



THE SYSTEM TO ACHIEVE  
FOOD EQUITY (SAFE)

# YEAR ONE REPORT

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# 2021-2022

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We thank you for the ongoing support and contributions to the SAFE network.

## Acknowledgements

84.51°

Childhood Food Solutions

Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Cincinnati Public School

City of Cincinnati Office of Environment & Sustainability

Cincinnati City Council

Eat 2 Live

Freestore Foodbank

Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council

Green Umbrella

Hamilton County Recycling and Solid Waste

Hyperfarm

Isaiah 55, Inc.

Kroger's Zero Hunger Zero Waste Foundation

La Soupe

Last Mile Food Rescue

Lehigh University

Lord's Gym

MyWhy

Queen Mothers Market

The Health Collaborative

Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation

UMC Food Ministry

University of Cincinnati

University of Louisville

Your Store of the Queen City

The SAFE Network is funded with generous support by Kroger's Zero Hunger Zero Waste Foundation



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Report created by the All Children Thrive Learning Network Team

# A Letter from the SAFE Network

Inequity in food security is a massive, long-standing, deeply rooted, and urgent problem here in Cincinnati, Ohio, as in many other U.S. cities. It is a wicked problem that is being tackled by many stakeholders across many sectors without resolution.

It is difficult to solve a wicked problem. Many factors drive food insecurity and inequity, including political, social, and logistical challenges. Food equity is a complex problem with no simple solution. Its elimination will require multiple points of intervention at multiple levels, from community to policy levels. Real and sustained success will require transformation of our systems and policies.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the SAFE network emerged in response to the expressed needs and hopes of families and communities. A diverse set of stakeholders came together to act collectively to ensure children and families had access to food and nutrition during the early months of the pandemic. From this beginning, SAFE now aims to eliminate childhood food insecurity in Cincinnati.

To accomplish this audacious yet necessary goal, SAFE adapted the framework used by [learning healthcare systems](#). We have nurtured the growth of a family-centered, community-driven, cross-sector learning network aimed at creating food and nutrition equity for children and families. To achieve and sustain change, learning healthcare systems bring together diverse stakeholders with shared purpose, processes, and resources. This approach has been used to tackle complex problems in the healthcare setting. To our knowledge, this is the first time it has been used to address food equity.

Herein, we present our efforts to date with a focus on our early impacts and how we have achieved them. We share our approach, along with our early successes, persistent challenges, and next steps in hopes that they may inform and inspire. We have a long way to go, and we are on our way.



*Onward together we go,*

*Carley Riley*

*The System to Achieve Food Equity Network*

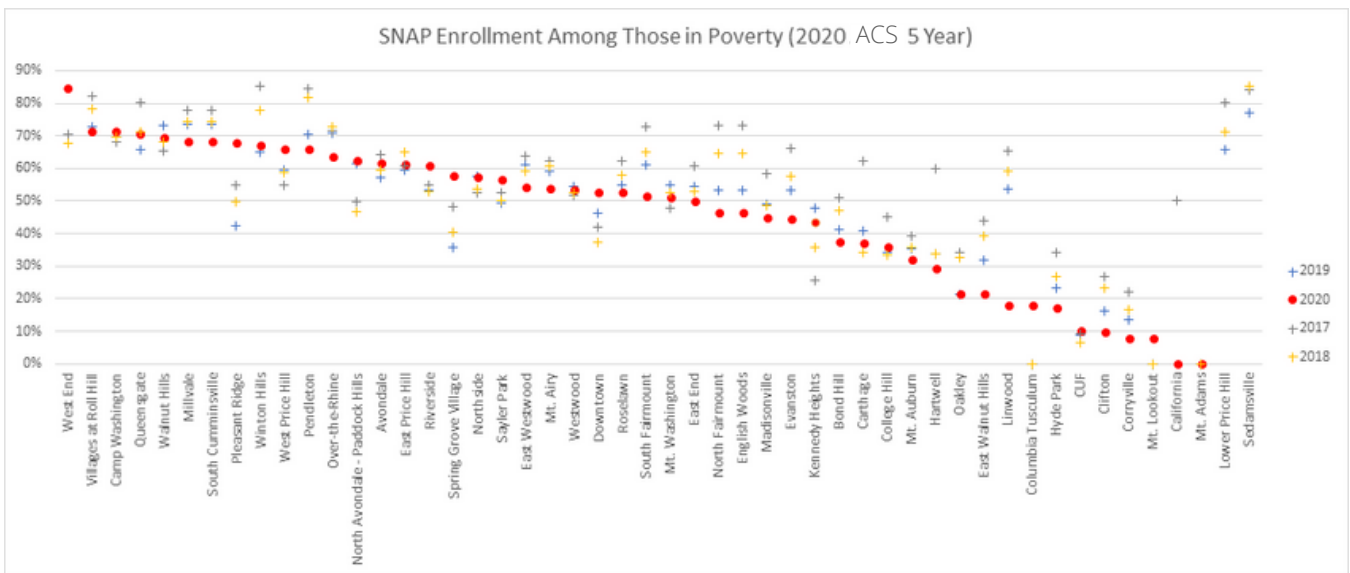


# The State of Food Equity

Food inequity, defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life”,<sup>1</sup> is a wicked problem in Cincinnati. Across Hamilton County, more than one in five children experience food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> However, food insecurity is not distributed evenly across the region. Rather, children and families living in historically and structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods of Cincinnati suffer much higher rates of food insecurity (Source: [Feeding America, Map the Meal Gap](#)) reflected by higher SNAP enrollment in those areas (Figure 1). In our sample of households with children in three disadvantaged neighborhoods of Cincinnati (Avondale, East Price Hill, and Lower Price Hill), nearly all households reported food insecurity in recent months. The problem is deep and wide, and its impact broad, with harmful effects on children, including effects on their developmental, behavioral, academic, and emotional outcomes.

The SAFE Network emerged in response to the expressed needs and hopes of families and communities. Prior to the pandemic, food insecurity was already a constant challenge and threat for many families and neighborhoods across Cincinnati. During the pandemic, pre-existing inequities in food security were further exacerbated.

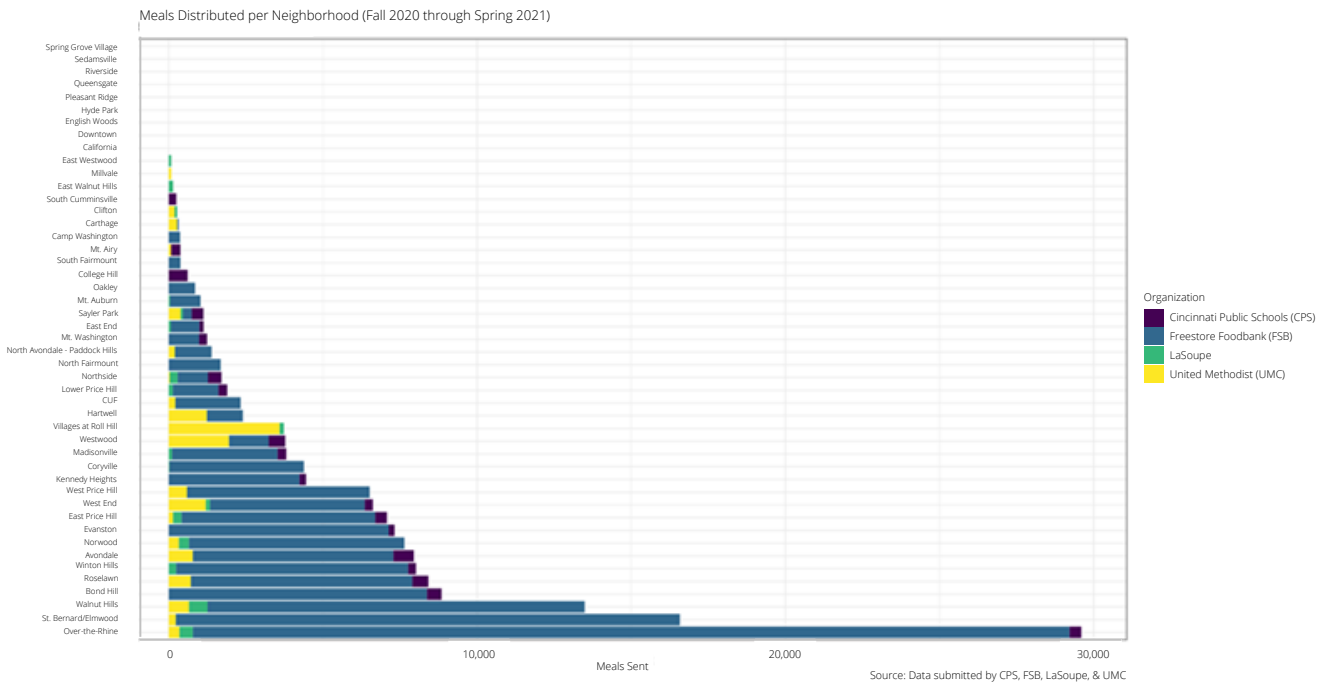
Figure 1: SNAP Enrollment Among Those in Poverty (Source: [2020 American Community Survey \(ACS\) 5 year](#))



Upon the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cincinnati, and amidst stay-at-home orders and remote learning for schools, the office of City Councilmember Greg Landsman organized weekly calls with a large number of stakeholders to support the development and execution of a coordinated response informed by actionable data. A team comprised of individuals from 84.51° and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital provided actionable data by mapping the food distribution sites across Cincinnati, including the emergency food distribution sites being stood up at two dozen schools within the Cincinnati Public School system, against neighborhood child poverty rates. These maps revealed inequitable distribution of emergency food resources with little to no access to food resources in multiple neighborhoods with anticipated high need.

These data activated local organizations to increase distribution of food resources into those areas of unmet need (Figure 2), with all stakeholders affirming the shared aim of ensuring food resources were available at least three days per week within one mile of every child in Cincinnati. Having experienced the power of coordination and collaboration in response to real-time data, stakeholders were motivated to build on current food security efforts and coalitions, and organize around a shared aim that would lead to larger impact, require more innovation, and result in sustained transformation. Collectively we wanted to emerge from the pandemic with a more effective and equitable food system.

Figure 2: Meals Distributed per Neighborhood



Knowing that it would take sustained collective action to achieve greater food security and equity across the city, we sought to create together these five conditions within the network to support collective success:

- Common purpose or aim
- Shared data
- Distributive leadership
- Continuous communication including community building and engagement
- On-going support from key backbone organizations

*"It was unity. COVID improved empathy and sympathy. People started listening with their hearts instead of their minds and pockets. Once you take the blinders off, you think 'that could be me!'"*

*Jennifer Foster,  
Avondale Community Member*

# Framing the SAFE Network

## Vision

All 66,000 children in Cincinnati have the food they need to grow, develop, learn, and thrive.

## Principles

- Elevate together an unassailable goal focused on excellent and equitable outcomes for children and youth
- Emphasize achieving equity results at scale with a focus on addressing racism
- Manifest diversity across our teams, amplifying the voices of those with lived experience
- Cultivate trustworthiness and robust communication across all engaged in the endeavor
- Use rigorous improvement science with shared outcomes, frequent testing, and rapid learning

## Practices

- Co-produce with community members, leaders, groups, and organizations
- Create shared language and ensure everyone can access and inform data
- Foster and advance equity
- Honor flexibility and meet families where they are
- Listen and build on what already exists and works
- Promote families and neighbors as experts and decision-makers
- Respect that each neighborhood has its own identity

## Goals

- Improve food security by 10% for children and families living in three pilot neighborhoods
- Organized data shared by all
- Mobilized and resourced stakeholders
- Timely, granular data from households
- Engagement and leadership in neighborhoods

### Pilot Neighborhoods

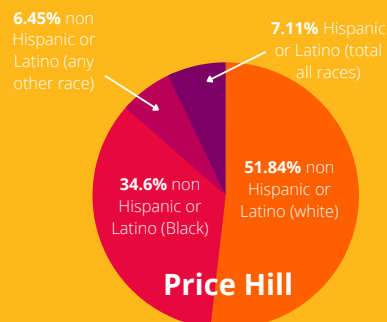
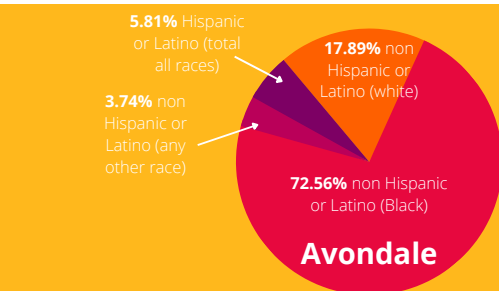
The Avondale and Price Hill (East Price Hill and Lower Price Hill) neighborhoods are the current target populations for the SAFE network.

