

Nourishing Networks Workshop

Wood County – March 9th, 2018

Preliminary Report

Nourishing Networks Wood County: Workshop Reflections and Report

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Introduction

Each year we witness a widening gap in the U.S. between those who can access high quality, affordable, nutritious foods and those who cannot. Across West Virginia, where disparities in food access are particularly acute, many intrepid advocates are working hard to close that gap. How can we bring these diverse food access initiatives together around one table to advance community health and wellbeing for all West Virginians?

On March 9th, 2018 the Wood County Nourishing Networks Workshop brought together folks from different backgrounds, expertise, and experience to explore food access barriers and the effectiveness of healthy food access strategies in Wood County. We had some fun, learned together, and used shared tools to deepen our understanding of what limits access to healthy food and what we can do about it. Our workshop advanced through three stages.

- 1.** First we worked as a team to conduct a rapid assessment of healthy food access barriers in Wood County. Participants worked together to identify access barriers.
- 2.** Second the room identified community assets, food resources, and existing initiatives in Wood County which could be mobilized to improve access to healthy food for all.
- 3.** Third, reflecting on the key barriers to healthy food access in Wood and the major assets that could be mobilized our teams developed strategies to improve access to healthy food.

Over the course of a mere 7 hours (9am-4pm), our participants collectively identified:

225+ Healthy Food Access Barriers

98+ Community Assets to Support Healthy Food Initiatives

15+ New Healthy Food Access Strategies

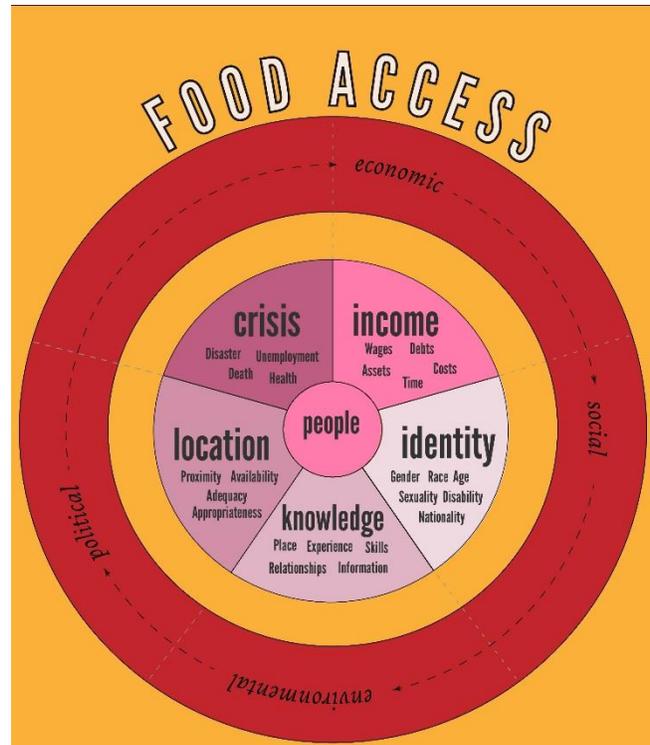
In this brief reflection on the workshop we present the results of these discussions, collective analyses and strategic planning exercises. The intention of the document is to inform the next phase of consultation among those who wish to continue working together to advance a healthy food access plan for Wood County. Here we aim to document and represent the findings our collective experiment in its rawest format. In the conclusion your facilitators offer their reflections on the process and potential next steps.

Overall, we found the Wood County Nourishing Networks Workshop to be a tremendous success and look forward to accompanying you in a process of planning and action that enhances the amazing work you are doing to improve access to healthy food in Wood County and beyond.

Access Barriers: What limits people’s access to healthy food?

At the center of our concern about healthy food access is people. Across West Virginia many people confront significant barriers to accessing affordable, adequate, nutritious foods. Some of the forces that affect people’s ability to access healthy food are represented in our food access barriers wheel (represented to the right). The inner circle is composed of a series of social constraints that have the most direct impact on the ability of an individual, a household, or a community to access food.

Income refers to the effect of someone’s resources in wages or assets as well as the costs of food, debts carried, and the time limits placed on those who work rather than growing food for themselves. As most people in the U.S. work to earn money to buy food, this is the largest constraint on food access. **Identity** refers to the way someone’s gender, race, disability, sexuality, nationality or age affects their ability to access food. **Knowledge** refers to what people know, what experience or skills they have, their place-based understanding, and the relationships they have with others. **Location** refers to people’s proximity to healthy food outlets, the availability of particular foods, as well as the ability to grow food. And last, **Crisis** refers to disasters, unemployment, health issue or death that can undermine food access for an individual, household or community.



