRINGS KITCHEN TO NOURISH OUR COMMUNITY.
Questions, Discussion, Ideas, Suggestions