

Research Brief

PROGRAM INTEGRATION: *Providing a Common Framework for Three Merging Teams at a Community Food Bank*

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BACKGROUND

The Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona (CFB) is a 501c3 nonprofit based in Tucson, Arizona, that serves 240,000 individuals annually across five counties: Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima and Santa Cruz. The CFB recognizes that food security is not the only resource to ensure community health; therefore, the CFB engages in many community programs which aim to address the root causes of hunger and to rebuild pride, health, opportunity and confidence among individuals living in poverty. CFB's mission is to change lives in the communities they serve by feeding the hungry today, and building a healthy, hunger-free tomorrow.

In the summer of 2019, three existing teams in the programs department of the CFB integrated into one new team directed by Rhonda Gonzalez, Director of Health Initiatives. The three individual teams included Health & Nutrition, Farm & Garden and Civic Engagement. Rhonda identified that the success of this integration would be reliant upon a mutual understanding of each team member's role and for a common framework to be established by and for the new integrated team. As the direct supervisor of this integration, Rhonda tasked me to complete a research project focused on the integration of this team. I took this research on as an MDP practicum. I am a staff member at the CFB, but this research project was not connected to my existing role. However, through my research, I was able to engage and learn more about the CFB program teams and activities.

The main components of this research project included data gathering to recommend a common framework and areas of focus to be adopted by the integrating team. With the

information gathered, I presented my research findings and recommendations to team members at their retreat in August 2019. As a result, this research project informed team members about their current work and highlighted existing team achievements, structure, successes and partners. In addition, the research informed recommendations for the integration and a framework for how the team could unify and collectively navigate their work.

The social framework that informed and guided this research was Social Determinants of Health (SDH) (Figure 1). SDH are the conditions in which we are born, live, age and work that impact our health and wellbeing.

Figure 1. Study Framework



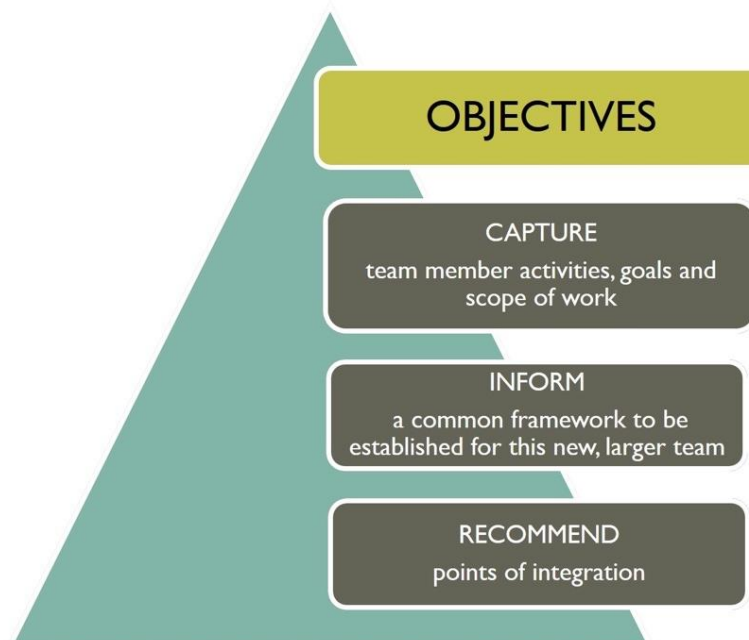
The CFB recognizes that an individual's health is impacted by the quality of their homes, schools, workplace, neighborhoods and communities. Health is also impacted by the economic and social opportunities that increase or decrease access to improved livelihoods such as clean water, food, the quality of education, and safety within the workplace and neighborhood. This framework expanded and supported my data collection and analysis by acknowledging that food security is not the only resource to ensure community health. The activities of each program team at the CFB are grounded in this framework, because while trying to achieve health and food security among participants, these teams also aim to improve other determinants of health such as job security, clean environments, economic opportunity and

literacy. In conclusion, this framework guided me to first acknowledge the scope and depth of the work and provide a common framework for the merging teams.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research project were to: gain an understanding of each team member's activities, goals and projects, recommend a common framework to be established by the integrated team, and encourage points of integration for the new team (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Study Objectives



METHODS

Data Collection

This was a cross-sectional study. A set of interview questions were developed to gain information on the activities, goals and outcomes of three program teams at the CFB: Health & Nutrition, Farm & Garden and Civic Engagement. Individual interviews were conducted over a period of three months with team members to understand their scope of work (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Study Methods



No statistical methods were employed. The data were analyzed qualitatively.