#### Avondale

- 1494 young children (3-8 years of age) living in the Avondale neighborhood
- 31.96% of families living in poverty (ratio of income to poverty level below 100%)
- 50.55% of families with young children (under 5 years of age) living in poverty (ratio of income to poverty level below 100%)
- 20.98% families with young children (under 5 years of age) with ratio of income to poverty level 100% to 184%

#### Price Hill (East and Lower)

- 3099 young children (3-8 years of age) living in the Price Hill neighborhoods
- 25.10% of families living in poverty (ratio of income to poverty level below 100%)
- 39.49% of families with young children (under 5 years of age) living in poverty (ratio of income to poverty level below 100%)
- 24.07% families with young children (under 5 years of age) with ratio of income to poverty level 100% to 184%

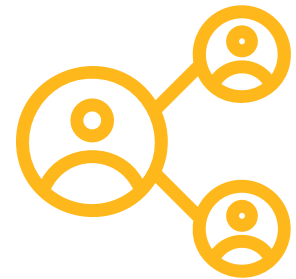


Source: U.S. Census

# SAFE Strategies

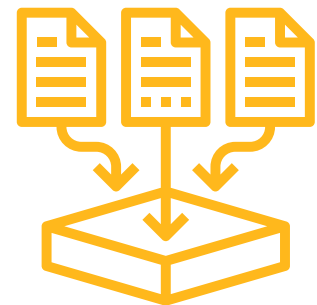
## Creating a Network Around a Shared Outcome

Pursuing a shared outcome is essential to sustaining engagement and collaboration. Improving food equity for the children, youth, and families of Cincinnati requires collective action and innovation. This shared outcome motivated stakeholders – including families, community members, local government leaders, emergency food organizations, healthcare organizations, local school and public library systems, and data scientists – to come together, build upon, and organize into a family-centered, community-based, cross-sector learning network: the SAFE network.



## Publicly Available Data

Publicly available data on shared outcomes are vital to generating insight, action, and learning across stakeholders. Democratized data shared by all is necessary to foster the power of the people and communities themselves. As such, publicly available data were informed by stakeholders and intended to be representative of each neighborhood.



## Neighborhood Level Organizing and Change

To ensure learning and action were led by families and community members themselves, neighborhood leadership groups were engaged or created. These neighborhood leadership groups, supported by community engagement specialists, ensured neighborhood voice would directly inform and drive improvement. Their leadership was embedded in the structure of the network as a mechanism to ensure neighborhood members informed, decided upon, and evaluated interventions in their own neighborhood as they were established.



# Community Stories: Family #1

Child Age: 15, 11, and 4

Can you walk us through what obtaining food looks like for your family?

*We usually go grocery shopping every two weeks and try to get as much meat and stuff for lunch as we can. Sometimes I will go to a food pantry for canned food and boxed food to save us some money on our grocery bill. In Between our 2 week shopping trips, we will go to Kroger for lunch meat or bread or milk a few times.*

What is some positive feedback you would like to share about the process?

*It seems to work better for our family to shop like that to save us money. Also we don't waste as much food by it going bad before we can eat it so that's a good thing.*

What are some challenges you face when obtaining food?

*Sometimes there are not many choices of meat that are within our budget so we might not get as many things of meat to last until we can have more money to get some more.*

Is there a time of the month where you have a greater need for food than others? When is that?

*I would say at the end of every 2 week cycle it is a struggle to have enough money to buy more food.*

What other thoughts or experiences with the food system would you like to share?

*I just feel like people who don't have enough money for food are often forced to buy unhealthy choices so that at least it will feed everyone in the household and everyone will get full. I would like to buy more fresh fruits and meats but sometimes I have to buy other unhealthy choices.*

Are you enrolled in SNAP? If not enrolled in SNAP, why?

*No, because me and my husband "makes too much money" and also my husband's employer has said that employees are not allowed to have any government assistance. I don't know if that is true or not though.*

Are you involved in any of the community gardens. If you are, how does it help your family? If you are not, why not?

*I am not involved in a community garden, but I know we have one where my son was picking some blackberries and he really enjoyed it so I would like to be involved this summer!*

This community story reflects the lived experience of a family who participated in one or more of the Shark Tank interventions between November 2021 and September 2022. Families were randomly selected, engaged through intervention-wide surveys, or volunteered to share their insights and were interviewed by community engagement specialists from Cincinnati Children's Hospital.



# Creating a Network Around a Shared Outcome

Pursuing a shared outcome is essential to creating and sustaining motivation, engagement, and collaboration. Our shared outcome – as manifested in our vision statement and initial SMART aim – was greater food equity for the children and families of Cincinnati. Therefore, we took a series of key actions to nurture a community-based, family-centered network to achieve improved food security and equity.

## Identify Key Stakeholders

In SAFE's early days, individuals and organizations with activity or influence in food security came together to collaborate solutions to solve the immediate problem of access to emergency food resources while stay-at-home orders were in place. From this set of stakeholders, we learned about the current efforts and coalitions that existed to address hunger, eliminate food waste, and invited community voice in. Building upon this knowledge, a subset (led by the Greater Cincinnati Food Policy Council, The Health Collaborative, and Cincinnati Children's Hospital) leaned into the idea of working differently together to create a better future, one in which the food system in which the food system could be transformed to create equitable access to all children and families (Figure 3).



Figure 3: SAFE Key Stakeholders

These stakeholders included organizations from the emergency food system (e.g., Freestore Foodbank, La Soupe, UMC Food Ministries), anchor institutions with a primary focus on children and families (e.g., Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati Public Library, Cincinnati Children's Hospital), other essential organizations (e.g., Cincinnati City Council, Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council, The Health Collaborative), and people with lived experience (e.g., youth, parents and other caregivers, community leaders and members).

## Establish a Starting Point

In tackling an issue as large, deep, and complex as food equity, SAFE's early stakeholders had to determine a starting point and initial focus. Because the SAFE network grew out of a collective effort to ensure equitable access to food for children and families during the early phases of the pandemic, our early shared focus was addressing food security within historically and structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods. Much of our early attention was dedicated to addressing hunger through improvements in our collective emergency food response. From here, we adopted our initial SMART aim to improve food security for children and families by 10% across three Cincinnati neighborhoods.

## Center the Wisdom of People with Lived Experience

To center the wisdom of people with lived experience of food insecurity, we held a community listening and design session during which community members and other key stakeholders could share their wisdom and shape the direction and actions of the network. During the session, we asked participants to identify what was going well and what was frustrating about the emergency food system. We then presented a proposed goal and facilitated a discussion about what it would take to achieve the goal. This discussion helped create shared understanding and alignment across the emerging network.

# Create Infrastructure to Distribute Leadership and Reallocate Power

As an initial direction for SAFE emerged, we organized for action. We created three workstreams: neighborhood leadership, household survey, and shared data. These workstreams allowed individuals and organizations to identify where and how they would contribute to the overall effort. To ensure early momentum was possible, we identified and addressed challenges and barriers that could jeopardize progress within and across workstreams.

We also implemented a “checks and balances model” (Figure 4) that encouraged distributive leadership and reallocated power among the different stakeholders in the network. This model provided each branch of SAFE with the power and autonomy to contribute to effective collective action. The three branches included neighborhood leadership, food initiatives by agencies, and stewardship. Each branch had its distinct ways of contributing to each other and the network.



Figure 4: Distributive Leadership "Checks and Balances" Model

## Learn How to Work Together Differently

With alignment, direction, and structure in place, we took opportunities for collective action to learn how to work differently together. As an example, when families faced an increased number of non-instructional days during the pandemic, we collaborated on more than 20 different food distribution pop-up events to ensure children had access to meals. In rolling our sleeves up to collaborate on these events together, we were able to strengthen relationships, learn about each other’s practices, barriers, and assets, and begin to develop and refine new ways of working together. To facilitate shared learning and promote collective change, we used tools such as weekly communications, standardized reports and processes, and huddles.

## KEY LEARNINGS

It is easy to get overwhelmed in the face of a large complex problem. To overcome this threat, we identified an initial focus, organized for shared learning and action, and got started with small actions and tests of change. These steps allowed us to create a new context for strengthening relationships, building momentum, and then generating transformative solutions.

People with lived experience and people who live, work, and learn in the impacted communities have essential expertise that must lead the work.

A neutral convener is needed to facilitate the adoption of a shared aim and development of new ways of learning, acting, and solving together.

On-going coordination across stakeholders, especially early in a new collective effort, requires substantial time and effort, and therefore needs to be planned for and resourced.

Specific learnings from the food distribution pop-up events:

- Adopt a standard, tactical food access plan for children and families on non-instructional days, facilitated by the school system with the support of emergency food agencies
- Ensure plans include family-informed choices and options, intentional coordination of logistics and learnings, and a core group of volunteers who are ready to support food distribution on the days of the events

# Community Stories: Family #2

Child Age: 3

Can you walk us through what obtaining food looks like?

*Sunday afternoon we purchase our groceries at Kroger and San Luis Market*

What is some positive feedback you would like to share about the process?

*There are several Krogers and Spanish Markets less than a 10 minute drive away from where I live. We usually find what we need from both places.*

What are some challenges you face when obtaining food?

*I guess not having what we need at the same store, however we're privileged enough where that's not a major inconvenience.*

Is there a time of the month where you have a greater need for food than others? When is that?

*With the weekly routine we've established there's not often a time where the need for food is greater.*

What other thoughts or experience with the food system would you like to share.

*I think that budgeting/planning our shopping list beforehand helps us to know how much we need to budget and stick to our routine so that we're not overspending and/or purchasing what we don't truly eat. My wife has had to learn this sort of routine since her family's routine wasn't as structured it was often just based around what they might need when they definitely need it. Having the convenience of food items we use at home is a big win because I know there are families that either have to walk far or drive farther for certain food items.*

If the family is not enrolled in SNAP, why?

*I found it interesting that [community member's partner] has never heard of SNAP. He knew of WIC as a child his mom got free milk when she handed over a paper. He has heard of food stamps but never SNAP benefits.*

Are you involved in any of the community gardens. If you are, how does it help your family? If you are not, why not?

*There is a community garden not far from where we live however last I checked it's not maintained even during the spring summer seasons. Outside of that observation, I'm not used to a community garden being where I pick up my produce. It'd be something my family considers if the one a couple minutes of a walk away was active and had what we use.*

*This community story reflects the lived experience of a family who participated in one or more of the Shark Tank interventions between November 2021 and September 2022. Families were randomly selected, engaged through intervention-wide surveys, or volunteered to share their insights and were interviewed by community engagement specialists from Cincinnati Children's Hospital.*

# Publicly Available Shared Data

Data shared by all is necessary to ensure stakeholders are equipped to contribute their expertise, inform decisions, co-create action, and assess progress toward shared outcome. Additionally, timely and granular data are necessary to know if improvement efforts are leading to desired change. As such, two of the SAFE network's goals were (1) to have organized data shared by all and (2) to have timely, granular data from households.

## Identify Neighborhood Equity Gaps through Geographic Mapping

Ensuring equitable outcomes for all children and youth was the motivating purpose at the inception of our network. At the beginning of the pandemic, and throughout the next two years, we created geographic maps of the emergency food distribution system and neighborhood child poverty. This resulted in a cooperative response to shared data and the creation of a website that both highlighted inequities in our food system and provided real-time support to families and communities seeking resources.

## Leverage a Cross-institutional Data Team

A cross-institutional data team including data scientists from 84.51°, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Lehigh University, University of Cincinnati, and University of Louisville supported – and continue to support – our data efforts. This diverse team collaborated to produce innovative output and visualizations to inform and guide our collective efforts. Together, this team led the process from data sourcing to output, and developed the infrastructure to build out a data dashboard on food security and equity in Cincinnati.

## Select Data That Matters

Selecting data that matters to the community was essential. We aimed to create shared language and ensure that everyone is able to inform, access, and use the data. We started by gathering best practices on community data sharing as we created our vision. As a network, we collected qualitative data including family and community voice and identified quantitative measures that would show food security at a neighborhood level.

