

## Leveraging Community–Academic Partnerships to Improve Healthy Food Access in an Urban, Kansas City, Kansas, Community

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### What Is the Purpose of this Study?

- To partner with grass roots organizations in a low-income, minority, urban community, to develop a business plan to improve access to healthy foods.
- This was done by engaging residents in community conversations and conducting a Community Food Assessment Survey, and using the data to drive the development of strategies to improve food access.

### What Is the Problem?

- Overweight and obesity levels are at epidemic proportions in the United States. Eating healthy, unprocessed foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains is one way to combat obesity.
- Studies indicate that Americans who live in underserved, low-income, minority communities have poor access to nutritious, fairly priced, high-quality foods.
- It becomes difficult for residents of such communities to follow recommended dietary guidelines, thus increasing their risk of obesity and other conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
- Community-based participatory research approaches are increasingly being used to solve community food access issues.

### What Are the Findings?

- Residents are unanimously dissatisfied with the lack of a full-service grocery store in Argentine and chose the introduction of a grocery store as their top solution to food access issues in the community.
- On average residents spend \$104 per week for a five-person household.
- On average residents had to go 3.5 to 5 miles to access the nearest full-service grocery stores, making Argentine a food desert.
- An unexpectedly low percentage (10.6%) of residents surveyed reported being on the Federal Women, Infants and Children program. However 35.7% reported being on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- Eighty percent of residents reported shopping at least weekly or more with 11% shopping for a household other than their own.
- Although ratings of food quality at stores frequented were high, fruit and vegetable consumption was low owing to prohibitive costs and personal preferences.
- Residents admitted to resorting to fast food establishments as a cheap way to feed their families.

### Who Should Care Most?

- Community-based organizations and community health centers.
- Residents of underserved, low-income, minority urban and rural communities.

- Food policy makers.
- Chain and independent grocery stores.

#### Recommendations for Action

- Communities addressing food access issues should conduct culturally tailored comprehensive community food assessments to avoid wasted time on strategies that do not match the population's needs or desires.
- Community organizations should consider partnering with experts from other organizations in various sectors, including academic, financial, government, and nongovernmental agencies, to help them address food access issues.
- More planning grants should be made available to communities to increase the probability of success at the implementation stage.