At any one time, people may confront one or more of these social constraints to accessing healthy food. Furthermore, there are a range of indirect forces that also shape access. We characterize these as broad structural forces such as economic change (financial crisis, mine closures), political change (budget cuts, program elimination), environmental change (flooding, pollution), or social change (expansion or reduction in civil rights). These indirect structural forces are also constantly changing and thereby shaping the direct forces that shape people’s access to healthy food. Environmental change in the form of a flood disaster. Economic change in the form of layoffs or wage reductions. Social change in the form of racism and marginalization. Political change in the form of cutting nutritional program budgets. In conjunction we understand people’s ability to navigate these barriers to be harrowing at best. It is for this reason that there are various healthy food access initiatives that approach these barriers and help people to overcome them.

Wood County: Healthy Food Access Barriers

According to the workshop participants, low-income households in Wood County confront significant barriers to accessing healthy food. Furthermore, participant observed particular gaps in the strategic efforts to improve access to healthy food. These concerns can be grouped into the following five main categories:

Income Barriers

- The lower the income, the more nutritional issues in the family
- Instances of weighing children before and after the summer to check weight loss/gain
- People get kicked out of SNAP and other programs who are only \$50 over the limit
 - Instance of someone getting kicked off SNAP for being \$12 over the income limit
- Wood lost both K-Mart's
- USDA has lots of restrictions
- Pipeline coming in brings in people from out of state and so rent prices go up
- Affordability of food
 - Healthy food is too expensive
- Dollar Stores are cheaper
 - Canned foods
- Employment change history
- Fresh food expensive on fixed income
- Drug convictions/prior convictions limit resource accessibility
- Financing for charities are limited
- Lack of vehicle
- Food stamps without decent jobs
 - Middle class suffers
 - Don't qualify for assistance
 - Just above the cutoff
- Single parent homes
- Government is corrupt
- Even better off schools don't have school gardens
- Prices
 - Difference between higher cost fresh foods and cheaper fast food
- Low access to higher paying jobs
- Peak growing season not during school year
- Majority Service jobs that pay less
- Part-time jobs with no benefits or job security
- Threat of businesses leaving
- Unemployment
 - Increasing every year
- Not a lot of sure footing, people feeling vulnerable
- People can't afford appliances, cooking gear
- Elderly and Disabled on fixed SSI income
 - A high percentage must choose between food and medicine
- Healthcare costs are rising
- Transportation to work is expensive
 - Gas is expensive
- SNAP benefits have gone down don't stretch as far as they used to
- Filing for Food Assistance takes too long (SNAP take up to 30 days to complete filing and to get EBT card)

- Change in types of jobs available after Dupont, Paint Co, GE, Fenton, and Century left
 - Great paying jobs gone
 - Manufacturing Plants closing
 - Only Service and Support jobs filling this gap
- People struggling to match income to expenses
- Consumer choice opportunity
- Working can prevent food stamps access
- People can access more food using state benefits and working less
- WIC only gives \$11/month for produce
- No more senior discounts at Kroger (or discounts for food pantry bulk buying)
- Cheaper to live further away from resource hubs
- High poverty rate
- Service employees make too much to receive benefits
- Disappearing middle class
- Families
 - Kids in sports have greater nutritional needs and families must spend more on food

Identity Barriers

- Discrimination
 - Instance of a transgender individual being refused food at a food pantry in the county
 - Others being discriminated against on their sexuality
 - Instance of Muslim woman facing discrimination in the county
- Disabilities - 20% unemployed
 - Special diets
 - Autism
 - People who cannot leave their homes
 - Wheel Chair Accessibility – many organizations do not have it
- Single parents
- Very white population with few minorities
 - Reported instance of discriminatory police arrested a black man after church for jaywalking, tackled and handcuffed
- Elderly/Seniors have greater need
- Fairness Act
 - Last county, last state to join
- Youth need mentors
- Community garden not being utilized by filing who actually need it
- Aging population
- Young folks without transportation
- A lot of single parents in wood county
- Folks with allergies
 - Not all pantry food is allergen friendly and it can be hard to navigate a food assistance landscape with
- Veteran community that is not served well
- Some people are not well enough to access food
- Medicinal Dependencies
 - Side effects can sometimes cause even greater issues
- Youth population on the streets without resources to know where to go to get help
- Pride

- People are too proud to ask where to access
- Judgement
 - People are too quick to judge someone in a situation without understanding them
- Stigma of accessing services
- The working poor are discriminated against
 - Pantries closed during work hours prevents working poor from accessing their services
- Age prevents new jobs for older people
- Young unable to find work
- Some pantry-goers lack decision making power in what they get
- Aging population has limited resources
 - The nondiscrimination ordinance was struck down in Parkersburg last year (not a welcoming community to minorities)
 - Limited access to resources
- Large homeless population in the county
- Age gap is impacting unemployment
 - Young people are moving away
 - High percentage of population has disability
- WIC – difficulty in retailers qualifying
- Specific groups of people targeted by some programs

