

GROW AND GIVE PROGRAM STATEWIDE EVALUATION

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Grow & Give (G&G) is an Extension program that provides gardeners a conduit to easily donate produce and works statewide to improve food security and access to homegrown fruits and vegetables. The goal of the program is to connect gardeners with organizations, pantries, and neighbors to improve local food systems and support the community interconnectedness.

INTERSHIP GOALS

- Evaluate and strengthen G&G community engagement to improve the program's evaluation and marketing tools and cultivate community and relationships with community hunger relief organizations (HROs)
- Communicate with HROs to develop efficient communication channels
- Conduct a program evaluation on the impact of G&G on HROs and develop more effective and standardized data collection tools

HOW THIS APPLIES TO MY EDUCATION

- The internship goals are related to my research interests in environmental sociology, hyperlocal food systems, environmental justice, resource distribution, and sustainability.
- I plan to pursue an applied career, thus I benefitted from networking with organizations and professionals from all over the state.
- This was an opportunity to develop and apply program evaluation research methods and evaluate a statewide program that has direct public health outcomes and impacts on hyperlocal food systems.



WHAT I DID

- Engaged with stakeholders from four counties and collected primary program evaluation data
- Conducted 14 interviews with HROs, food pantries, and growers from 5 counties in Colorado
- Conducted a program evaluation focused on communication channels between G&G and the organizations and program engagement
- Developed an interview guide and two surveys to collect standardized program evaluation data
- Prepared and presented a final report with recommendations for G&G leaders to continue working closely with HROs and how to better address the needs and recommendations of HROs revealed through the interview process.

WHAT I LEARNED

- The importance of having fluid, efficient, and well-developed communication channels for Extension programs
- The importance of standardized data that allows for better analysis and implementation of program's improvements
- The role of Extension, individual growers, and a variety of pantries and organizations in the hyperlocal food systems
- The local links between food insecurity, sustainability, and nutrition
- How to develop standardized data collection tools for program evaluation

NEXT STEPS

Recommendations based on data collected during internship:

Flyers for HRO front desks

Meeting with growers

Send a monthly newsletter to HROs

Emails and notifications on donations

Signs and stickers for HROs

Training for staff/volunteers (and classes)

Social media engagement (templates)

Provide resources for growing and storage food in diverse environments