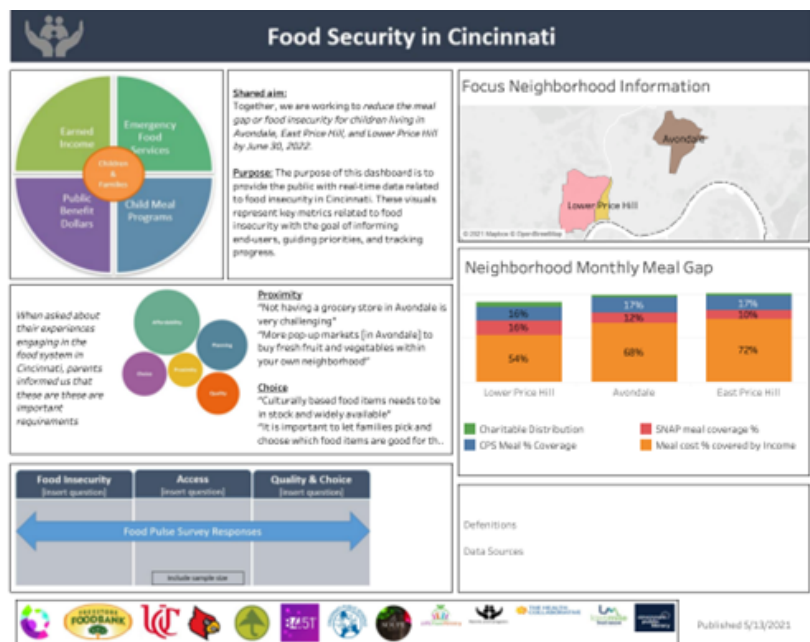


Figure 5: Initial Version of SAFE Data Dashboard

## Build a Process and Infrastructure

As key metrics were being identified by SAFE stakeholders, the data team worked together to develop a process and build the infrastructure for a sustainable pipeline to collect the data necessary to monitor those metrics. This involved collecting data from various sources (e.g., government, local nonprofits, and community members), reconciling the different formats, and integrating these previously disconnected sources into a central data lake. The data lake was designed to provide support in multiple ways to stakeholders who provided input, including opportunities to improve cross-organizational collaboration, facilitate practical research to quantify best practices, and act as an input to community facing dashboards.

## Create a Household Neighborhood Level Pulse Survey

Existing, publicly available data was neither granular nor timely enough to track and detect real-time change at a neighborhood level. We therefore decided to collect weekly household-level data across the three pilot neighborhoods. With parent partners, we co-produced a survey instrument including validated items to assess food security. We piloted the survey in English and Spanish with over 100 families living in Avondale and East Price Hill and adapted the survey instrument based on qualitative and quantitative data. Our household survey team collected learnings and then held a design session to develop a strategy to scale the survey. In July 2022, we launched our community outreach plan to recruit families to complete the electronic survey, that is now automated for weekly distribution, to households in the pilot neighborhoods. A variety of strategies were used to connect families to the survey, including the distribution of informational flyers throughout the pilot neighborhoods, utilization of community boards and agencies, social media campaigns, and neighbor-to-neighbor word of mouth.

### KEY LEARNINGS

All stakeholders wanted shared data, though no process or place yet existed for providing on-going democratized access to data.

Sustained commitment of a cross-institutional team of data experts invested in the mission and vision of SAFE was essential to creating the new data system and dashboard.

Distributed leadership across the shared data team made it possible for the team to accomplish the audacious data-related goals of the first year of the SAFE Network.

It is possible to build a platform for shared data on food equity and to create a sustainable way to collect granular, timely household-reported data on food security at a neighborhood level.

This data infrastructure will allow us to track key metrics over time while continuing to improve the accuracy of the data being input. By making this data available to policy makers, non-profits, and community members we hope to enable action and the measurement of the outcomes of those actions.



# Community Stories: Family #3

Child Age: 9

Can you walk us through what obtaining food looks like?

*We wait until we get paid and go to the grocery store and buy what we need until next pay day. We also get power packs from school.*

What is some positive feedback you would like to share about the process?

*The only thing I can say is that we don't eat a lot of "junk" food because we only buy what we can afford. Sometimes the power pack we get from school help us last until we can go to the store.*

What are some challenges you face when obtaining food?

*Sometimes when we are at the store and my son wants something and I can't get it for him.*

Is there a time of the month where you have a greater need for food than others? When is that?

*I would say in the middle of the month because it's the in-between when bills are due*

What other thoughts or experience with the food system would you like to share?

*It's crazy because all the prices for food is going up say you have \$40 to get a week worth of food and it makes it hard to do it.*

If the family is not enrolled in SNAP, why?

*We used to be on SNAP but no longer qualify for it we make to much money (that is what JFS says) we have bill that they don't count towards monthly outgoing bills.*

Are you involved in any of the community gardens. If you are, how does it help your family? If you are not, why not?

*I don't think we are. I would say it's lack of knowledge on what's going on or a way to get to somewhere*

*This community story reflects the lived experience of a family who participated in one or more of the Shark Tank interventions between November 2021 and September 2022. Families were randomly selected, engaged through intervention-wide surveys, or volunteered to share their insights and were interviewed by community engagement specialists from Cincinnati Children's Hospital.*

# Neighborhood Level Organizing and Change

To achieve neighborhood-level change, SAFE co-designed every aspect of the work with community members, leaders, groups, and organizations. We promoted families and neighbors as essential experts and decision-makers. We respected that each neighborhood has its own identity and priorities. We developed our structure, approach, and interventions to test with neighborhood-level improvement in mind.

## Engage Neighborhood Leadership

In the spirit of distributed leadership, and to ensure learning and action were led by families and community members themselves, neighborhood leadership groups were either engaged or created and consisted of parents, residents, and community stakeholders. Their purpose was to elevate family and neighborhood voice, assess and decide whether to fund potential food solutions, and support interventions in their neighborhood. Neighborhood leadership groups used a community organizing framework to engage and mobilize community members towards action.

## Understand Neighborhood Priorities

Respecting that each neighborhood has its own identity, we listened to families and community members to understand the priorities of each neighborhood. In Avondale, residents raised the issue of living in a food desert, including the absence of a neighborhood grocery store, with food apartheid leading to limited access to healthy foods. In East Price Hill, the early focus was on community advocacy and outreach promoting community gardens and nutrition education.

*"One of the greatest strengths that SAFE provides to preventing food insecurity is really the community involvement... SAFE was able to open certain doors for us so that we could really hear from the community. Getting the community involved and at the table has really been, in my opinion, one of, if not the greatest, strength of SAFE so far."*

*Aaron Moore,  
Last Mile Food Rescue*

## Fund Shark Tank Interventions

To identify and test innovative, community-desired approaches to addressing food security, we leveraged funding from Kroger's Zero Hunger Zero Waste Foundation to fund community-designed, selected, and led interventions in our three engaged neighborhoods. Nine interventions received funding. Their work ranges from delivering neighborhood garden produce and shelf-stable staples to teaching children how to choose and prepare healthy meals at farmers markets and culinary classes.

## Build Community Capacity

In addition to financial support, each Shark Tank intervention received support from a team of experts in community engagement, data, and quality improvement from Cincinnati Children's Hospital. This team was tasked with supporting intervention activities such as recruiting participants, generating and analyzing data, and using quality improvement to improve programs and increase impact. Intervention leadership engaged in biweekly meetings to provide updates on their interventions, generate improvement ideas to test, and escalate any concerns or issues to ensure success. Attendees included parents, residents, and several neighborhood asset stakeholders. Emphasis was placed on creating specific goals and generating meaningful data to evaluate effectiveness of intervention activities, so learnings could inform our understanding of how neighborhood-owned and led initiatives can best address the food needs of their community.

# Provide Data Back into Community

We understand that data from and about the community belong to the community. Moreover, providing data back into community is an integral part of creating and supporting neighborhood-level change. As such, we view SAFE as a steward responsible for ensuring that families and communities have access to their own data. Therefore, we have aimed to create multiple ways for the data to be accessible and distributed for all.

The nine interventions funded through Shark Tank made the following impact over the last year, with data updated through early October 2022 (Figure 6).

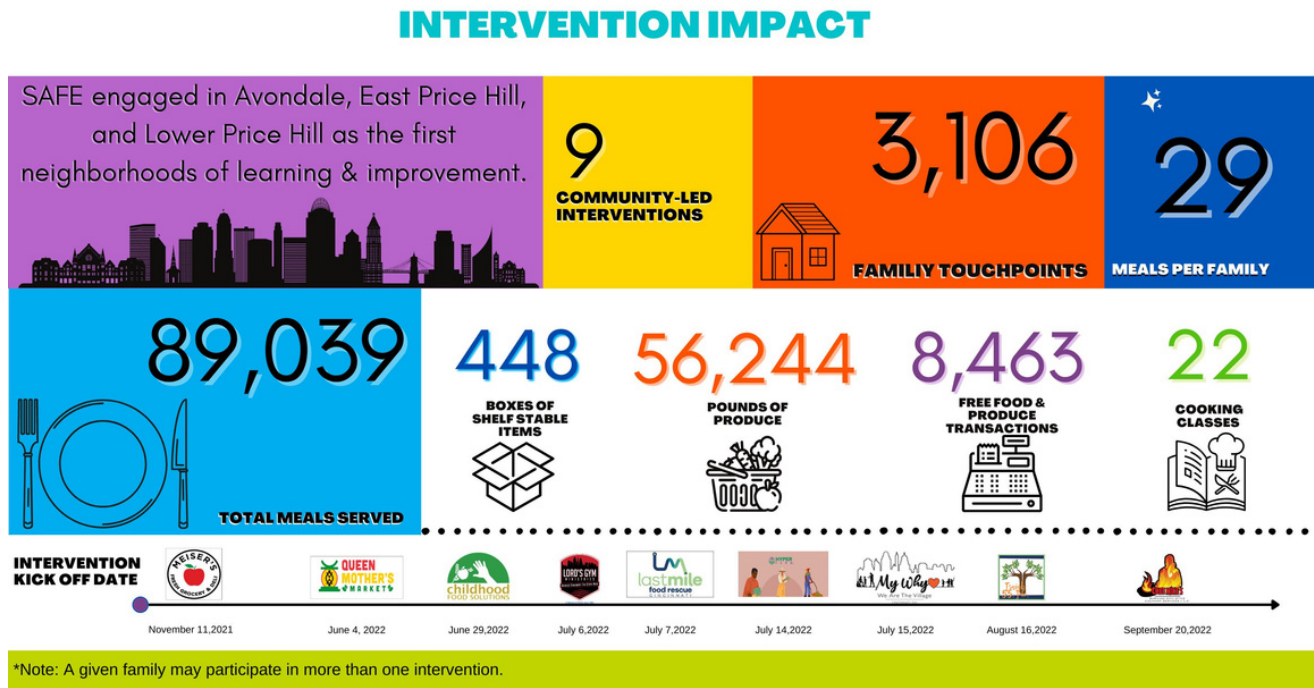


Figure 6: Shark Tank Initiative Impact

KEY LEARNINGS	
COMMUNITY-LED	Ongoing communication and feedback with the community of focus is critical to ensure interventions meet the needs and desires of the focus neighborhood. Word-of-mouth and face-to-face communication is very important in the community.
ACCESS	Whether it's free deliveries of fresh produce or markets in walkable distances, access to quality and affordable food is critical for those struggling with food insecurity.

## KEY LEARNINGS

### AUTONOMY

Choice and quality is very important for participants of interventions. While distributing free food provides temporary relief, interventions that empowered participants to choose and/or affordably pay for items have longer-term benefits in building up communities toward food security.

### PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY GROWTH

While feeding families was a primary goal for these interventions, many provided opportunities for participants to learn about different foods and healthy lifestyles, be a part of the community in sharing recipes and working in gardens together, and feel encouraged to cook more often. Addressing the educational gap to food autonomy and health is a key aspect of addressing food insecurity from a long-term perspective.

### PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration with other organizations and businesses improves food access and choice for the community while enabling intervention success.

### DATA-DRIVEN ACTION

Collecting and analyzing meaningful data provides valuable insight for improvement and growth of interventions and the community. Flexibility was also important in adjusting and improving processes and approaches to addressing food needs based on the learnings from qualitative and quantitative data.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

While some interventions already had an established approach and structure in their operations, some required more planning and upfront work that took time and effort before they could begin providing food and services to households. Ensuring interventions have the necessary resources, support, and community connections is essential in meeting goals to address food needs (e.g., setting up a freight farm, securing space for cooking/teaching, recruiting/marketing strategy in focus neighborhood).