Knowledge Barriers

- Older population don't know about what resources are available
- Some people do not know the restrictions for food assistance
- Lots of food backpack programs that might not know how to reduce cost
- Families told they can only go once a month to some resources
- Getting food banks to source what we need – sufficient storage
- Does everyone have the resources to cook with?
- People have difficulty budgeting and cooking
- People don't garden because it takes too much time
 - Lost tradition
 - Gardening knowledge and skills and not passed down to younger generations anymore
- Some county residents lack life skills and tech knowledge
- Difficult to navigate system of resources and local knowledge for people outside of town
- Knowing where to get food (e.g. homeless youth)
- Knowing how to prepare food or healthier ways to prepare some things
- Not many people attend canning and food preserving workshops
- Not many people using snap to buy plants; fruit trees, seeds, growing supplies
- Literacy and k-12 education
 - There are many folks in the county who cannot read
- People having to go get new education after plants all leaving

- Lack of education prevents new employment
- Many are unaware of the aid benefits they're eligible for
 - Instance of mothers taking the WIC benefits for their children but not for themselves
- Younger people don't know about services or where to find out about services they may qualify for
- Lack of access to current and correct nutritional information
- Food identity limits people from trying new, healthier recipes
- Misunderstandings between generations due to age gap
- Need for strong approach/networking to share knowledge and promote collaboration
 - Sharing information resources, especially for different populations
- Food choice – SNAP budget
- Do people know they can get certain types of assistance (F.A. Goods) regardless of income?

Location Barriers

- Where do other people in Wood get food outside of Parkersburg?
- Rent has skyrocketed
- Transportation a huge issue in Wood
- Locations of Foodlands
 - The only grocery stores in wood
- Lack of vehicles
- Difference between where people work vs. where they can shop/access food
- South Side - Franklin is a lower income area
- McKinley Elementary - St. Mary's, Northend - very rural with poor transportation
- Salvation Army needs to branch out
- Parkersburg South is the only FFA program in Wood County
- Lack of sidewalks
 - Many broken
- Spatially spread out
- Low transportation to hot meal programs
- Bus system only operates in Parkersburg and Vienna
 - There is a bus to WVUP but it's only for students
 - Limitations of bus system
 - Only on Sunday.
 - Problem for work access for those who work on Sunday
 - Costs \$0.50 per ride per rider - adds up
 - Runs to the University, Walmart and City Limits
 - Won't stop at HUD housing
 - Instance of women with small children waiting for the bus and being ignored
- Fresh food is more expensive in the county than in the city
 - Also prices tend to be seasonal

- Majority of retailers in the county are convenience stores
- Only 1% of retail is farmers market
- Emergency Food schedules and border are a problem for access
- Emergency food has different types of rations and foods depending on where they are
- Urban vs Rural access dynamics –
 - Low access to transportation throughout the county, especially in rural areas
- Veteran food access
 - Out of city limits and not near the veteran’s service agencies (DVA)
- Taxi usage is high
- Many in rural areas have to pay drivers for lifts to grocery/food stores
- Parkersburg is close to Ohio, no crossing state lines with USDA commodities
- People are too far away; they are trying to cross the county to get food
- Gas prices are high and prevent people from getting around
- Some areas are without phone/computer access
- Public transportation does not accommodate rural populations
- Farmers markets are not located in convenient locations
- The land is not good for farming in wood county
 - Lack of producers
- All big box retailers are in commercial zone
- Bus is expensive
- Uber does not exist in the county
- Some people far from Parkersburg resources
- Urban vs. rural retailers and transportation
- Need greater access to milk and eggs

Crisis Barriers

- It takes too long to receive food assistance (sometimes 30 days to get SNAP benefits)
 - Elderly
 - Dietary issues
 - Allergies
- Drug addiction
 - It could be valuable to add in data on this into the Food Security Workbook
- Salvation Army drug tests people who wish to access resources each day. It was reported that they don’t deny them services, but they will not continue to serve them for very long
- Health issues in Wood
 - Diabetes
 - IBS
 - Digestive issues
- Apathy
- GE closed
 - Lost jobs
- Dupont spill
- Massive fire occurred a few weeks previously
- People are leaving, youth especially from the state
- Unhealthy state
- Few people are active
- Lots of drug activity in the park
- Many people are one paycheck away from crisis

- Crime is increasing with the opioid epidemic and people are losing assets that are not insured
- Feelings of hopelessness
 - For many people there is no belief in the future
- Housing
- Teacher strike – feeding programs and backpacks programs at the school
- Lack of summer feeding programs
- Unemployment rising
 - Instance of a man that lost his job and made \$12 too much to qualify for state assistance
- It was reported that women in the county sometimes do not drive and have difficulty finding work
- Seniors need two incomes to cover basic costs of living
- Opioid Crisis
 - Women/Men are losing custody of children
 - New guardians are sometimes not generally or financially prepared to take over the kids
 - Can direct social awareness and funding from other issues such as hunger
- More and More grandparents raising kids
- Flash flooding has impacted the homeless population
- Plastic storage facility fire
- Snow delays and flooding have led to several days of school closures
- Income sometimes must be used for drug treatment for family members
- Urban and rural distribution of resources – transportation
- Lack of producers
- Sharing information about food resources to specific populations
- Difficulty for retailers to qualify for WIC – this is not unique to Wood County
- Challenges and tension between healthy food and cheap non-perishables

