



2020 RURAL CHILD HUNGER SUMMIT RECAP

Event Details

On March 31, No Kid Hungry hosted the second Rural Child Hunger Summit on Zoom, an online teleconferencing platform.¹ Over five hours, nearly 700 attendees took part in the event. Nonprofits, school districts, school food service and government agencies were the core audience for this year's Summit. By moving to a virtual platform, No Kid Hungry was able to engage more than twice as many participants as had been anticipated for our scheduled in-person convening in Columbus, Ohio. The Summit consisted of a series of webinars that provided opportunities for direct engagement with session panelists during live Q&A sessions. All sessions were recorded and are [available for viewing](#) on No Kid Hungry's website.

What We Discussed

The second Rural Child Hunger Summit opened with an update on the emerging COVID-19 outbreak and its impact on rural communities. Subsequent sessions focused on racial equity and community resilience, the power of Native youth in creating solutions to hunger, the role of the healthcare sector in responding to public health emergencies and the importance of community perspectives and cultures in program design and delivery.

At A Glance: Select Panelists from the 2020 Rural Child Hunger Summit

Jeremy Everett, Founder and Executive Director, Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty (TX)

Marlysa D. Gamblin, Domestic Policy Advisor, Racial and Gender Divides, Bread for the World Institute (DC)

Lucas Humblet, Seed Regeneration Supervisor, Dream of Wild Health (MN)

Rev. William "Bill" Kearney, Research Associate and Community Outreach Manager, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dr. Monica White, Author and Associate Professor of Environmental Justice, University of Wisconsin-Madison

¹ The inaugural Rural Child Hunger Summit occurred March 21-22, 2019 in Louisville, KY. The second Rural Child Hunger Summit was originally scheduled to take place March 31-April 1 in Columbus, OH but was moved to a virtual platform due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Key Themes

Equity and Inclusion: Most of the sessions stressed the importance of engaging rural communities in designing strategies and programs from the beginning. The need for cultural competency and recognizing youth and program participants as agents of change came up repeatedly. Additionally, the importance of naming *racial inequity* as a key driver of poverty and food insecurity was highlighted, with numerous associated resources provided to attendees by Marlysa D. Gamblin of the Bread for the World Institute.

Responding to COVID-19: The challenges to providing kids meals during this crisis are similar to challenges that rural areas face in feeding kids during the summer – lack of transportation, areas that are not eligible to operate programs (just now being waived in 31 states during COVID), food deserts and the cost of reaching kids. These challenges are exacerbated by the current strains on food banks, schools and programs due to an elderly volunteer base, increased demand and lack of capacity and funding. Creative solutions shared during the Summit included the following:

- Native youth-led agriculture programs are planting quick-growing crops to address a spike in demand.
- Geisinger, a regional healthcare provider in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, has rolled out food security screening to all clinical providers and is providing emergency food boxes to patients who screen positive for food insecurity.
- The Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, in partnership with USDA, PepsiCo and McLane Global, aims to provide nearly one million meals per week to children in rural areas through the [Emergency Meals-to-You program](#).

What We Learned

No Kid Hungry surveyed Summit attendees following the event to learn about their experience: 83 completed surveys were received through QuestionPro. Across all sessions, survey respondents indicated they learned something new and found session panelists and moderators to be highly engaging. Respondents also indicated high levels of satisfaction with the content presented across all sessions. Numerous respondents specifically stated that they appreciated the timely pivot to address COVID-19 and its effect on rural communities and enjoyed hearing directly from youth.

“Be aware that not everybody experiences the same spaces as you do. People’s stories are important, and often-times it is not what they say, but what they don’t say. I say that relative to racial injustice, and so many times we want to tell our people to do great things, but we didn’t take the time to evaluate the history and the stories of marginalization and oppression.... We’ve got to do an immediate intervention, but we have to give people, help them gain their voice and vocabulary to begin to address racial, environmental and social injustices.”

- Rev. William “Bill” Kearney

Survey data also highlighted opportunities to improve future virtual events. Respondents stated an interest in more dedicated time for audience Q&A sessions as well as more time for breaks between sessions. A preference emerged for streaming video featuring panelists and moderators during sessions, as well as a more seamless user experience to avoid clicking between discrete Zoom webinars over the course of the Summit.

Looking Ahead

Based on input provided by survey respondents, possible topics for future convenings include:

- Update and/or recap of COVID-19 response in rural communities
- Impact of COVID-19 on rural communities
- Continued focus on racial equity
- Creative partnerships around agriculture, healthcare and education

Due to our transition from a physical to a virtual convening, No Kid Hungry presented a relatively small subset of content which had originally been developed for the 2020 Rural Child Hunger Summit. Remaining content includes multiple sessions dedicated to federal Child Nutrition Programs and faith community engagement. We plan to repackage and present these sessions to our audience throughout 2020 in a virtual format, either through webinars or other types of virtual live events. Our team is also interested in exploring creative options for digital engagement such as breakout rooms that would provide venues for networking while remaining socially distant.



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