### SYSTEM BARRIERS

Many interventions were impacted by racial/cultural barriers, crime, and other challenges faced by the community. In order to create long-term, larger-scope solutions to food security, system barriers need to also be addressed.

# Future State: Next Steps for SAFE

In August 2022, we convened our first SAFE Summer Summit in which we looked back on the progress and learnings of the prior year and looked ahead to the opportunities and possibilities in the year ahead (Figure 7). We used a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to inform ideas and priorities for the future.

Figure 7: SAFE Summer Summit Graphic Recording by Jo Byrne of [See Your Words](#)



## SWOT ANALYSIS

### STRENGTHS

- Addressing neighborhood-specific food needs
- Community-designed and led with inclusion of key stakeholders
- Flexibility to pivot based on priorities and shifting needs
- Having the expertise and reputation of Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center associated with the work
- Strong engagement among partners in providing diverse data, quality improvement capabilities, and other resource investments
- Trust, teamwork, and collaboration

### WEAKNESSES

- Accessibility to food is still limited in reaching the most vulnerable with the highest need
- Empowering partners and the network as a whole
- Inability to scale up effectively (number of stakeholders, feedback, scope, communication, marketing, data)
- Lack of common language and structure across interventions (data governance/standards) and partners (roles/responsibilities) to hold one another accountable
- Limited resources (financial, increasing data needs)
- Short term focus of activities without addressing root causes

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Build trust and synergies across the work
- Create a blueprint for other communities to show how data can inform interventions
- Dig deeper into root causes and impact (policy, strategic planning, systems lens)
- Expand food options and access
- Greater policy involvement to create systemic change
- Spread word to different communities, businesses, and partners

### THREATS

- Lack of collaboration and commitment to network goals, values, efforts
- Lack of resources (limited people/stakeholders to do the work, limited funding)
- Loss of momentum over time leading to loss of interest by participating organizations
- Loss of stakeholder voice and authority over time as network expands
- Root causes are complex and not fully addressed
- Systemic and socioeconomic barriers
- The true north goal can feel too big and insurmountable without a clear path



## Next Steps

Participants of the SAFE Summer Summit self-selected into three breakout groups to discuss data to drive insight and action, neighborhood-based change, and systems practice and policy change. In these groups, participants discussed potential goals within each focus areas to address in the next year

## Recommendations for the Coming Year

For now, the SAFE Network will maintain focus on the three currently engaged neighborhoods in order to solidify our approach and essential infrastructure and to enable us to expand our efforts related to nutrition quality and choice, root causes of food inequity, and policy. We will plan to scale when ready (e.g., data infrastructure fully established, funding sufficient).

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Co-develop a longer-term strategy for the SAFE Network, including communications and funding plans, for addressing food equity based on learnings

Continue learning through ongoing support of community led and owned interventions (e.g., neighborhood leadership, Shark Tank initiatives)

Determine a shared SMART aim for the network's second year

Establish clarity for SAFE network roles and responsibilities through a charter process

Identify and advocate for strategic policy priorities, starting with a focus on one key policy

Share learnings from this past year in a SAFE Network report and playbook to be disseminated both internally and externally

Standardize data management and gain alignment on data governance with all SAFE partners

Support execution of the planning grant from Feeding America focused on networked strategies to improve local access to food



# Appendix

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Appendix A: References **22**

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Appendix B: Shark Tank A3 Reports **23**

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Appendix C: Community Photos **38**

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# References

1. Bickel G, Nord M, Price C, Hamilton W, Cook J. Guide to measuring household food security. U.S. Department of Agriculture; 2000.
2. Gundersen C, Strayer M, Dewey A, Hake M, Engelhard E. Map the Meal Gap 2022: A Report on County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2020. Feeding America. Accessed 09/14/2022, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/child/ohio/county/hamilton>



**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Tony Fairhead | Childhood Food Solutions (CFS) | tony@childhoodfoodsolutions.org  
 Mission: To develop solutions for childhood food insecurity that can be applied in a community, tested for effectiveness, and duplicated in other communities.

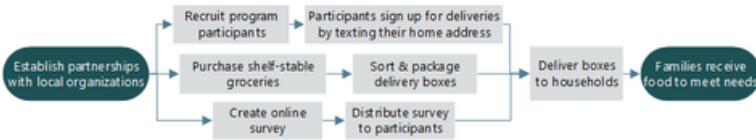
**Intervention description:**

Obtain, sort, and deliver free food boxes to food-insecure households in Avondale to counter the meal gap

**Scope:**

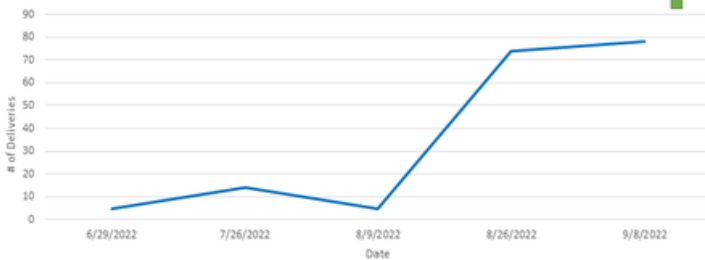
Neighborhood: Avondale  
 Timeframe: June 29 (First delivery) through September 30, 2022.  
 Grant amount: \$20,000

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**

CFS Number of Families who Received Deliveries by Date



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

Deliver free shelf-stable food boxes to 80 families in Avondale

**5. Key Learnings:**

While some registered households live in Avondale where recruitment was focused, majority were in neighborhoods all over Cincinnati spanning 26 zip codes.

Delivery box contents are intended to provide high calorie, shelf stable foods for those who are experiencing severe food insecurity in order to function throughout the day. As such, focusing activities for this intervention around this specific demographic in a wider geographic area may be more impactful than limiting activities to a specific neighborhood.

With recruitment efforts centered on the school health clinic (during summer months with high staff turnover) and flyer distributions, engaging with the Avondale community for participants and survey feedback proved challenging.

CFS is intentional about the anonymity of participants as it can provide comfort and ease of requesting free food without social stigma. This however makes collecting data difficult as face-to-face interactions are more effective ways of getting feedback and information from participants. Online surveys are efficient in collecting data anonymously but can be difficult to manage and solicit feedback.

**6. Results:**

As of 9/30, 80 families have been signed up to receive food boxes on a bi-weekly/monthly basis, out of which 15 addresses are in the Avondale zip code area. While most deliveries are to families outside of the focus neighborhood, CFS provides a service that benefits food-insecure families all over Cincinnati on a wider geographic scale.

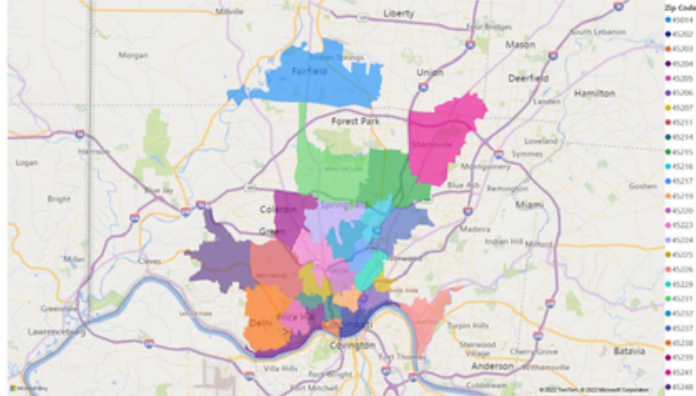
448 total boxes of food have been delivered as of September 30.

CFS will continue food box deliveries to the 80 families registered with the grant funding and will add families in Avondale as families sign up.

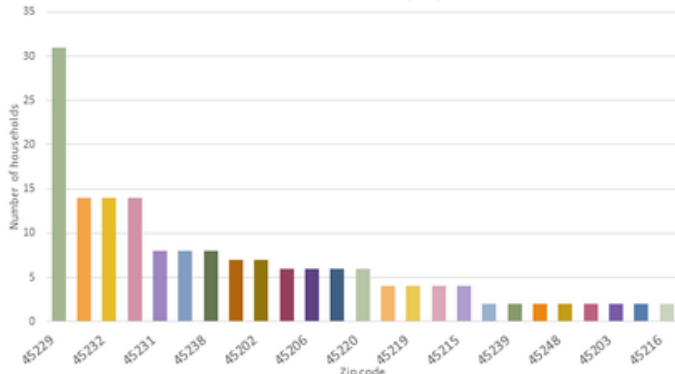


**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**

CFS Deliveries by Zip code



Number of Deliveries by Zip code

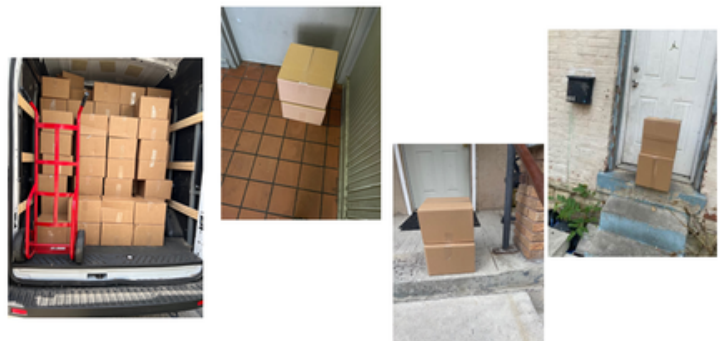


Grocery Item:	Calories
Frosted Bite Size Shredded Wheat, whole grain cereal, 18oz.	1,890
Peanut Butter, 18oz.	2,880
Honey Grahams (8g whole grain), 14oz.	1,690
Cinnamon Grahams (8g whole grain), 14oz.	1,690
Fruit & Grain Bar, 8g of whole grain, (8 per pack) (2 boxes)	1,920
Mac & Cheese, 7.25oz. (2 boxes)	1,560
Club Crackers, 13.7oz.	1,960
Oats & Honey Crunchy Granola Bars, 16g of whole grain (6 per pack)	1,140
Ramen Noodle Soup, 3oz. (4)	1,520
Fruit Flavored Snack (source of Vit. C)	160



Each CFS box contains about 16,000 calories, providing about 28 meals (at 575 calories/ meal, the average for school lunch and school breakfast).

www.kidsfed.org





#### 8. Observations:

Contents of the delivery boxes consist of shelf-stable staples that children can readily eat and enjoy such as cereal, peanut butter, crackers, granola bars, and fruit snacks. Intent is to provide caloric sustenance to the most vulnerable households to survive and function in their daily lives. Families sign up anonymously by texting the delivery address to the CFS number to respect confidentiality preferences.

Initially, CFS partnered primarily with contacts at the South Avondale school clinic to sign up families for this intervention. Recruiting families in the Avondale neighborhood was slow, possibly due to school being out of session and turnover of key staff at the clinic during the intervention. Flyers were distributed at Avondale community events and other Shark Tank interventions, and promotions via Facebook and by word of mouth also contributed to participation from across the Cincinnati area.

As activities to increase community awareness and recruit families increased, there were some inquiries and referrals from outside of the target neighborhood. CFS partnerships with other organizations may have contributed to the deliveries in zip codes outside of Avondale. Texts were sent to participants to learn where families heard about this intervention, many of which were through online, word of mouth, and social media avenues.

Number of deliveries were lower in June through early August due to lower number of registered families and lower supply of these items at the grocery stores where items are bought in bulk. Maintenance issues with the delivery truck also halted deliveries for a short period of time.

An online survey was created to understand family food needs and how this intervention can contribute to improving food security. Texts were sent out with the survey link on 9/26, and flyers with QR codes were created to be distributed with deliveries starting 10/6. As of 9/30, there has been no survey feedback from families receiving these deliveries.

Compared to 3 other CFS programs in other neighborhoods, this partnership with SAFE is the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest program after their partnership with Oyster school in Price Hill. Recruiting families happened more quickly with the SAFE partnership, and CFS was able to create a better survey to distribute to families.

#### 9. Learnings:

Although recruiting families proved to be slow during the early months of the intervention, CFS was able to recruit 80 families into the program. While Avondale households were a fraction of the total recipients (17 Avondale addresses), other neighborhoods have shown interest in this intervention in meeting their food needs.

This intervention was providing shelf-stable, high calorie foods specifically for those experiencing extreme hunger. While type of food distributed were considered readily available and unhealthy by some Avondale community leaders, this intervention met a specific need for specific households as a safety net for when food runs out.