Existing Healthy Food Initiatives and Community Assets in Wood County

Central to any plan to overcome healthy food access barriers is assessing the existing initiatives and assets within a given community. In this phase of the workshop participants identified many different assets in Wood County that contribute to community well-being and specifically healthy food access initiatives. We have categorized these assets into six asset types:

State Assets

- Wood county commission
- Crime commission with law enforcement
- Regional councils
- Economic Authority and downtown Parkersburg revitalization working to bring in more economic activity
- City development departments – collaborators
- City council is an open forum to claim rights and increase knowledge.
- Certified Medicaid Programs
- Title 13/19
- Nutrition Outreach Instructor (Becky at Extension)
- WVU Parkersburg
- Energy Express - 8 weeks, breakfasts and lunch
- Extension - youth/ families/ health/ ag, yearly needs survey, community garden, newsletters, not sure about Wood County specifically (Callie)
- Dining with Diabetes - 5-6 weeks learning to cook and budget
- Backpack Programs (most schools)
- Lutheran Church Garden - used to give out produce
- Mini grants through Try This - \$500-3,000, 2nd stage up to \$15
- Energy Express
- Summer Feeding – 4 sites with Energy Express
- Licensed child care
- McKinley Elementary
- Community block grants are less politicized as of last year, namely non-profits have received some of the funds that used to go to road projects and other special interests
- Familywise/United Way has programs for discounted healthcare costs
- Nutrition and Wellness
- WVU Extension
- Washington County Extension – how to budget for food
- Seniors get vouchers for the farmers market
- CEP

Market Assets

- Piggly Wiggly Owner – Wholesale deals to pantries – Jim Opps
- Later this year more stores will start to accept WIC and begin to meet the requirements for that starting in April
- Internet helping increase WIC access (can take the classes online, check balance, ect.)
- Farmers Market vouchers from WIC

Charitable Assets

- Community Resource Network (DHHR referrals) - housing, employment help, budgeting and resumes, small food pantry, ID services, financial assistance, case management
- Salvation Army - food pantry (1 budget for 5 counties)
- Case management (shelter)
- Opportunity house (former shelter families, more intensive)
- Utility assistance/ clothing vouchers
- Pathway of Hope (open-ended) - long -term case management, home visits, support system (3 families)
- Circles – resources available for low income families and guest presenters, circle leaders meet weekly. Right now living on a budget education a 6-week program with 6 different partners
- Faithlink - groceries, housekeeping, senior boxes (looking to start delivering these soon)
- United Way Alliance – fundraising, allocating funds – impact allocation, connecting hunger solution groups/agencies
- Catholic Charities
- FRN – community resource handbooks
- School Backpack Programs
- Networking Backpack Programming
- Backpack Collaborative has quarterly coordination meetings to reduce identify and reduce service duplication and educate folks on healthy food options
- Sak Pack Program - try to include as much produce as possible
- Food pantries do not turn people away
- No gatekeeping in pantries such as discrimination or only serving certain areas or neighborhoods
- Emergency Food Co-Op that advertises programs for the different affiliated organizations and runs food drives to benefit members
- Robust network of food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters and emergency services
- Mobile Food Pantries – Rural Action goes to WVUP and Camden Clark, Catholic Charities and Salvation Army have mobile food pantry goes out to rural areas
- Disabled Veterans (Murphy Town) Pantry - serves Veterans
- Food Pantry in Williamstown serving that school district once per month
- Church of Christ in Belpre pantry every Thursday has no income guidelines
- First Lutheran Food Pantry
- Christian Community Cupboard - only serves that neighborhood
- Many service providers have pick-up options
- Hot meals every day and different churches
- Trinity lunch and dinner on Sundays
- Latrobe St. Mission opened a kitchen that serves breakfast and lunch
- Friendship Kitchen community meals Tuesday-Thursday 11-1 pm
- Community Dinners - Monday through Saturday, 12-5 pm, open and free (Salvation Army)
- Meal Deliveries by Salvation Army and Senior Citizens Center
- Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinner Lists
- Community member who collects from Kroger, Sams, Walmart, and donates multiple pantries
- SW Resources- Employs people with disabilities, provides vocational rehabilitation

