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Oasis in a Food Desert

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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