Contact points within the community were limited to a few individuals with competing resources and priorities, which may have contributed to the low engagement of Avondale households in this intervention.

Although feedback was not obtained from the Avondale intervention, based on survey results from other CFS programs in the Price Hill neighborhood, the delivery contents are very favorable for children in the household and were helpful in saving money for other groceries and necessities and reduced stress around food security.

CFS is intentional about the anonymity of participants as it can provide comfort and ease of requesting free food without social stigma. This however makes collecting data difficult as face-to-face interactions are more effective ways of getting feedback and information from participants. Online surveys are efficient in collecting data anonymously but can be difficult to manage and solicit feedback.





**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Michael A Vinegar | Chef Mike's Burning With Style Culinary Services, LLC |  
chefvinegarcincinnati@gmail.com

Mission: Raising awareness and empowering families with classical food preparation skills

**Intervention Description:**

Teach cooking classes with nutrient-dense ingredients and provide training on nutrition and classical culinary skills. Classes are 2 times/week over a 5-week period

**Scope:**

Neighborhood: Lower Price Hill

Timeframe: September 20 (first class) through October 20, 2022 (last scheduled class).

Grant amount: \$10,000

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**

Number of Meals Served by Date



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

Enroll 10 students in the nutrition program to learn about health and nutrition while learning how to prepare healthy meals

**5. Key Learnings:**

Establishing partnerships and connections with the neighborhood is a critical step in starting interventions and programs to improve food security.

It is important to address the educational gap in food insecure communities to help children and families learn how to obtain and prepare healthy meals. Many children are interested and enjoy new and healthy foods but are limited in exposure and access to them.

How to integrate fresh vegetables in food and being conscious of reading labels are the most important aspects to teach in the courses. This can enable kids to make good choices on food they obtain and prepare for meals, not just during the course but throughout their lives.

Participants' ages ranged from 7 years old up through high school age. Children are more capable than many adults give them credit for in their ability to prepare healthy delicious foods for themselves.

**6. Results:**

6-9 children and youth are participating in the culinary nutrition class held twice a week. As of 10/11, 234 healthy meals have been served through Eat 2 Live at Santa Maria where classes are held along with other afterschool programs.

At the end of the intervention in October, the class will be evaluated based on end-of-course surveys showing how well the students learned the course content to improve knowledge on healthy eating and food preparation skills. The plan is to distribute gift cards to Kroger and community food entities at the end of the class with extra incentives for high-attendance students.



**8. Observations:**

Cooking classes were held at the Santa Maria facility in Lower Price Hill. Partnerships with Santa Maria as well as other organizations like the community partners group and Meiser's were critical in helping coordinate the classes and recruit participants. Plans are in place to obtain ingredients locally for upcoming classes through Meiser's and MyWhy.

At each class, students learned how to cook various meals they can prepare throughout the day including different ways to cook eggs and pancakes for breakfast, various types of salads for lunch, and chicken stir fry and rice for dinner using an assortment of vegetables. Students also learned how to read food labels, research ingredients and chemicals to look for and look out for, as well as topics around food safety, cleaning, and ingredient preparations. Based on level of engagement and understanding, class content was adjusted throughout the intervention to be more tailored to the attendees.

Eat 2 Live served meals to approximately 40 kids after every class. While space limited the participants who can join or watch the cooking classes, the kids enjoyed the meals despite hesitancy trying new ingredients, and even the vegetables were gone very quickly when the meals were distributed.

Attendance of kids in the cooking class varied from class to class. While Tuesday and Thursday afternoons worked well for this session, there were other activities going on at Santa Maria that many kids joined instead, and many of the high school chefs had other after-school commitments like sports and extra-curriculars. While coordinating schedules is always challenging, working with participants and their families to find the best time for these classes would provide the most value in learning about healthy foods and habits.

In addition to kids learning how to eat healthier, they are also learning respect for one another as they show appreciation for their peers in the classes who prepare the meals for them.

**9. Learnings:**

As with other newly developing Shark Tank interventions in the Lower Price Hill area, recruiting students for the program required a lot of effort upfront. Flyers were distributed within the community by several community partners, but it took 5 weeks to recruit 9 students to start the intervention. Anecdotally, this neighborhood has several close-knit communities of various backgrounds that tend to show hesitancy participating in activities outside of their sphere of activity/comfort. Establishing connections with the focus community and identifying key partners is crucial in addressing food needs.

Education is a key component in improving food security for children. For many who do not have access or exposure to different types of food, there is a knowledge gap in identifying, finding, and preparing quality food and ingredients for healthy meals. Providing opportunities to try new foods and to learn how to choose healthy foods for themselves builds up not just individual children but also entire households and communities toward food security.

For future classes or interventions like Eat 2 Live, securing an adequate location with sufficient space for students to cook as well as space for observers would be beneficial in teaching more individuals about food preparation and nutrition to expand the impact on communities.

**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Kai Stoudemire-Williams | HyperFarm | kaistoudemire@yahoo.com  
 Mission: to increase fresh food access for children and families in Avondale.

**Intervention description:**

Grow fresh local food in an indoor hydroponic farm system to harvest and deliver fresh local food to families. In addition, safe, convenient accessible pick-up locations will be offered.

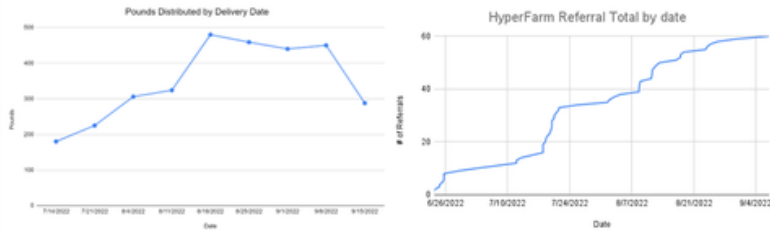
**Scope:**

Neighborhood: S. Avondale  
 Timeframe: July 14 (first delivery) through September 30, 2022  
 Grant Amount: \$90,100

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

Install a freight farm system in the Avondale neighborhood to grow local produce

Register 50 families to receive deliveries of fresh produce from HyperFarm

**5. Key Learnings:**

Partnerships with other businesses and organizations was an important part of this intervention. Using existing systems for deliveries and working with other neighborhood gardens and individuals eased HyperFarm operations.

While various methods of recruiting families were used for this intervention, referrals of friends and families from participants were an essential part of its success. Participants often expressed excitement about the quality and quantity of produce and were happy to share with others in the community.

Based on participant surveys, transportation, cost, and access were the top barriers that families face in getting fresh food.

Each family received 1-2 recipes with their deliveries, which had great responses. Including these allowed for more interactions within families and among community members to share recipe ideas. The deliveries also encouraged participants to cook more often.

Transportation was a key barrier for participants in accessing food for themselves.

Participant feedback on types or amount of certain produce was incorporated in subsequent deliveries.

Resilience in overcoming obstacles with setting up freight farm was great in meeting family food needs.

**6. Results:**

Due to unexpected delays in obtaining construction materials and processing building contracts and agreements, the freight farm did not begin growing produce during the intervention period.

Regardless, HyperFarm was able to register 60 families to receive fresh produce and delivered 3,152 pounds of produce throughout the intervention timeframe with produce from other neighborhood gardens and purchasing in bulk at reduced prices with grant funding.

**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**



**Family Feedback**

This project was so needed, it helped family eat more fruit and veggies, tried to find new ways to cook, much needed and going to be missed. Is setting some of the produce aside for Thanksgiving in freezer.

Produce has been a blessing, very grateful for the produce

Kids have loved the fresh produce and look forward to receiving it. Mom is grateful for how nice it's been for her family

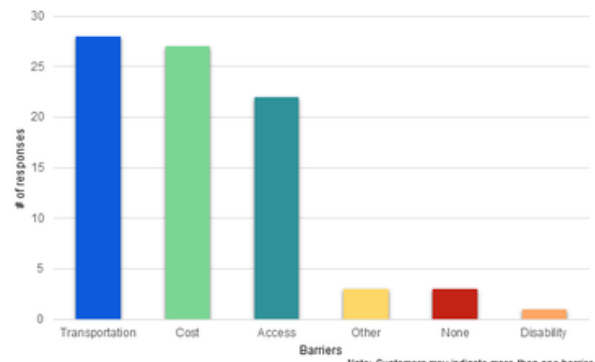
Mom has been pleasantly surprised at the quality of produce given to her family and they appreciate the delivery option and kindness.

HyperFarm deliveries by date



184 Total Deliveries

HyperFarm What barriers do you face in getting fresh food? n=60



Note: Customers may indicate more than one barrier





### 8. Observations:

There was more work than originally anticipated to set up the freight farm including zoning application and assessment with electricians and finalizing an agreement with the church for using the space. Ultimately, we were not able to get the transformer and metering parts needed to make electrical connections to the freight farm before September to be able to grow and distribute produce from the freight farm.

The free Door Dash deliveries eliminated the need and reliability issues of recruiting volunteer delivery drivers, and data was easily accessible to minimize work needed to gather and input information. While this served the delivery needs of most participants, personal deliveries were also made to individuals with specific needs (e.g. blind participant, those who could not receive deliveries on the regular Door Dash days). It was interesting that a majority of the Door Dash drivers did not speak English and were from various backgrounds and nationalities, and communications barriers were overcome with translation apps. This allowed for connection and diversity among the drivers to the community as well.

Partnering with Queen Mother's Market allowed for more locally-grown produce to be delivered to families through HyperFarm.

Referrals of family and friends from HyperFarm participants was a key contributor to meeting the goal of reaching 50 families with this intervention. Other recruitment methods included handing out flyers in apartment complexes, at other Shark Tank intervention events, and including flyers in the produce baskets. With these additional ways of reaching out the community, there has been an increase in participation of Avondale households and also of elderly single-person households and families in other neighborhoods such as College Hill, Walnut Hill, and Roselawn.

In comparison to previous times that this intervention took place, support from Shark Tank provided more funding stability to contribute to extended time of consistent deliveries (3 months vs few weeks) and the ability to buy bulk produce that could not be grown in outdoor gardens.

Feedback on the quality and quantity of produce was very positive. Participants commented on they were pleasantly surprised with the amount, taste, and variety of produce and were excited to try out new recipes with them.

### 9. Learnings:

More time should be allocated earlier on to set up and install freight farms. Paperwork for zoning applications, contracts, and other materials have been saved in case they can be used as templates in the future should operations expand to install multiple freight farms in the neighborhood

Based on survey results gathered from participants, transportation, cost, and access were the top barriers that families face in getting fresh food. In inquiring further, we learned that many families rely on transportation provided by Medicare but do not have their own car.

Partnerships with other businesses and organizations was an important part of this intervention. Using existing systems for deliveries and working with other neighborhood gardens and individuals eased the operational burdens of HyperFarm.

While various methods of recruiting families were used for this intervention, referrals of friends and families from early participants of this program were an essential part of its success.

Sharing ideas among Shark Tank interventions would have been valuable in supporting one another, as well as in connecting community members to other food sources. Plans for future Shark Tank are in progress to facilitate regular gatherings among the intervention leaders.

There were many people in the community who were interested in volunteering with the efforts in the community to address food needs. Having a way for people to find and attend volunteer activities with HyperFarm or within the SAFE network would be valuable.



**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Shannon Carr | Isaiah 55, Inc. <https://isaiah55inc.com/>

Mission: To grow food and provide healthier options to un-resourced neighborhoods

**Intervention Description:**

Registered families will receive 1 cooked vegetarian meal and 2 meal kits with recipe instructions on a weekly basis.

**Scope:**

Neighborhood: Lower Price Hill

Timeframe: August 16 (first delivery) through September 30, 2022.

Grant amount: \$10,000

**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

45 families registered to receive weekly meal and meal kits

**5. Key Learnings:**

Connectedness to the community and individual families within the location of focus is critical in understanding specific needs to address food insecurity.

Racial/cultural barriers as well as circumstances such as COVID presented unique challenges for this intervention.

In light of these challenges, flexibility in adapting and overcoming these barriers as well as having partnerships with other community networks is important for the success of the intervention.

Most of the participants were more interested in obtaining the hot meals instead of the meal kits. Many of them were single mothers with children, and in need of not just food but other necessities. They were in such need that they were willing and open to connecting and sharing their experiences. Meal kits were not often sufficient to meet the needs of the participants.