- Workforce Development has job training and pays for GED training
- Life skills for folks – Circles, FRN – 4-week workshop – healthier eating
- Families Leading Change
- Try This WV
- Give Local MOV - 24 hour online giving program that provides different levels of matching for the community organizations in the area
- Sisters Health Foundation
- Parkersburg Area Community Foundation
- Domestic Violence Shelter for Women
- Parolees - Salvation Army, directed to S.A.; Downtown Bethel - church brunch
- First Lutheran has community gardens where prisoners grow the food and get paid for it
- Westbrook Mental Health and Fellowship Home
- Bridges out of poverty is streamlining case management to reduce “agency time” so people don’t have to travel all around the county to get services. More centralized locations
- Spirit of collaboration partnerships and alliance across Parkersburg social service world
- Mid-Ohio Valley non-profit league – provides bridges out of poverty training
- House to Home - day shelter
- Boys and Girls Club
- Sobriety Point
- Opioid treatment center
- Senior living buses to help elderly get around
- Senior Citizens Vehicle Assistance
- WV 211
- Shack
- Consumer Credit Counseling
- OCOF is very active in Wood county, helping with representation and political organizing
- Wood County indivisible – Fairness Parkersburg working on equal rights for trans-gender
- Advocacy WV works with people with disabilities for fair treatment of children and adults

Farming/Self-Provisioning Assets

- Childcare – raised gardens – Amy Snodgrass – Community Resources
- Old Man River’s Delivery
- Community garden initiatives
 - Master Gardeners
 - Workshops
 - WVU Extension
- Farmers Market Downtown – although there are not many vendors, it is open year round and is indoors
- Parkersburg Academy High Tunnel
- Old Man Rivers and Delivery Options
- Churches Community Garden – First Lutheran (Emerson) – doubling in size
- Grow This!

What strategies enable people to access healthy food?

People access healthy food through various mechanisms. While many people who might be reading this report primarily access healthy food by spending their wages in a market (grocery store) or through the farming sector (local farmers market) many other individuals, households and communities cannot afford to access food only in this way. Some of the strategies and initiatives to improve people's access to healthy food are represented in the food access strategy wheel (represented to the right).

The inner circle is composed of the primary mechanisms that people access healthy food. **Market** refers to grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, dollar stores and the like where people exchange wages for food. **State** refers to government programs such as SNAP, WIC and School programs that provide direct subsidies to offset the cost of food for individuals and households (especially children) who lack the money to access food in the market. **Charity** refers to free food rations provided by food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens that is funded by donation. **Farming** refers to grower-based initiatives to sell produce through farmers markets and other mechanisms. And lastly, **self-provisioning** refers to practices of hunting, foraging, fishing or growing your own food. Taken together these strategies represent the dominant and divergent ways that people access food.



At any one time an individual, household or community may utilize a combination of these strategies to gain or maintain access to food. Furthermore, as this wheel demonstrates, the retail marketplace is not the only way in which people access food. Government programs play a major role in supporting low-income families and those confronting crises. Charitable assistance agencies also play a supplementary role. Farmers make important local contributions to food access and hunters put away a lot of protein for the winter. However, surrounding the inner ring again are the broader structural forces that shape these various strategies. In conjunction with the barriers described earlier these can indirectly impact people's ability to exercise these food access strategies. Economic change can lead retailers to close up shop or raise prices. Political changes can cause the loss of vital government nutrition programs. Charities may become overwhelmed by the growing need or fail to raise enough money to meet demand. Farmers may confront environmental changes like social degradation or drought. Self-provisioners might confront disease in their gardens, declining game habitat or access to fishing areas. It is for this reason that healthy food initiatives work with people to develop creative strategies and protect vital programming that enables people to sustain themselves, their households and their communities.

How can we promote innovative action to support healthy food access?

Through four years of research we have observed and assessed a range of strategies to improve access to health food for all in West Virginia. Most commonly, these strategies operate in distinctive programming associated with the State, Charitable or Farming/Self-Provisioning mechanisms described above.

However, there are also some very interesting innovations that we describe as Hybrid Healthy Food Initiatives that bring together strange bedfellows and mix together various strategies to close food gaps and promote community well-being. Many of these hybrid healthy food initiatives are project-based and represent outside-the-box thinking. Mobile farmers markets, Hunters for the Hungry, Food pantry CSA programs, Double Bucks Farmer's Markets, and much more. Furthermore, in some cases, these hybrid healthy food initiatives are leading to new policy innovations that link people across these differences. For instance, the recent Farm to Food Bank bill in WV brought charitable agencies, farmers and state officials together to create an innovative law providing farmers tax breaks for farm food donations.

We believe there is much to learn from the creative thinking that comes from bringing many people with different expertise and experience to the table. Hybrid healthy food initiatives are just one example of how we can work together to imagine and enact a different food future.

Thinking Outside the Box: Beyond Program-Thinking

One of our goals with our workshop in Wood was to invite participants to break away from existing program thinking. We all work within programs of some sort or another. Programs are structured interventions that are often funded on an annual basis, have staff, clearly defined goals to promote change and assess effectiveness. Government agencies have programs. Non-profits have programs. Corporations have programs. Schools have programs. There are numerous existing state-based, charitable and educational programs focused on improving access to healthy food. Many of these programs are funded, operate effectively, and are successful according to their own measures and forms of assessment. Programs work. Yet, programs can also be limited in scope, ineffective or they can stagnate in their efficacy.

