GOVERNOR'S FOOD DESERT WORK GROUP

AN UPDATE

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WHAT IS A FOOD DESERT?

Food deserts are geographic areas where residents have few to no convenient options for securing affordable and healthy foods — especially fresh fruits and vegetables.

Disproportionately found in high-poverty areas, food deserts create extra, everyday hurdles that can make it harder for kids, families and communities to grow healthy and strong.

Annie E. Casey Foundation
THE PROBLEM

Since 1997, Arkansas has seen a steady decline in the number of supermarkets and grocery stores.
22.5% households in Arkansas are food insecure*

1 in 3 Arkansas children are facing food insecurity*

157 K additional Arkansans struggling with hunger due to COVID-19 pandemic*

Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance
The Facts

75 Number of counties in Arkansas.

75 Number of counties in Arkansas with a food desert.

Source: ACHI
Timeline

- June: Focus Meeting
- July: Kick-Off + Focus Group Prep
- August - September: Conduct Focus Groups, Review Existing Data
- October: Consolidate data, Begin drafting report
- November: Refine/final draft, Print report, Submit to Governor
WHERE WE'VE BEEN AND WHERE WE'RE GOING
FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. If a new grocery store opened up within one mile of you, how likely are you to shop there? What products or services would you want it to provide?

2. About how far do you have to travel to access fresh produce?
Providers

How do you get the funds for your pantry to operate? How do you sustain those funds, or do you have challenges in that?
Since 2011, HOPE has financed 16 healthy food projects throughout the Deep South, directly investing $20,011,440 and leveraging $74,000,000. Providing access to healthy food to over 400,000 residence in low to moderate communities.
**MS Delta Online Grocery Program**

**Location #1 – Drew, MS**
- Population: 1,836 (2022)
- Avg. Household Income: $36K
- Poverty Rate: 45.3%
- People of Color: 90.1%
- Median Age: 29.7

**Location #2 – Shaw, MS**
- Population: 1,357 (2022)
- Avg. Household Income: $33K
- Poverty Rate: 44.3%
- People of Color: 93.3%
- Median Age: 31.8

*Brighter Futures Begin with HOPE: Alabama Arkansas Louisiana Mississippi Tennessee*
MISSISSIPPI DELTA ONLINE GROCERY PROGRAM

Traditional Grocery Store Challenges
(Rural and/or Low Income Communities)

Purchasing Power
- Low Population + Low Income = Lower Weekly Sales
- Minimum Order Requirements of Wholesaler Suppliers
- Competitive Pricing Requires Preferred Wholesaler Rates

Transportation
- Low Car-Ownership Rates
- Access to Reliable Public Transportation

Labor Force
- Lack of Experienced Grocery Operators and Managers
- Difficulty/Cost in Attracting, Training and Maintaining Staff
- Low Profit Incentive; Operator Needs Commitment to Community

Start Up Costs
- Capacity to Service Debt
- Low Margins/High Risk

Hope
Brighter Futures Begin with HOPE. Alabama Arkansas Louisiana Mississippi Tennessee
"One of my residents has to pay someone $20 for a ride to the grocery store in Pine Bluff or Stuttgart... Just think, if our city had a grocery store, the money spent on transportation, could be spent on food."

~Mayor of Altheimer, AR
Policy Change: Healthy Food Financing Initiative Model

Government or Foundation

- Provide seed funding
- Oversee program implementation

Community Development Financial Institution & Food Access Organization

- Raise private capital
- Provide financing
- Determine applicant eligibility
- Market program, advocate for community

Fresh Food Retail Projects in Underserved Communities

- Supermarkets
- Small grocery stores
- Co-ops, farmers markets, and other "non-traditional" formats

Food Trust - Philadelphia, PA
Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Selling FRESH in Small Stores

Before

After

The FOOD TRUST
MAIN STREET MARKET
Evansville, Minnesota

OPEN HOURS
Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 5pm
Saturdays 9am to 4pm

*24hr Shopping Access available with Membership!
Questions? Stop in or email at MSMEvansville@outlook.com
TAKEAWAYS
THANK YOU!