

Farm to Food Access

Joe Josleyn, Alicia Loebel, & Emma Hardiman

In partnership with Growing Gardens and The University of Colorado, Boulder

PROJECT PURPOSE

The Growing Gardens capstone team examined the landscape of food access in the Boulder area from the viewpoint of local food access organizations. A systemic low supply of local and organic produce available to these organizations and their clients has exacerbated existing inequalities in food access and nutrition. These organizations also frequently experience acute issues surrounding the processing, storage, and transportation of produce donations which has resulted in food waste and unmet client demand. Additionally, a lack of structure allowing these organizations to work together has made collaboration a challenge. This project was designed to develop a framework to allow Growing Gardens and other organizations to partner with one another more effectively and increase the impact of their food access programming.

METHODOLOGY

Phase 1: Framing the Project	Phase 2: Data Collection	Phase 3: Developing Deliverables
<p>Throughout the spring we focused on gaining an understanding of the landscape of food access in the Boulder Valley region and how Growing Gardens currently addresses food insecurity through their food donation program, the Growing Gardens Food Project (GGFP). We completed a literature review, case studies on similar cities throughout the United States, and held informational interviews with Growing Gardens staff and other parties invested in our goals. We also evaluated the current impact of the GGFP using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis and began identifying and mapping stakeholders throughout the region.</p>	<p>During the summer months, we collected data via surveys and interviews with our identified stakeholders. We performed outreach to 47 organizations devoted to basic needs, food access, and family/youth services. We received 13 survey responses, five of which had not previously received produce donations through GGFP. We then conducted nine one-on-one interviews with survey respondents to gain a deeper understanding of their programs. Separate surveys were designed for current and potential partners and each set of interview questions was curated based on the individual respondents' survey. The data gathered during this phase was used to assess each stakeholders barriers to fulfilling their clients wants and needs, specifically related to accessing fresh and local produce. Upon completion of our interview stage, we used qualitative analysis to evaluate our findings.</p>	<p>Over the course of the fall, we worked on compiling our data and developing each of our deliverables and recommendations. We aggregated a list of funding opportunities, utilized ArcGIS to create geographic maps, created visual aids to show connections between stakeholders and interactions between barriers; we brought all of these together in an ArcGIS Storymap. Much of our time was spent developing our recommendations based on our findings and presenting these to key stakeholders including the Growing Gardens staff and board, the Food Security Network of Boulder and Broomfield Counties, and the attendees of the MENV capstone poster session and symposium.</p>

OUTCOMES & DELIVERABLES

STAKEHOLDER BARRIER ASSESSMENT

Our interview and survey data were compiled to create our stakeholder barrier assessment. This was presented through a StoryMap that combines geographic maps, systems maps, and additional research to tell the story of our project. We included two systems maps created in Kumu that show the ecosystem Growing Gardens is a part of within the Boulder Valley food access community and the systemic barriers that interact with Growing Gardens' food access work. Our geographic maps highlight the overlaps between food insecurity, transportation, and climate impacts. Case studies show how these barriers have affected specific organizations we interviewed. The StoryMap will be shared with the Food Security Network of Boulder and Broomfield Counties so member organizations can use this information to better inform programming and advocacy moving forward.

FUNDING & RESOURCE GUIDE

Based on the information conveyed through the stakeholder barrier assessment, we created a funding and resource guide. This tool was designed to assist Growing Gardens and their partners with funding avenues to address barriers including but not limited to infrastructure and local food procurement. The list was compiled with the grants and funders provided to us by survey respondents in addition to outside research. The funding and resource guide will be shared with partners with the goal of increasing the funding allocated to addressing barriers to food access in the Boulder Valley region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations to Growing Gardens were designed to increase the impact of the Growing Gardens Food Project. It is our hope that these recommendations will allow for food access organizations that Growing Gardens partners with to better serve the food insecure communities in and around of Boulder County. Our recommendations include, but are not limited to, increasing production on the farm to grow more of the specific products requested by organizations and forming new partnerships with organizations that reach additional populations experiencing food insecurity. We will share relevant recommendations with stakeholders during our presentations to the Growing Gardens staff and board and the Food Security Network of Boulder and Broomfield Counties.



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