Reinvigorating Strategic Thinking. One of the reasons that programs stagnate is that we forget that they are the result of strategic thinking, strategic projects and strategic policies that have come before. Programs have a history, a set of logics, assumptions, and parameters that are rooted in past processes of strategic planning and design by individuals and groups. These folks developed these programs based on a particular framing of the problem. Today those problems may have changed, or opportunities may have arisen. To get past existing program-thinking we need to reinvigorate the kind of energy that comes from strategic thinking, collective inquiry, and innovative actions.

How do we get beyond existing program-thinking?

To get beyond program-thinking we think it is important to begin by fostering conversations among folks who are engaged in various forms of programming, policy work, and projects that address healthy food access in our communities. Second, we mobilize information on limits and barriers to healthy food access to serve as a basis for collective problem identification. Third we invite participants in diverse teams to consider new strategies (not programs) to mobilize community assets to address these collectively defined problems. And fourth, we invite participants to work together to come up with creative campaigns that advance policies and projects that address healthy food access barriers. Using a series of exercises, the teams participate in a strategy planning process that moves us beyond program thinking and toward new kinds of collective action that addresses pernicious problems.

What are healthy food access strategies?

We define healthy food access strategies along two essential axes of innovation: the development of healthy food access policies and projects. These two strategic approaches are very different from programs. Indeed, as stated earlier, policies and projects result in programs; not the other way around.

Policy-focused strategies target local, state and national laws, rules, public assets, activities or budget allocations to improve healthy food access. Policy strategies can reform the way schools, universities, corporations, and government operate. These strategies employ research, communication, networking, canvassing, organizing and lobbying efforts to create change. Usually the goal is to persuade a decision-maker to adopt a given set of practices, rules or adjust their goals to benefit your constituency. The tactics include new policy proposals, defending existing programs, consciousness raising, and coalition building. These strategies may in some cases have longer timeframes to implement, but not always. Indeed, with the right organizing, conditions and constituency (as a result of organizing efforts) policy change can happen quickly (even faster than projects). Because policy-focused strategies affect existing institutions they can have far reaching impacts from on the direction of programs that affect many people.

Project-focused strategies pilot and test out our new ideas and bring together novel resources and people to create a model, case study, or example. Projects tend to advance on more restricted timeframes that reflect their experimental nature. Projects have a beginning and an end. To evolve into a permanent activity or program that improves access to healthy food, projects must either result in volunteer-driven ownership or sustained financial support from private foundations, state, charitable or market-based efforts. Unlike policy strategies, projects can often take shape independently and autonomously from any particular constituency. This gives projects a nimble and entrepreneurial feel and can result in quick learning to be adapted to various future circumstances.

Wood County: Healthy Food Access Strategies

The strategies below were developed in consultation among participants in the Nourishing Networks Wood Workshop to improve healthy food access. These strategies are a result of group consultation following a collective assessment of the barriers to healthy food access in the county and the community assets that could be mobilized to address the problems identified. Each team arrived at their strategy through a different process whereby members evaluated potentials and set priorities. While these strategies were developed rapidly, they nevertheless represent several promising avenues for near term collective action which could be carried forward in Wood County.

Name of Strategy: Mobile Fresh

Approach:

- Identify and deliver to communities who have limited access to transportation and fresh foods (mostly in the South-East part of the county)
- Stock the mobile pantry by gleaning from farmers market, local grocers, gardeners, and community gardens
- This program would mostly be summer oriented for growing seasons, but could operate outside of that time frame with more assistance from local grocers

Barriers Addressed:

- Transportation
- Communication
- Low-income

Dream Team:

- Parkersburg Farmers Market
- Catholic Charities
- WV 211
- Jim Opps (owner of Foodlands and now Piggly-Wiggly)
- SW Resources
- First Lutheran Church

Outcomes:

- To deliver fresh produce to those in need and who do not have access to consistent transportation to grocery stores or farmers markets at little to no cost

Name of Strategy: Farmers Market**Approach:**

- Arranging a more centralized and accessible location for Parkersburg Farmers Market – currently in a closed off and inaccessible location close to the Ohio River
- Also bring more small growers and producers into the market and to encourage more gardeners to sell
- Plan to introduce Double Up Food Bucks for low income folks to access more fresh produce in addition to enticing more small growers to participate

Barriers Addressed:

- Expensive and exclusive current farmers market
- Current inaccessible famers market
- Low income folks to be served by local farmers and producers to bolster the local food economy

Dream Team:

- Mt. Pleasant Food Pantry
- WVU Extension Services
- City Park, 4-
- WV Food and Farm Coalition
- Parkersburg Churches

Outcomes:

- To provide a more centralized and open space for small producers, gardeners, and part-time farmers to reach folks who have limited access to funds for fresh produce using Double Up Food Bucks

Name of Strategy: Food Loop**Approach:**

- Expand the regular bus route's radius three miles, hitting more high-need areas as stops including the section 8 neighborhoods and local retailers including Walmart
- Extending hours to service sites one night per week