While some families were happy with the meal kits and were able to prepare healthy meals themselves, there is an educational gap that exists for many families who do not have the knowledge to find ingredients and tools to cook their own meals.

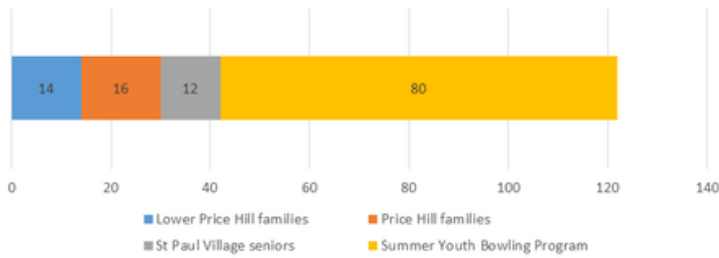
**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



Note: meal kits were discontinued over the course of the intervention based on participant feedback and issues

**3. Measures:**

Isaiah 55, Inc. Number of Meals Delivered by Location



**6. Results:**

Despite only 14 families from the Lower Price Hill neighborhood participating, 122 families in various neighborhoods received hot meals and/or meal kits throughout this intervention.

Isaiah 55, Inc. will continue to distribute hot meals and meal kits to intervention participants and work with the SAFE network to recruit more families from Lower Price Hill while funds remain.



**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**









**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Aaron Moore | Last Mile Food Rescue | aaron@lastmilefood.org  
Mission: To save good food and get it to those who need it most

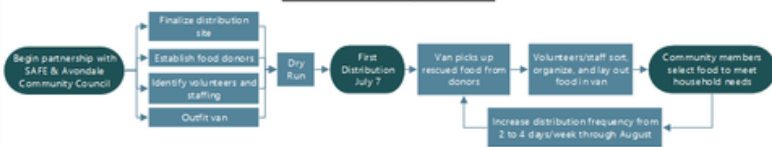
**Intervention description:**

Intervention involves obtaining a refrigerated box truck/van to use as a mobile food pantry to take rescued fresh food from grocers and food establishments and distribute them at a convenient local pick-up location for Avondale community members in need

**Scope:**

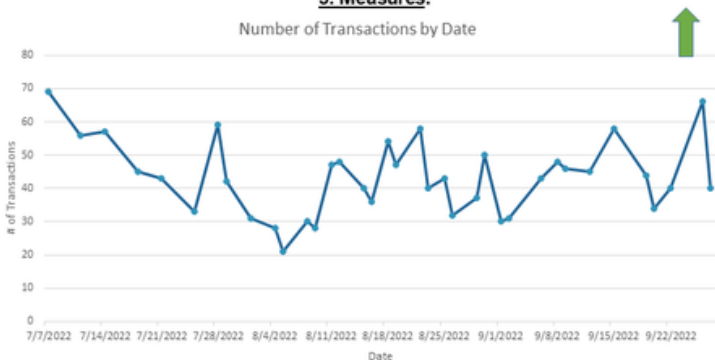
Neighborhood: Avondale  
Timeframe: July 7, 2022 (first distribution – soft opening) through September 30, 2022.  
Grant amount: \$50,000

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**

Number of Transactions by Date



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

**Average 43 shoppers on each distribution day by September 30**

**Average 38 new shoppers weekly by September 30**

Distribute fresh, desirable food to the Avondale community with a focus on nutrition, quality, and equity

**5. Key Learnings:**

The refrigerated van allowed for wider variety of foods to be more easily accessible to the community.

As distribution days increased over the course of the intervention, valuable data was obtained on shoppers and shopping habits that brought insight into the food needs of the neighborhood.

Strong partnerships with local businesses for rescued food was critical for day-to-day operations of the mobile market.

Choice is very important to shoppers. Customers were happy that items were not pre-packaged and pre-selected for them and that they had the ability to select what they wanted.

**6. Results:**

Last Mile Mobile Market was able to distribute food to an average of 43 shoppers on distribution days and as high as 70 shoppers on a single day of operations.

34,872 pounds of food were distributed throughout the intervention period including donated produce, dairy, meat, and bakery items

Last Mile will continue to hold markets through October 31 on Mondays and Thursdays, with plans to spread to new neighborhoods or market sites in Avondale in the spring.



**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**

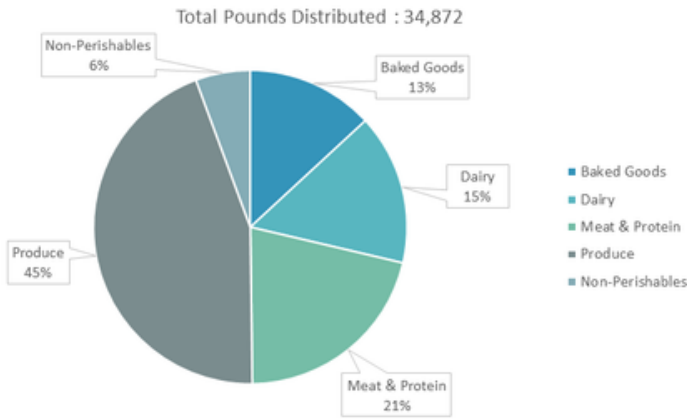


Last Mile Market brings fresh, rescued food to families in Avondale | WKRC (local12.com)





7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:



Conversations from the Market

I am so grateful you all are doing this market. This is helping my family get through.

The produce and meat is great. Most free food giveaways don't have quality produce and meat.

This has been so convenient. I normally have to go to another neighborhood to get fresh produce.

I love that I can come as often as I would like.



8. Observations:

Distribution days increased from once a week 1-3pm to 4 days/week throughout the course of the intervention. Busiest days in the week were the initial test days when the intervention first started (first distribution days were Thursdays, then Mondays, then Fridays and Tuesdays were added incrementally). As distribution days increased throughout the summer, attendance slowly grew with more awareness of the additional days of operation.

Most market shoppers regularly attended 1-2 times per week, and most arrived in the first hour of operations as popular items such as meat often ran out before the market closed for the day. Per survey results, attendees are shopping for an average of 3 people in the household. Most attendees walked to the market, making it favorable that the location was easily accessible.

Word of mouth from shoppers and flyer distributions primarily helped increase community engagement in this intervention. Last Mile was featured on the local news during the intervention, but no significant boost in market attendance was noticed. Noticeable shifts in number of attendees correlated with certain events and timings. For example, the 1st week of school had more participants, likely due to shoppers doing more back-to-school shopping. There were also fewer attendees than average earlier in the month, potentially due to timings of SNAP benefits and other monthly programs reducing the need to obtain free groceries during those timeframes. Consistency in location and times of the market helped maintain and increase number of attendees.

Last Mile Mobile Market was also able to distribute a wide variety of food with high quality based on the various partnering businesses in their types of donations. While the intent was to distribute a balanced "healthy plate" breakdown of food choices, this did not often align with what shoppers chose and what the market often ran out of. Assumptions for this are cultural preferences of some food over others (meat vs. produce), lack of education and awareness on balanced diet and healthy food choices, and accessibility of types of food at other distributions (for example, meat is more expensive in retail and other ways of obtaining free produce in the community may already exist).

While the mobile market couldn't choose what food was donated and how much, good relationships and partnerships with donating organizations and staff helped ensure that there were certain types of food always available. Shoppers were very satisfied with the quality of food available at the market.

9. Learnings:

While operations of the mobile market were successful during this intervention, having more infrastructure such as an inventory management system could ease the day-to-day management of the market.

Volunteer resources were limited on distribution days, and some issues arose with volunteer conduct during the intervention (eating/saving market food for themselves, politeness and interface with shoppers). Volunteer recruitment and training moving forward could improve the shopping experience for the community and contribute to further success moving forward.

In addition to partnerships with donating businesses, collaboration with other services in sharing information on resources and events were positive. Being part of the SAFE network helped establish some of these connections. Partnering with CCHMC on data analysis was helpful. Shark Tank program could improve with better meeting structure and clearer expectations for grant funding recipients as it considers ongoing and future partnership with community organizations on food interventions.

Although market days had to be reduced at one point due to van maintenance, there was great benefit in the market being mobile as it provided for flexibility and ease of operations. As Last Mile Food Rescue considers the future of the mobile market, opportunities for disaster relief or different distribution sites such as day care centers are being explored in further improving food security for families in need.





**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Danny Gomez | Lord’s Gym Ministries [dgomez@lordsgymministries.org](mailto:dgomez@lordsgymministries.org)  
 Mission: The Lord’s Gyms are a weight-lifting, work out, and long-term discipleship program designed to teach at-risk men values and principles that avoid destructive lifestyles while nurturing their relationship with God.

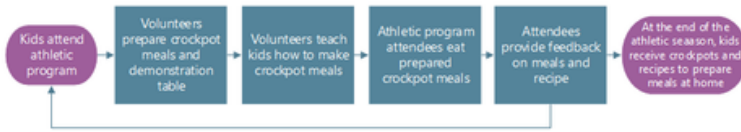
**Intervention description:**

Teach 65-80 kids to learn how to make five easy meals in a crockpot. Kids receive crockpots at the end of the intervention

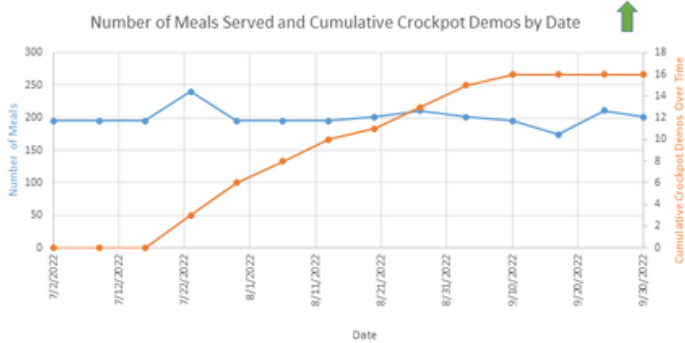
**Scope:**

Neighborhood: East Price Hill  
 Timeframe: July 6, 2022 through September 30, 2022.  
 Grant Amount: \$25,000

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

Conduct 15 total crockpot demonstrations

Feed all athletic program attendees with crockpot meals

**5. Key Learnings:**

Coordinating these crockpot demonstrations and meals with the athletic program greatly contributed to the success of this intervention with number of participants and meals served.

Feedback from the kids who participated in this program was valuable in creating recipe cards and meal ideas throughout the intervention on what they would want to cook and eat at home.

Racial and cultural differences were noticed in those who prepared the meals (who were predominantly white) from the kids who participated in the intervention and meals (who were predominantly Afro-American). Although no Afro-American volunteers agreed to teach and prepare a meal during this intervention, this is something to consider for future interventions so that the food choice and cooking preferences better reflect the participants' backgrounds. Having culturally acceptable ingredients and seasonings could further improve the success of these interventions in improving food security in these neighborhoods.

**6. Results:**

16 crockpot demonstrations were conducted over the course of 8 weeks. A total of 2804 meals were served at these events to 2759 children who attended football practice and their siblings. 80 kids are registered to receive crockpots and recipes at the end of the sports season.



**8. Observations:**

Approximately 200 kids attended these sports programs every week (about 65 kids/day, 3 days/week) where the crockpot meal demonstrations and meals took place. 80 families were registered for the intervention and will receive a crockpot at the sports banquet at the end of the season with recipes of the meals they learned.

The original plan was to have the crockpot demonstrations at the indoors facilities, but due to logistical complications, these were held outside where the sports practices were held.

Based on a survey for the kids who ate the meals during the intervention, kids love watermelon and bananas, and provided positive feedback on vegetables such as sweet carrots and green beans. Surprisingly, Mac & Cheese was not popular among the attendees as there were several crockpots left over on those intervention days. This could have been due to the additional ingredient of hot dogs in the mac & cheese and more difficulty making them in the crockpots.

There were some dietary restrictions among the participants (e.g., no pork), but they were easily accommodated with choosing meals that met their needs.

As volunteers showed the participants how to cook the meals, the kids themselves were also teaching the volunteers how they make them differently at home, showing differences in culture and experiences.

While the priority is to feed the kids in the athletic program, there were several instances where parents were wanting food from the intervention. The food needs in families and households is not limited to kids in many instances.

**9. Learnings:**

Coordinating these crockpot demonstrations and meals with the athletic program greatly contributed to the success of this intervention with number of participants and meals served.

Feedback from the kids who participated in this program was valuable in creating recipe cards and meal ideas throughout the intervention on what they would want to cook and eat at home.

