Web-Based Resources to Combat Food Insecurity

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Background

- **A Pandemic in NYC** - Share Meals and Hunter College Food Policy Center
  - Unemployment rates quadrupled from 3.4% to 16% \(^{[1]}\)
  - Residents receiving food assistance doubles to 2 million \(^{[2]}\)
  - One third of food pantries and soup kitchens close \(^{[3]}\)
  - Social distancing drastically reduced food pantry volunteers and operating hours + protocols
  - Grocery stores run out of fresh produce and childcare supplies

- **Meanwhile in Alabama...** - End Child Hunger in Alabama at Auburn University

- **Food Resource Access: What do we know?**
  - Nationwide, 1 in 10 access charitable food resources as of 2018 data \(^{[4]}\)
  - “Family Preference” for food-insecurity assistance - self selection with a menu of options \(^{[5]}\)
  - Demographics of those accessing charitable food resources \(^{[4]}\)
    - Individuals ages 18 to 34, women, single parents, Black and Hispanic adults, families in poverty (<200% of the poverty level). Many are experiencing other material hardship. Many access public “safety net” programs
Problem

How do I find information about the food assistance programs that are still running?

What if I get conflicting information on their operating hours and/or status?

How can I find the closest resources to me so I can minimize my exposure to others or access them quickly and affordably?
Solution

Web-based Community Food Guides!

- Comprehensive
- Updated frequently
- Low cost, high impact

Collaboration: What did it take to get here, and how can others replicate it?

- 5 Pillars of Success
- Future Directions
5 Pillars
Sponsoring Organization Capacity

• Mission-Driven
  ○ Social justice, food justice, food access, minimizing food insecurity and hunger, nutrition and public health

• Administrative Support
  ○ Leadership
  ○ Collaboration with Stakeholders

• Personnel
  ○ Project, Volunteer, Technology Management
Communications Management

- Public Partnerships
  - Identify organizations with common goals/interests (DHR, Public Health, Schools/Universities, Public Safety, Agriculture/Extension)

- Utilizing Networks
  - Identify Private and NP Organizations with common interests
  - Coalitions/Collaborative Efforts

- Direct Marketing
  - Social Media
  - Mailers
  - Public Events
  - “Swag”
People Management

- Recruitment
  - Identify needs/system in advance
  - On-going effort
  - Target like-minded organizations

- Management
  - Thorough training
  - Maintain open, frequent communication
  - Automate whenever possible

- Retention
  - Flexibility
  - Communication
  - Gratitude

- Partnerships
  - Internships
  - Non-profit organizations
Data Management

- Consolidation of data
  - one-time from untrusted sources
  - ongoing collaboration with trusted partners
- Constant validation
  - via volunteers
- Automated tools to assist
  - data conflict resolution
  - translations
  - outreach materials generation
  - backups (emergency, research)
Technology Management

- Off the shelf tools
  - eg: Amazon, Google, Airtable, Wordpress
  - time saved vs functionality limitations
  - financial and personnel constraints

- Built in house tools
  - infinitely customizable
  - shareable
  - personnel constraints
Future Directions
Future plans

● Increased Access
  ○ Automated SMS/Voice Hotline
  ○ Smartphone App
  ○ Collaborative relationships with existing resources

● Fine-Tuned Analytics

● Scale Up
  ○ Packaging together everything an organization needs to launch its own Food Guide
  ○ Providing premium services to manage the tech needs to launch and maintain a Food Guide
  ○ Providing a community of support for a sponsoring organization
Join Us!

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View the Guides:
https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/coronavirus-nyc-food-reports/
aub.ie/foodguides

sign up to join the community!
Q&A
References

llion-residents-face-food-insecurity-officials-say

ht-pandemic

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DC: Urban Institute.