This will be done by:

- Showing the need through the reporting of pantry numbers, local petitions, voicing concern at local city and county governance meetings and open forums
- Identifying what routes need to be changes
- Creating an effective loop route to run once per week to assist those in need

Barriers Addressed:

- Lack of employment - people are getting to their jobs
- Transportation barriers - people will be able to get where they need too when they need too

Dream Team:

- County Commission
- Bus Board of Directors
- WVUP - how did they get their loop?
- Stacey- Director of the United Way

Outcomes:

- Increased access to transportation

Name of Strategy: Fabulous Fresh Food from the Farm**Approach:**

- Coordinated effort to connect growers and produce from area farms to neighborhoods, senior centers, and food pantries
- How do we get affordable fresh food to people?
 - Driven into agencies/neighborhoods – senior farmers market vouchers

Barriers Addressed:

- Healthier, fresh food to those in need

Dream Team:

- April Pennel
- Whittens Farm Market
- Faith Link and Catholic Charities
- Pleasants County, Wirt County, Calhoun County Famers
- Friendship Kitchen
- Extension
- KISRA
- Kristen McCartney
- Vienna Senior Center
- Belville Farms
- Butche's Farm

Outcomes:

- Healthier families, adults, lifestyles
- Create network of farms, food pantries, individuals
- 75% of pantries clients get fresh produce
- Increased self esteem

- Reduce food waste, canning preservation

Name of Strategy: Fresh Treats Truck

Approach:

- Like an ice-cream truck, but with cheap fresh snacks driving through neighborhoods

Barriers Addressed:

- Need for healthy snack options
- Childhood obesity
- Increased need for hydration in the summer

Dream Team:

- Hospitals
- Highmark
- WVU Extension
- SNAP-ED

Outcomes:

- Fun summertime activities
- Increased hydration
- Social connections
- Giving out nutrition information

Name of Strategy: SNAP @ Farm Market

Approach:

- Promoting Farm Markets and SNAP use

Barriers Addressed:

- Limited access to healthy food, especially for low income people and families
- Expensive farmers market products
- Expensive healthy food

Dream Team:

- Whitman's
- Wards
- James County Store
- Wagrens
- Bellville
- Dirt Rd. 1 ¼ mile
- Bob's Market

Outcomes:

- Increased access to nutritious food for low-income people
- More money coming into the farmers market and into farmers' pockets

Name of Strategy: "Farm-to-Live": Sober Living and Farm Facility**Approach:**

- Find sober living home/ apartment complex on/ near Gihon Road
- Incorporate Gihon Road farm
- Create a greenhouse, community garden, farmers' market, farm stand
- Offer SNAP
- Communal living facility with life skills incorporated - how to cook, farm, budget
- Educational components

Barriers Addressed:

- Poor health
- Unemployment
- Lack of some types of knowledge
- Need for Life Skills Education
- Need for better relationships
- No sober living facility in Wood County
- Low job access

Dream Team:

- Jeannie Harrison – GroHuntington
- Tim Kraft - High on Hope (addiction recovery classes)
- Extension Master Gardeners
- Gwen Crum (Wood County Extension)
- Michael Cross
- John Jackson - Consumer Credit
- Kristen McCarthy
- Kayla Hinckley - Try This WV
- Habitat for Humanity (work on building)
- Kate Greene - Brownsfield Development

Outcomes:

- Self-sufficiency
- Address mental health and addiction cycles
- Get better jobs
- Better nutrition

Name of Strategy: “Growing Brave Kids” - Kanawha Elementary High Tunnel

Approach:

- High tunnel at Kanawha Elementary
- Fresh produce to schools
- Volunteer day for high tunnel construction
- Sell extra food → fundraiser for field trips

Barriers Addressed:

- Large swath of rural Wood County
- Need for youth engagement
- Low income area
- Poor nutritional health

Dream Team:

- Grow Ohio Valley – Danny
- Chuck Talbott and Doug Penn - Putnam County Extension (previous school high tunnel project)
- Kanawha Elementary principal and Kanawha PTA
- Kayla Hinckley - Try This WV
- Amy Gherke - Salvation Army
- Raina - Community Food Initiatives (winter growing guide)
- Megan Saulter - elementary teacher (Cabell County)
- Mandy Eagle - 1st grade teacher
- Families Leading Change

Outcomes:

- Produce for school meals
- Healthy food access
- Growing knowledge - seeds, soil, irrigate
- Relationship building
- Selling to raise money for extracurricular activities

Name of Strategy: “Wood County Appleseed”: City-wide Orchard

Approach:

- Plant fruit trees instead of ornamental trees across the county
- Help the homeless - those farther away to reach produce

Barriers Addressed:

- Rurality
- Low income region
- Homelessness

Dream Team:

- City of Parkersburg Mayor
- Wood County commissioners
- Master Gardeners
- GrowWV
- Gwen Crum - Wood County Extension Agent
- Lowe's/ Home Depot