As a CFB staff member I have a strong background and understanding for the team members' roles and activities. In addition, I had a strong rapport with the team members allowing them to be honest with me about their experiences and the realities of their roles. Lastly, I collected the data in a human way by sitting down with each team member and asking questions about their role and work.

RESULTS

A total of 12 interviews were conducted. The responses were reviewed qualitatively by Samantha and Rhonda and summarized in Tables 1-3.

Overall, the main program activities identified from each interview included economic development, leadership development, train the trainer and program tracks. Train the Trainer and Leadership Development were conducted by all team members through adult and youth education. Education programming included, but was not limited to, school garden education, youth and adult nutrition education, civic engagement education, cooking education and water harvesting certification program.

The interviews also identified what team members consider to be the major strengths of their programs, as well as areas for improvement, how they feel about the integration, and their vision for the future (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Interview Questions and Responses

Question	Responses
What are the main goals for your CFB role? What are your professional goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collectively, team members aim to gain practical and professional skills in water harvesting, businesses development, natural building, and time and project management.
What are your major strengths? What professional areas could you use more support with?	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centering clients in our work; team members find points of intervention and think innovatively to improve the lives of clients. Strong interpersonal skills; team members excel at building and leveraging partnerships and relationships and fostering safe emotional and physical spaces. Team members have strong teaching, facilitation, organization and creative skills. <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team members are collectively calling for, evaluation & data collection training and skills, and understanding for advocacy and policy and how it affects our clients and organization. Identified skills and training needs include; facilitation, teaching, quarterly and annual project development, planning and management, goal setting and tracking, diversity, equity and inclusion, curriculum development, written and oral communications, storytelling and decision-making. Team training and skills coordination to offer program participants Transformative justice models; develop, implement & manage client-centered programs and activities.
Who are your current internal partners and collaborations?	See Table 2
What outside organizations are you currently collaborating with? Which are the ones that are fundamental in helping achieve program goals/outcomes?	See Table 3
What team building and project management strategies have you found to be effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team building recommendations include building strong interpersonal relations: one-on-one conversations, regular team meetings and retreats, transparent communication and transparent exercises,

	<p>offsite time, informal gatherings, and respect & trust-building, and emotionally taking care of teammates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project management recommendations include; peer coaching activity and SMART goals, team check-ins, teamwork, project planning (quarterly, annually), and task lists.
<p>Where do you see your CFB team in 1 year; 3 years?</p>	<p>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT TEAM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train folks how to use community organizing tactic in the field and among program activities and provide training for staff members. • Implement and develop community organizing tactics to be a standard operating practice. • Three to four full-time Community Organizers supporting leadership development and the client centered philosophy and approach across five county service area. • A robust and effective Community Advisory Group helping to fortify and institutionalize partnership and client focus approach. • 30 -50 actively engaged community leader collaborators. <p>HEALTH INITIATIVES (HI) TEAM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HI will be utilized as a resource by CFB staff and HI team will understand all nutrition education projects across CFB. • There has been a transition and can see progress from year one. <p>FARM AND GARDEN TEAM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farm and Garden is a training model and resource. Provide best practices and recreate training at different sites across five service counties. • 1-year: New structure for garden leaders and leadership development across farm / garden program, and this will be scaled out and inform leadership development across CFB. • 3-year: Leadership structure established at Las Milpitas farm so gardeners are leading programming and staff are focused on other projects, such as teaching “train the trainer” workshops and community organizing initiatives.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current program participants are facilitating training and growing new leaders. • Teams will look at green spaces and displacement as a part of social determinants of health and apart of rising costs in Tucson and provide programming to grow community resiliency to climate change. • Continue to provide school garden resources to Sunnyside School district, have the district take over school garden network and for team to move into Amphi School District.
What energizes you – inside and outside of CFB?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Root cause and justice work! System change work. • Diversity, Equity & Inclusion work. • Being outside and working with body. • Hearing people's stories. • Claudio has been, "inspired and empowered by the women on his team and their vision for their work and community" and enjoys meeting other folks doing similar work (knowing I'm not alone). • Clare shared, "the first broccoli harvest at Challenger Middle School very few students were excited about trying the broccoli, and even fewer were open to trying it without ranch dressing. At our next harvest, just a week or two later, the students' attitudes towards their garden produce had clearly changed (for the veggie-positive)—students were so excited to eat the broccoli they had grown that Clare had to remind them not to eat the broccoli out of the harvest bucket before it had been washed!" • Rosalva shared that she is energized when she see's participants at the beginning and end of her class and how they discover themselves and see's it in their face. The way her participants are talking, their energy, and the change in the way they see themselves, and their openness to change. • Supporting community resilience to climate change and making Tucson a viable and livable.

