



## Q&A FROM THE 'EMBRACING COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES AND CULTURES IN PROGRAM DESIGN AND DELIVERY' SESSION

### 2020 Rural Child Hunger Summit

- 1. Question for Taylor: How can farmers markets networks like - Virginia Fresh Match work with food banks to support farmers and customers with low access to fresh, healthy food?**
  - a. (Taylor) Farmers markets and their networks are an absolutely essential part of supporting farmers and ensuring individuals and families can have access to fresh and healthy food. In the Western Tidewater area of Virginia, we have had conversations with a few of the farmers markets as they were beginning to conduct outreach to local farmers. This becomes a win-win-win because a) the farmers market is able to have a wider selection of produce available; b) the farmers see more individuals and families making purchases; c) those who are struggling with low access to fresh and healthy food now have another available source. There is certainly a lot of room for improvement - both on the awareness and accessibility components - to ensure that all resources are leveraged, but I am hopeful that we will be able to integrate this component into our work soon. The COVID-19 pandemic may prevent it from happening this year, but that will only allow us more time to plan and roll out an effective strategy.
  
- 2. Question for Taylor: firstly, thank you for your awareness and engagement efforts within the Hispanic community you mentioned residing primarily on the Eastern shore. As your response to COVID-19 develops, how are you incorporating their unique community needs to ensure they are engaged and involved?**
  - a. (Taylor) I believe this is where it becomes increasingly important to have a collaborative network in which we are able to deliver our mission. This network provides us with the eyes and ears on the ground to ensure that we are effectively meeting the needs of those in which we serve. As an example, our branch on the Eastern Shore has been working in conjunction with the Rural Health Network that serves a large Hispanic population. They are able to share real-time data and needs with the Foodbank and we are able to respond accordingly.
  
- 3. Can you tell us more about how your community circles are facilitated?**
  - a. (Suzanne) There are a variety of formats that can be followed. I really like the wide variety of resources found at Everyday Democracy - <https://www.everyday-democracy.org/resources>. Also your land-grant university Cooperative Extension Service in your area always has provided services in this area, so be sure to reach out to those contacts as well.
  - b. (Bill) Please visit our website UNC Food, Fitness and Opportunity Research Collaborative (FFROC) for contact info, **our mission & values** and **our projects**. <https://www.hpdp.unc.edu/research/ffroc>



**4. I do wish they could all grow gardens. Some of the areas here in Dallas Southern Area do really need to have more engagement to families. How do you feel would be the most effective way to do so?**

- a. (Bill) As I mentioned our research project supports a total of 18 community gardens in 6 plus rural counties. We are funded by USDA SNAP-Ed dollars which allows us to support our garden managers with stipends and garden supplies. When recruiting our garden managers, we sought individuals who were engaged in their communities - some were already growing gardens and others were contemplating growing gardens. We have partnerships with churches, tribal communities, public housing and non-profit organizations. We've found that working with established organizations works best because there is structure and they can help with recruitment of garden managers and participants.

**5. What partners do you have joining you at the table in your communities?**

- a. (Suzanne) I think it depends on what topic we are talking about. Doing a scan to ensure that you have a wide variety of voices representing all ages, demographics, abilities, etc.
- b. (Taylor) I second what Suzanne stated. Currently, we have key stakeholders ranging from local government, corporations, local school districts, healthcare facilities, faith-based organizations, other service providers, community members, and beneficiaries.

**6. Dr. Kearney do you collaborate with other nonprofits?**

- a. (Bill) Yes, we collaborate with nonprofits across the state. Examples: churches, youth development centers, public housing, senior centers, charitable foundations and community development centers.

**7. Question for Rev Bill: What are some of the challenges you have found in the faith-based organizations and how have you overcome them? How do you get members to buy in?**

- a. There was a concern in the faith community that partnering with outsiders (academia, government, funders, ect.) in research projects would compromise their faith. Not having the capacity to understand research and management of funds and resources, they feared they could end up in a lot of trouble. Also, many members of the faith community didn't realize their assets/resources.
- b. To address these concerns in my role as health ministry coordinator for my church and association of churches, I was very intentional in helping develop small partnerships to build trust that were leveraged into larger partnerships. Examples: I helped develop health related partnerships with our local health department, a five-year pilot research project "Faith and Health Initiative" with the CDC, Duke University, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, a one year fitness project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and several community garden partnerships with UNC-CH Center for Health



Promotion and Disease Prevention. Through these partnerships we were able to show members of the faith community that faith and research go hand-in-hand and that our partnerships could help us achieve greater ministry/service to our communities. Most importantly it helped the faith community (my community) set goals and identify and mobilize our assets - understanding that we have human capital (knowledge, skill, and experience) and material assets and not to see ourselves as grasshoppers when compared to others.

**8. How do you all help your coworkers be more open-minded to hearing other people's voices?**

- a. Role-modeling is one way. Are you leading your organization with these same sets of core values and modeling? Do you have a mission statement that you can return to and use with your staff during orientation and trainings to guide them back to your key values?
- b. (Bill) We have a mission statement and team values. Our research team members have all attended/participated in racial equity workshops, we have a racial equity work-group, we hold monthly "Courageous Conversations" where we discuss race and inequity/equity and quarterly our team goes on field trips to historically African-American communities to hear the voices of the communities we primarily serve. We stress the importance of being aware of your implicit biases and allowing yourself to be uncomfortable when interacting/talking with people of other races and cultures. We stress the importance of using our privilege to help elevate the true voices of the people we seek to serve. Please visit our website <https://hpdp.unc.edu/research/ffroc>
- c. (Taylor) Our mission statement definitely helps. It is also important to ensure that individuals from the organization have the opportunity to spend some time within the community so that they can experience the strengths, needs, unique nuances, etc. on an individual basis.