Racial and cultural differences were noticed in those who prepared the meals (who were predominantly white) from the kids who participated in the intervention and meals (who were predominantly Afro-American). Although no Afro-American volunteers agreed to teach and prepare a meal during this intervention, this is something to consider for future interventions so that the food choice and cooking preferences better reflect the participants' backgrounds. Having culturally acceptable ingredients and seasonings could further improve the success of these interventions in improving food security in these neighborhoods.

Crockpot Recipes Survey (sample size 25-30 kids)

Crockpots made	Leftover meal (crockpots)	Meal	Meal Acceptance	Side	Side Acceptance	Side	Side Acceptance
3	0	Hamburger Helper- 1R	73%	Green beans	78%	Watermelon/Banana	100%
5	3	Mac & Cheese- 1R	52%	Carrot	63%	Watermelon/Banana	100%
4	0	Spaghetti and Meatballs- 2R	94%	Corn	74%	Watermelon/Banana	100%
4	0	Chicken Pasta	89%	Garlic bread	82%	Watermelon/Banana	100%
4	0	Chicken and Rice- 2R	100%	Corn	85%	Watermelon/Banana	100%
4	1	Pinto Beans with Ham	80%	Cord Bread	97%	Banana	100%
2	0	Cheese Dip with Beef- 3R	100%	Nachos	100%	Banana	100%

R- Meal Repeat

**1. Brief Background:**

**Partnership Organization:**

Reba Hennessey | Your Store of the Queen City | <https://www.yourstoreqc.org>  
 Mission: Open a community-visioned, led, & operated nonprofit social enterprise providing free and affordable food access for the Lower Price Hill neighborhood

**Intervention Description:**

Pilot inventory and infrastructure of Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli and Meiser's Green Giveaways Programs for financially-vulnerable families to obtain nutritionally & culturally appropriate food.

Activity with Shark Tank funding includes:

- Supply and manage inventory of free giveaway food
- Supply and manage inventory of affordable food (WIC/SNAP/Produce Perks)
- Establish management system to track inventories, customer activity (habits, preferences), and sales (Clover POS system, EBT transactions)
- Advertise Meiser's Green Giveaways to increase family participation

**Scope:**

Neighborhood: Lower Price Hill.  
 Timeframe: November 11, 2021 (Meiser's opening) through February 11, 2022 (intervention timeframe end, store operations ongoing)  
 Grant amount: \$12,773

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

Open a nonprofit social enterprise for food access in Lower Price Hill  
 Register 500\* people in Green Giveaways by November 11, 2022



\*approx. 1500 total Lower Price Hill residents in 500 households

**5. Key Learnings:**

There is a need for a city-wide whole-sale food purchasing entity (business, network, buyers club, etc.) specific to supporting neighborhoods experiencing food apartheid

Ongoing communication and feedback with the community of focus is critical to ensure the enterprise is neighborhood-owned and operated. Word-of-mouth communication is very important in the community.

Having both free and affordable food in the same space allows for families to meet produce needs, to save time and money, and to create full meals

Collaboration with other organizations in activities and events improves food access and choice for the community while enabling the success of enterprises such as Meiser's.

Collecting meaningful data on operations provided valuable insight for improvement and growth.

**6. Results:**

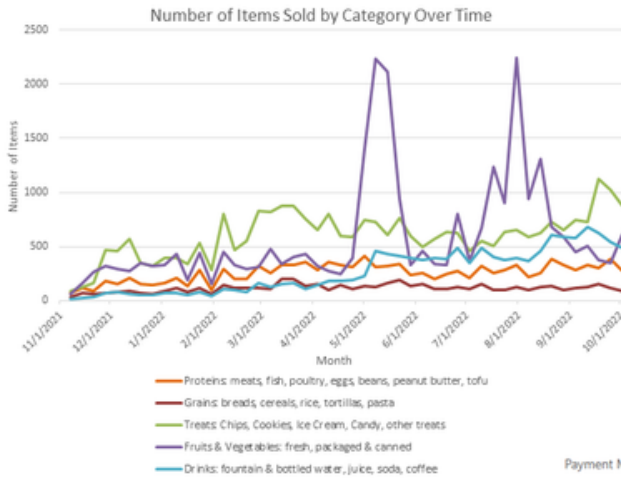
- Since opening Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli in November,
- As of October 1, 515 people have been registered for Green Giveaways (both food and non-food goods), exceeding our goal of 500 in 1 year following Meiser's grand opening.
  - Weekly sales transactions continues to increase, showing strong community utilization of and engagement in Meiser's to meet their household needs.
  - Hours were expanded from 30 to 60 hours/week
  - Employment increased from 4 part-time employees to 6 associates, 3 contractors, and 3 entrepreneurs, all hired from within the neighborhood
  - Over 10 different categories of food as well as cooking tools and household items were distributed so that families had the necessary items to prepare desired meals and recipes.

Meiser's will continue to partner with food networks across Cincinnati to provide free and affordable food and household goods to the Price Hill community.



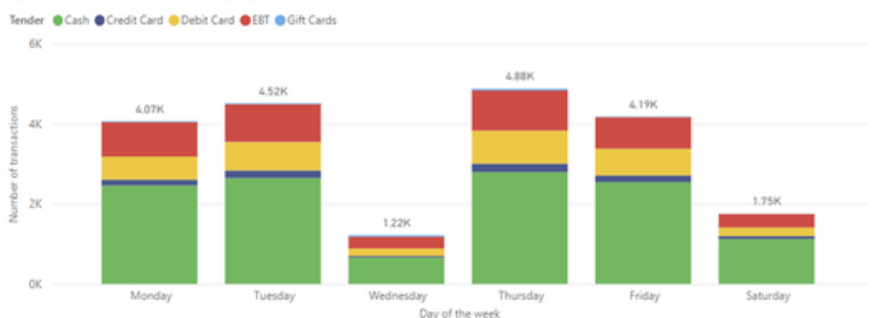
System to Achieve Food Equity (SAFE) Network | Your Store of the Queen City

**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**



As of 10/6/2022  
**20,626**  
 Total Transactions

Payment Method for All Transactions by Day of the week







**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**



Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli is at Meiser's Fresh Grocery & Deli  
Support at 216 for Cincinnati, OH



**8. Observations:**

Maintaining inventory is expensive. With no storage space, loading dock, or financial reserve for wholesale pricing, sales price of food increased due to mark-ups.

Meiser's originally planned for a zero-dollar-pay-what-you-can model, but due to regulations (can't appear to be requesting donations for donated goods), sales model had to be adjusted. Changing produce perks criteria helped increase number of perks redeemed for goods.

Timely effective communication with the community is essential. Regular updates were needed on what donated food was available on a given day/week, and while social media communication was used with intentionality to specifically reach out to the local community, promoting Green Giveaways both virtually and in person significantly boosted sales and giveaways. Staffing Meiser's with community members is critical for customer feedback and meeting neighborhood needs. Being a presence in community events like the summer festival increased neighborhood engagement and feedback on Meiser's (over 40 people reached out during/after the festival)

Partnership with various organizations and networks is critical to the success of Meiser's in meeting community needs. Partnering with Oyler School for their FSB pop-ups significantly boosted Meiser's sales, and organizations and businesses that regularly catered Meiser's boxed lunches were an important part of operations. The physical space and location of Meiser's also allowed for expanded network into community art space and after-school children's programs to build up neighborhoods.

Frequency of donated food deliveries had to be adjusted over time to find the right frequency to avoid food waste (changed from weekly to every other week).

Data provided key insight into customer activity and food hub operations. For example, transaction trending showed peak sales times/days for focusing resources like inventories, staffing, donations. As daily transactions were tracked, analyzing the data became complicated as it brought to light various stories and opportunities for improvement.

**9. Learnings:**

There is a need for a city-wide whole-sale food purchasing entity (business, network, buyers club, etc.) specific to supporting neighborhoods experiencing food apartheid

Ongoing communication and feedback with the community of focus is critical to ensure the enterprise is neighborhood-owned and operated. Word-of-mouth communication is very important in the community.

Having both free and affordable food in the same space allows for families to meet produce needs, to save time and money, and to create full meals

Collaboration with other organizations in activities and events improves food access and choice for the community while enabling the success of enterprises such as Meiser's.

Collecting meaningful data on food hub operations allowed for valued insight for improvement and growth.



**Partnership Organization:**

Mary Beth Knight | MyWhy | maketheassist@gmail.com

Mission: Equip under-served children with the knowledge & the training to properly feed themselves for a lifetime.

**Intervention description:**

Operate pay-what-you-can farmers markets and distribute produce at local programs and locations.

Teach children and community how to grow, harvest, prepare, & share produce

**Scope:** (neighborhood(s), timeframe, grant amount)

Neighborhood: East & Lower Price Hill

Timeframe: July 15 (first market date) through September 30, 2022.

Grant amount: \$15,050

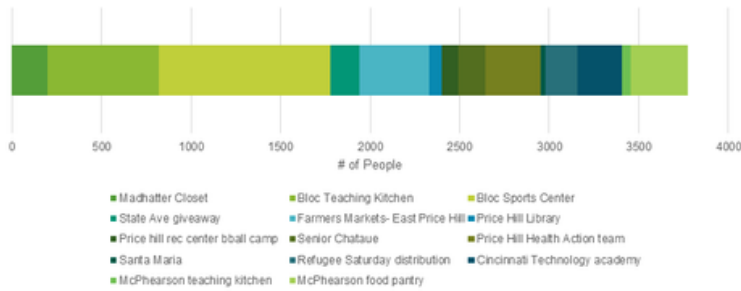
**1. Brief Background:**

**2. Process Map/Timeline:**



**3. Measures:**

Number of People Impacted through MyWhy Programs



**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

- Distribute produce to 700 children at MyWhy programs and events
- Recruit 800 total attendees at farmers markets at Price Hill & Avondale\*
- Distribute 900 pounds of produce and hold 4 farmers markets in Lower Price Hill
- Attract SNAP, EBT, WIC, and Senior coupon customers to improve amount of produce consumed

\*initial plan was to have intervention in both neighborhoods, but focus was placed on Price Hill throughout the whole intervention period

**5. Key Learnings:**

Intentionality in making connections with individuals at markets and events was essential for the success of this intervention and helped promote interactions among neighbors in these communities. The markets helped with word-of-mouth communication and bringing communities together.

Desire for produce and knowledge of it was greater than initially anticipated, particularly among Hispanic families. With the diversity of the Price Hill neighborhoods, it's important to understand the specific needs of the communities to empower them toward food security and provide better access to desirable foods.

Education was a critical part of this intervention in teaching kids about healthy foods and eating habits. It is important to improve the awareness and knowledge of the community along with providing food services to improve overall food security in neighborhoods.

Holding events at schools greatly increases the level of impact this intervention has on number of families impacted.

Layering of benefits & incentives proved to be important as did "bulk" buying power to make produce more affordable for families.

**6. Results:**

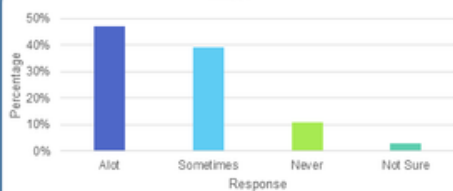
917 children obtained produce through MyWhy's markets and school programs. While total attendees was not counted, 389 adults made transactions at the farmers markets, 11% of which were free produce transactions. Many attendees brought their children and extended families, so total market attendees are estimated to be over 900. 57% of customers used

Throughout the intervention period, MyWhy was able to distribute 37,546 pounds of produce.

MyWhy plans to expand to 4 additional pop-up locations in the neighborhood and expand benefits like produce perks at these markets. MyWhy will continue to fundraise to continue the activities that were initially funded by Shark Tank.