Outcomes:

- Access to fresh produce county-wide

Name of Strategy: Grocer-EASE

Approach:

- Mobile grocery store that travels to remote areas of Wood County
- Workshop component: teach how to prepare the groceries that are distributed from the truck into healthy meals
- Recipe cards will supplement the workshops and bring educational materials to those unable to attend workshops
- Can utilize SNAP and WIC at the mobile grocery store

Barriers Addressed:

- Lack of transportation
- Low affordability of fresh, healthy food

Dream Team:

- Nutritionists
- SNAP educators
- WVU Extension office
- AmeriCorps VISTA
- Community Resources Inc.
- Local farmers
- Produce from the Lutheran church on 19th street

Outcomes:

- Improve food access and sharing of knowledge

Name of Strategy: Food Swap Hop

Approach: Increase access to fresh vegetables by encouraging backyard gardening and having a set time every week to swap/exchange produce. Some suggested this could have the potential to turn into more than just a swap with a revenue generating potential for backyard gardeners.

Barriers Addressed:

- Location
- High cost of healthy foods

Dream Team:

- WVU extension
- Sister's health fund
- Trucking companies
- WV Food and Farm Coalition
- WV Farmer's Market Coalition

Outcomes:

- Expanded produce access
- Improved health and dignity through self-provisioning
- Improved awareness of healthy food – education potential.

Name of Strategy: Wood County on Demand**Approach:**

- Mid-Ohio Valley transit authority is a 5-member board
- They would need to be approached first with the idea to expand bus service into the county
- They would have to make a request to the county commission for a property tax levy – would have to figure out if that tax would go only in the county, or if the city would also be taxed, because they are already being taxed for the bus system there
- Political problems with the county population potentially not supporting the levy because many there would not use the bus
- Would need to get a lot of agencies on board to promote it and campaign for the levy to pass
- Could also pair with an approach like the Hocking/Athens/Perry Community action model that has an Uber like on demand transportation
- Potentially combine with the transportation options available through Medicaid and create a pool of cash to create a hybrid with bus and taxi/microbus service
- If the levy passes county commission can apply for a federal match 25% county and matched 75% by the department of transportation of infrastructure and bus purchases

Barriers Addressed:

- Rural location
- Low income

Dream Team:

- HAPCAP
- Mid-Ohio Valley Transit
- Wood County Commission
- Insurance Agencies
- Wood County AH transportation council
- Civil society allies
- Bus mechanics
- Wood/Washington/Wirt Interstate planning commission

Outcomes:

- Improved access to services, medical appointments, food and employment.

Name of Strategy: Table to Able**Approach:**

- Program targeted to people with disabilities in the food system
- Provide pathways to meaningful contributions that include a wage that would be taken from a combination of state and private/corporate funding
- Educational/Vocational model (on the goodwill model) to enable people to participate and integrate people with disabilities into all parts of the food system from food pantries to gardens to store clerks
- There is perception that people are DIS-abled, but in fact they can do many things and it gives them meaning

Barriers Addressed:

- Disabled population in Wood
- Knowledge
- Income

Dream Team:

- S&W Resources
- 4-H
- Goodwill
- Emergency Food Providers
- Office of behavioral health

- Title 19 waiver agencies.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced production/marketing/distribution – specifically in charity that needs more labor
- Enhanced feelings of self-worth for people with disabilities

Name of Strategy: Project Fresh Food

Approach:

- Fresh farmers market, which accepts EBT and WIC
- Discount to those who use EBT and WIC
- Central location to reach those in food deserts
- Live music at market to make in a community event
- Donation Station for produce provided through workforce rehab

Barriers Addressed:

- Opioid epidemic
- Workforce skills-increase income and knowledge
- Improve access to healthy
- Fresh food

Dream Team:

- EBT educators
- Wood County extension offices
- WIC educators
- Community gardeners
- Amity rehabilitation
- St. Mary correctional facility
- Fellowship Home
- Recovery Point
- State and City officials

Outcomes:

- Increase availability of affordable
- Fresh produce
- Improve nutrition education
- Improve community growth and health

Name of Strategy: Re-Growth

Approach:

- Rehab farm
- Acquire unused farm owned by WVU-P
- Halfway house for ex-convicts and/or those seeking rehab services for drug addiction
- Health benefits, work experience, could work w/ WVU-P Nursing
- Could Accept Medicaid

Barriers Addressed:

- Opioid epidemic
- Lack of producers
- Need for local markets
- Lack of transportation
- Farmers Market

Dream Team:

- Highmark
- Other Foundations – insurance with interest in health, rehab, agriculture, and food
- WV Family Health
- Addiction Specialist
- WVU Extension – agriculture, Master Gardeners

Outcomes:

- Improve access to local food
- Target specific population that has difficulty accessing food (can't get SNAP)
- Rehab participants
- Employment – or work exchange for living