Table 2. EXISTING INTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS & POTENTIAL COLLABORATIONS

	<p>Developing and building community leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing project goals accomplished!
How do you feel about the integration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afraid program, teams or activities will be diluted, replaced and watered down. • Do not want to move toward promotores model (community health workers) as the only community organizing strategy. • Excited and see's the potential to integrate with all teams. • "Hoping other teams can come together with shared vision for the future of garden spaces and the role they play at CFB." • People will need to be / feel valued and have strong intentioned about integration activities. • Hesitant and hopeful. Integration sometimes means erasure and afraid of loss over programs and decisions. This is also an opportunity to rebuild trust and increase alliance as long as people are not afraid of each other. • Opportunity to learn and gain skills from new team members

Farm & Garden, Civic Engagement & Health Initiatives Partnerships with

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	HEALTH INITIATIVES	CFB PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY IMPACT TEAM	CFB RESOURCE CENTERS	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Las Milpitas connects staff and gardeners with civic engagement trainings MAMA / Getting Ahead participants attended civic engagement Trainings in Spanish. Potential: Farm to Child, Sunnyside Unified USDA Grant, opportunity for community organizing strategies with surrounding communities and neighborhoods Potential: Garden team collaboration with C.O team to host conversations /Cafecito's with neighborhood folks in Nuestra Tierra Garden. Potential: Health Initiatives, Community Nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Initiatives and Farm to Child partner on Legacy Grant Potential: Nutrition and cooking education needed for youth with roots and nutrition education at farm. Potential: Health Initiatives partnership with Farm to Child and Las Milpitas to support curriculum development. Potential: Health Initiatives, Las Milpitas and Mariposa Health Center in Nogales. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child nutrition programs provides funding for snacks for farm youth camp. Local Food Pathways supports procurement initiatives with Sunnyside District, USDA Grant. Abundant Harvest Cooperative partnership with Las Milpitas for gardeners to sell at market and receive training. Water Harvesting program partners with Local Food Pathways team on Cooperative Business Development. Health Initiatives and Local Food Pathways partner on USDA-LFPP Grant: Fruit & Veggie RX. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden leaders and workshops provided at Nogales Resource Center. Line education at Gabby Gifford's Resource Center and potential at Nogales Resource Center. Cooking Matters at the Store Tours provided to all Caridad students, and potential expansion of line education and nutrition education nights at Caridad Community Kitchen. Line Education: upcoming implementation for agency partners and Nogales Resource Center and increasing event days in Tucson pantry. Community Wealth Working Group partners with Las Milpitas, Caridad Cooks to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Engagement supports Las Milpitas annual Pumpkin Smash with volunteers, event logistics and sponsorship. Las Milpitas will host Teen Leaders in October.

Leaders' collaborate with C.O team to further leadership development strategies.			establish new businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excesses pantry produce donated to garden & farm for composting.	
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Table 3. EXISTING EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT		HEALTH INITIATIVES		
LA NUESTRA TIERRA	MAMA/GETTING AHEAD	LAS MILPITAS	FARM TO CHILD	RAINWATER HARVESTING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Living Streets Alliance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archer Center Marty Birdman Frank & Edith Morton BGC Santa Rosa Center Steve Daru BGC El Rio Center Valencia Library Anna Henry Elementary Randolph Center John Valenzuela Youth Center Holmes Tuttle BGC Freedom Center Pascua Yaqui Cherry Ave. Center Trinity Place Apartments Santa Rosa Library School Pantry Nutrition Education (SPNEP): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wakefield Family Resource Center Palo Verde Family Resource Center Haven Totes Los Ranchitos Family Resource Center Cooking Matters at the Store: Fry's on 16th and Ajo ave. Caridad nutrition ed: CMATS tours for all students, expansion of line ed (potentially), nutrition education nights @ Caridad Line education: upcoming implementation for agency partners and Nogales Resource Center UA BARA UA Public Health UA Nutritional Sciences Arizona Complete Health Boys and Girls Clubs Kid & Co. Parks and Recreation Mariposa Health Center Chiricahua Health Center El Rio Health Center 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pima County Library • Tucson Organic Gardeners • Tucson Cooperative Network • Tierra Y Libertad Organization • Flowers and Bullets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pima County • YWCA • Pio Decimo • Las Artes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Rescue Committee (IRC) • Cholla High School • City High School • Pima County, Office of Sustainability: “Auto Case” Program • Mushroom Group • South West Folk Alliance • Mariposa Health Center • Sahuarita/Desert View • Make Way for Books • Desert Harvesters • AmeriCorps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UA School of Geography (SCGP) • Girl Scouts • UA Health Zone • AZ Department of Education • Pima and Cochise County Cooperative Extension • TUSD • Keeling Elementary • Amphitheater School District • USDA Farm to School Grant • Drexel Elementary • Summit View Elementary • Challenger Middle School • Apollo Middle School • Desert View Elementary • Ocotillo Early Learning • Los Amigos Elementary • Santa Clara Elementary • Elvira Elementary • Sunny Side High School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Side Workers Center • Flowers & Bullets • YWCA – business classes • Watershed Management Group & SmartScape • Sustainable Nations • Local First Arizona • Food Conspiracy • Green Cloud Landscapes • Primavera Works • US Foundation of Worker Cooperatives • Democracy at Work • Sustainable Economies Law Center
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DISCUSSION

