Background

- Food desert: “a low-income census tract where a substantial number of residents has low access to a supermarket or large grocery store”
- Low-access area in an urban setting: individuals live more than one mile from a supermarket
- 8.77% of Worcester population is classified as low-access to markets
- 1.64% of Worcester population is classified as low-access and low-income

Problem

- 15,000 individuals in Worcester have low-access to markets
- 1,500 of those individuals do not own an automobile
- People living in food deserts have trouble accessing supermarkets

Goal:

- Improve access to nutritional foods
- Provide opportunity to cook fresh, healthy meals at a community kitchen

Mechanism

Oasis in a Food Desert

- Two part, partially government funded program to lessen the impact of living in a food desert
- $100/month/family transportation fund for use with Worcester Public Transportation System
- Community kitchen (membership fee graduated by income)
- Participants gain access to grocery stores and farmers markets
- Classes on nutrition and healthy cooking
- Kitchen area to cook meals

Results/Outcomes

- Alleviate stress of living in a food desert
- Greater understanding regarding healthy diets
- Increase in profit for:
  - Transportation companies
  - Grocery stores
  - Farmers markets
- Create stronger community

Evaluation Methods

- Track revenue: grocery stores, transportation agencies
- Survey participants: transportation assistance, educational value of program, use of community kitchen

Conclusions/Recommendations

- Reasons for food deserts: low access to food markets, low income levels
- Solution: pre-paid transportation to food markets, implementation of a community kitchen, volunteer-run classes

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References