**Farmers Market Survey Results**

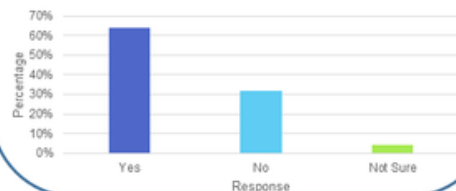
In the last 12 months, how often were you not able to eat a healthy meal because your family didn't have enough money? n=364



How old are you? n=364

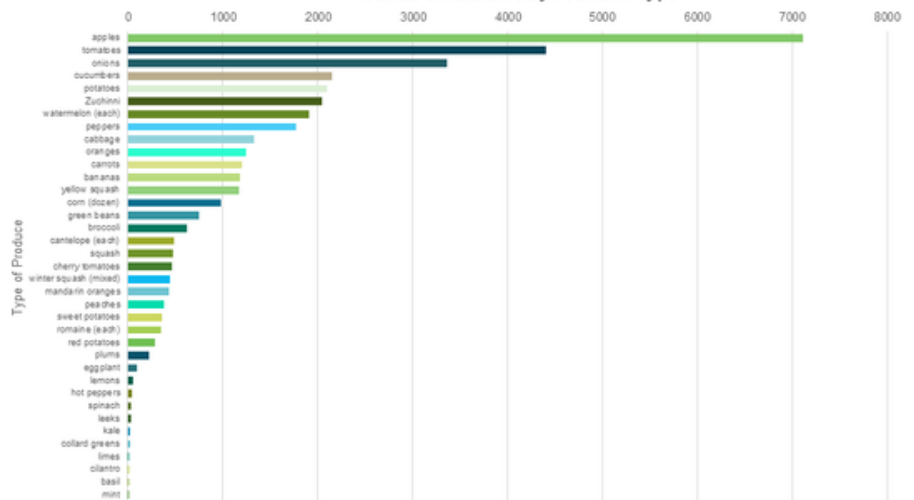


In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry because there was not enough money to buy food for your home? n=364

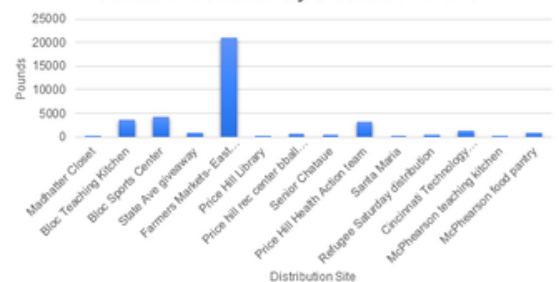


**7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:**

Pounds Distributed by Produce Type

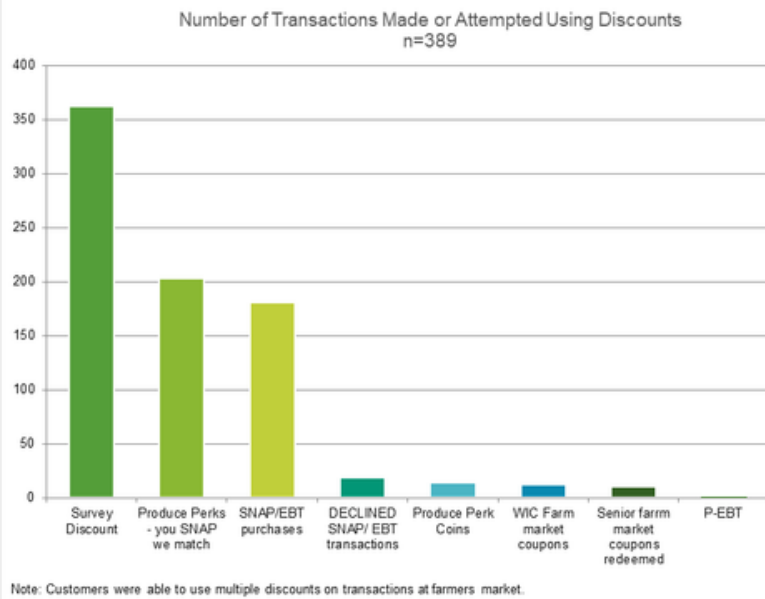


Pounds of Produce by Distribution Site





7. Pictures, Videos, Testimonials:



8. Observations:

Farmers markets were held once every week in both East and Lower Price Hill. SNAP, WIC, produce perks, and other benefits only cover about 1/3 of market sales, so the grant money was used to cover the difference.

Various incentives and activities encouraged children and communities to eat and obtain fresh food at these markets including distributing samples of vegetables for tasting, having children complete simple math/spelling problems to get a free bag of food, and providing a variety of produce options to choose from. Customers would sometimes get discounted or free produce for inviting their friends and families while attending the market. Community members have noticed more people in the neighborhood outside interacting with their neighbors since the start of these farmers markets where they were able to meet and get to know one another. Kids are also engaged and curious about asking questions about various produce and how to prepare them. Activities like scavenger hunts for different foods were held for kids as well while parents shopped for produce at the markets.

In addition to the farmers markets, market events were held at libraries, schools, and other public locations in the neighborhood. Flyers and signs were created and translated into Spanish to increase turnouts, and these events often included a teaching component where children learned about healthy foods, information on WIC benefits was shared, and other educational material were distributed. Flyers were distributed on a regular basis to remind people about these events throughout the course of the summer. For regular customers, requesting information to be able to send text reminders could improve turnout in future markets.

MyWhy also built partnerships with several schools during the intervention. Cincinnati Tech Academy and Oyster school held afterschool markets, Power of Produce classes, and gave class credit for working with local gardens, after which they donated 300 pounds of produce to the senior center and other local organizations. Next year, Tech Academy students will be assisting at the markets for course credit.

93% of market customers provided survey feedback. Intentional face-to-face interactions at the markets and exchanging completed surveys with \$5 coupons to market items helped engage customers to provide feedback. Having QR codes for online surveys as well as paper surveys were beneficial, and many who were hesitant to fill them out were happy to do so when someone read the questions to them. Children also fill out surveys before and after the Power of Produce classes.

9. Learnings:

Surveys showed that 50% of non-Hispanic families and 75% of Hispanic families run out of food by end of month. Individuals want to feel empowered and autonomous to choose and purchase quality food to meet individual needs. Many indicated that better access, lower cost, and more education on how to use produce was more desirable and more effective than free hand-outs in obtaining healthier food. Some considered it insulting that organizations or institutions think they want or need free food (e.g. so many food pantries), when in reality they want to pay for affordable and quality food

As demographics of neighborhoods change, preferences on variety and quality of food need to be considered as seen in differences between the West End with less diverse, less transient people and Price Hill with refugee communities and more people with multicultural backgrounds.

Feedback regarding the markets were overall very positive based on location, variety and quality of produce, and price point. At every market, customers would request and suggest having more frequent markets as well as markets in other locations in various neighborhoods.

57% of sales at the markets were from transactions using government benefits. With government agencies capping number of benefits within neighborhoods like with SNAP and EDT, competition exists among entities that accept these benefits. Being able to coordinate locations and hours of operations (e.g. holiday hours) can help to ensure these benefits meet neighborhood food needs effectively. Many Hispanic families did not use any government benefits, so the discount from surveys was especially meaningful for them.

Market attendees were often multigenerational, with kids attending with parents and grandparents. Neighborhood farmers markets are accessible and enjoyable for kids but are not as accessible to the elderly population. Transportation and carrying heavy produce often created barriers for seniors.

There's a large supply of fresh produce from local farms, but a key barrier in distribution is the personnel resources needed to harvest and distribute to communities.

Community connectedness is key to the success of these farmers markets and pop-ups. Emotionally connecting to individuals leads to them returning to events and inviting others to join.



**1. Brief Background:**

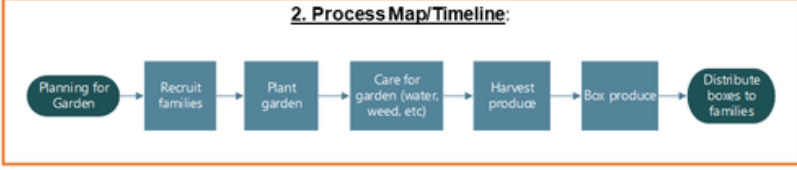
**Partnership Organization:**  
 Mona Jenkins | Queen Mother's Market | [monajenkins@queenmothersmarket.com](mailto:monajenkins@queenmothersmarket.com)  
 Mission: Queen Mother's Market (QMM) is a black, women-led grocery cooperative in Walnut Hills that provides access to healthy, affordable foods

**Intervention description:**  
 Increase access to fresh and healthy food through establishing a community garden at 832 Lexington Ave., provide hands-on experience in gardening, and offer education related to nutrition, healthy meal planning, and food security.

**Scope:**  
 Neighborhood: South Avondale  
 Timeframe: June 4 through September 30, 2022.  
 Grant Amount: \$20,000

**4. Aim / Goal / Community Impact:**

Provide weekly produce boxes to 50 families.

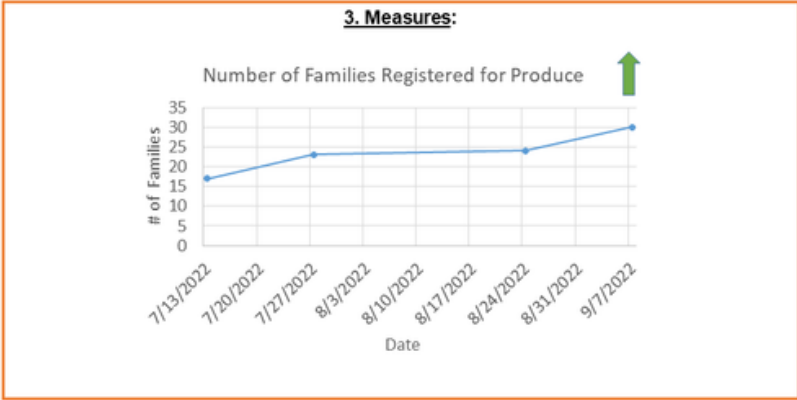


**5. Key Learnings:**

Avondale families need to travel to Norwood or neighboring communities to get to a grocery store. Quality and accessibility of produce is important to families in the community, especially those with small children.

There is high interest and engagement in the community garden that brings neighbors together. This public space could provide opportunity for children and adults of all ages to interact and harvest together, providing youth a positive growth activity/opportunity and improving adults' opinions and perceptions about youth.

Systemic barriers provided obstacles throughout the intervention. While food security is a key focus area in improving children's health in the community, other social determinants of health are interrelated and need to be addressed holistically.



**6. Results:**

As of September 9, about 30 families obtained boxes of fresh produce from the garden.

Towards the end of the intervention period, efforts were shifted from recruiting families to strengthening the relationships with registered families and community partners to understand their changing food needs with back-to-school and other seasonal changes.



**8. Observations:**

Families who have received produce have commented on the high quality and taste of the produce. Participants also commented on the ease of access in walking to the garden compared to taking multiple buses to get to a grocery store. Some new items were tested in the boxes (e.g. kale) to see if families like certain produce over others.

There was a lot more community involvement with the garden than originally anticipated, and many had voiced interest in starting their own garden. The community also had an opportunity to harvest produce to take home. This allowed for multi-generational interactions among community neighbors as they learned and taught one another to harvest produce. Neighbors had also noticed a decrease in vandalism in the neighborhood.

Intervention information was shared at Avondale community council meetings and through others in the community to increase number of registered families. There were other potential partnerships such as with the local church for educational elements of the garden and with Groundworks, an outreach in Bond Hill to train youth on non-traditional employment avenues like urban agriculture.

Social issues in the neighborhood created some barriers to this intervention. There were noticeable decreases in community engagement with the garden when gun violence and SWAT presence due to a domestic incident took place. In one incident, a neighborhood child broke into the garden to steal food to eat. Resources were provided for the child's household to obtain boxes of shelf-stable food, and an idea to set up a box outside the garden for people to take food as needed was considered. Despite these obstacles, the community was still supportive of the garden.

Attendance on some garden days and pick-ups were impacted by rain, at which times produce boxes were delivered to families. On weeks where there was high produce yield from the garden, families obtained 2 boxes instead of one.

Towards the end of the intervention period, efforts were shifted from recruiting families to strengthening the relationships with registered families and community partners to understand what their food needs look like as the season changed, kids were going back to school, and scheduling conflicts arose. Considerations were also made on which crops to plant.

**9. Learnings:**

Avondale families need to travel to Norwood or neighboring communities to get to a grocery store. Quality and accessibility of produce is important to families in the community, especially those with small children.

There is high interest and engagement in the community garden that brings neighbors together. This public space could provide opportunity for children and adults of all ages to interact and harvest together, providing youth a positive growth activity/opportunity and improving adults' opinions and perceptions about youth.

Systemic barriers provided obstacles throughout the intervention. While food security is a key focus area in improving children's health in the community, other social determinants of health are interrelated and also need to be addressed as a whole.





## SAFE Summer Food Pop-ups







## Last Mile Market





# Food Distribution with Cincinnati Public Schools





# Neighborhood Canvassing



# Shark Tank Sharing Session