This project identified the activities and themes that were common across 3 program teams at the CFB. These activities and themes provide a common framework and areas of focus to be adopted by the integrating team.

The data showed that adult and youth education were central themes to program activities and were grounded in leadership development and train the trainer models. Economic development opportunities, such as cooperative business models, were also a common theme across teams. Currently, the integrated team is developing a strategy to invest more time, resources, planning and integration of leadership development among their program activities.

For example, the MAMA (Mothers in Arizona Moving Ahead) project partners with Pima County Health Department and aims to partner with local nonprofits to support mothers. The objective of this program is to provide professional and social support and education to increase and address the health and financial concerns of low-income mothers in Pima County. As a result, Rosalva, the program manager at the CFB shared how the MAMA programs increase the confidence and leadership of its participants.

Rosalva witnessed participants evolve from the beginning to the end of her classes. They have discovered themselves and she can see the change in their faces, the way they're talking and the way they see themselves.

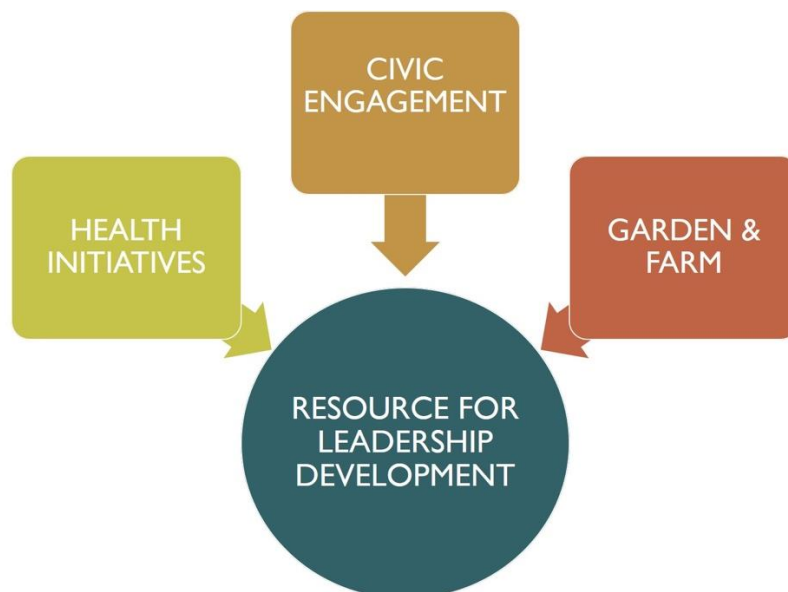
Overall, team members were both hesitant and hopeful for their team integration. They expressed concern that their team and activities would be diluted or replaced and were excited to integrate with new team members. Team members described being grounded in their work because of their commitment to systems change, root cause and justice work. Team members believe in the work they do and are dedicated to community resiliency and developing and building community leaders.

Team members shared the major strengths and areas for improvement for their programs. They believe that they exceed in centering program participants and thinking innovatively about how to improve the lives of participants. Areas of improvement included gaining a deeper understanding of how advocacy and policy affect both clients and the organization. Overwhelmingly, team members believed that relationship building strategies are at the core of team building and recommended fostering respect and trust through one-on-one meetings and retreats to learn about team members.

CONCLUSIONS

The most common theme of the data collected was that each team's program activities were rooted in building and developing leaders in the communities served (Figure 4). Team members strongly conveyed how they believe in the communities they serve and strive to provide a platform and resource for leadership development and to advance the livelihoods of their program participants.

Figure 4. Programs Integration



As a framework for the new integrated team, a leadership development model flips the traditional non-profit and food banking models. Exemplified by each teams' activities, a leadership development model allows us to re-imagine a large nonprofit, such as CFB, elevating participants and de-centering CFB from decision-making processes and from determining program activities and trajectories. Instead, program participants and community stakeholders will advise and direct the CFB on how to interact and meet the community needs. Leadership development programming is one activity to be included in this justice-driven nonprofit organization model. Justice-driven organizations operate as client-centered and ask how program participants can grow with the organization and be served by our programming teams.

References

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