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Advancing Childhood Food Security through Organizing Strategies

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Overview

Problem Statement

In the United States, food insecurity affected 14.7 percent of US households in 2009, including 17 million children.[1] In keeping with national trends, hunger and poverty have increased in Texas. More than 1.8 million Texas children are at risk of food insecurity.[1] This is more than 1 in 4 Texas children—the fifth highest percentage in the country. However, unlike other challenges associated with poverty, childhood food insecurity can be solved, and the necessary resources already exist to do so. The Texas Hunger Initiative in the Baylor University School of Social Work is a capacity-building project that seeks to develop and implement strategies to end childhood food insecurity through public-private collaboration, policy, education, research, and community organizing. This paper presents community organizing strategies being used by the Texas Hunger Initiative to organize policy makers and local community leaders, all in the effort to alleviate childhood food insecurity.

To begin, an explanation of the distinction between hunger and food insecurity is necessary. Food security is defined by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)[2] as people having access at all times to "enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum: (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (e.g., without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies)."[3,4] Likewise, food insecurity is "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways."[2] Hunger is defined as the uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The distinction comes in that food insecurity can be more easily measured and accounted for, whereas no standard measure has been developed to capture the feeling or sensation of hunger. Hunger is a potential, although not necessary, consequence of food insecurity and is a common description of the experience of food insecurity, but it is not standardized in its usage. For this reason, the USDA has adopted the use of the terms food security and food insecurity.

In recent years, food security has become more standardized through the work of the Committee on National Statistics of the National Academies and by Wunderlich and Norwood's expanded definitions of food security and insecurity as presented in Table 1.[4]

Table 1. Categories of Food Security & Insecurity[2]

General categories	Detailed categories		
	Old label	**New label**	**Description of conditions in the household**
Food security	Food security	High food security	No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.
		Marginal food security	One or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
Food insecurity	Food insecurity without hunger	Low food security	Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.
	Food insecurity with hunger	Very low food security	Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics conducts a monthly Current Population Survey, and the December 2010 food security supplement gives the following characteristics of food insecurity. Among food insecure households with children:

- 99% reported having worried that their food would run out before they got money to buy more;
- 96% reported that the food they bought just did not last and that they did not have money to get more;
- 94% reported that they could not afford to eat balanced meals;
- 96% reported that an adult had cut the size of meals or skipped meals because there was not enough money for food;
- 88% reported that this had occurred in 3 or more months;
- 95% of respondents reported that they had eaten less than they felt they should because there was not enough money for food.[5]

So how does one address these experiences of food insecurity, particularly among children? Childhood food insecurity is preventable in the United States, and there are a variety of formal and informal means of addressing the issue. The federally funded nutrition assistance infrastructure provides a formal mechanism: nutrition assistance programs provide the first line of defense against child food insecurity.[6] Feeding America's *Child Food Insecurity* report documented this account of these efforts:

Good nutrition is just like a good antibiotic or vaccine in preventing illness. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP (formerly the Food Stamp Program), WIC, the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program, TEFAP and other public nutrition assistance programs are good medicine, but the dose is often not strong enough and the prescription is not for a long enough time period. Many families cannot overcome barriers to access these services which are crucial for health.[6(p2)]

Formal Mechanisms to Address Childhood Food Insecurity
Policy proposals that strengthen the National School Breakfast Program, procedures that streamline Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program renewal applications, or approvals that increase access to summer meal sites need to be undertaken. Connecting the dots between volunteers and civil servants committed to addressing food insecurity, the systems in place to produce and distribute food, and the millions of people in need is the heart of the challenge. This paper presents the organizing strategies developed by the project of a multisectoral partnership in one state.

Informal Mechanisms to Address Childhood Food Insecurity
On the informal side, private food assistance programs prevent children from falling through the cracks by complementing and supporting the public nutrition infrastructure—local networks and service providers make up the difference in dose required and duration needed to cure the serious health problem of childhood food insecurity. Again, Feeding America has this to say about these efforts, "Working together, in mutually supportive partnership, the national public and private food assistance systems can prevent and eradicate the unnecessary health problem of childhood hunger, if we the people choose to do so."[6(p2)]
The matter of America "choosing to do so" is a matter of organizing these various approaches to working together so that resources can be utilized more effectively and more efficiently. There are plenty of opportunities to work for change, and a discussion of community

organization strategies will provide a better understanding of how Texas Hunger Initiative is "choosing to do so."

The Work of the Texas Hunger Initiative

Childhood food insecurity cannot be solved at one systemic level alone. Childhood food insecurity is a logistical problem that requires all sectors to cooperate and coordinate services. It is inherently a political problem that needs to be addressed by our elected officials in Washington and Austin. It is a bureaucratic problem that needs to be addressed by federal and state agencies. Childhood food insecurity is also a problem that can be impacted by faith communities on the local level. It is a financial problem that will require corporate support. Childhood food insecurity is an advocacy problem and a capacity problem. Childhood food insecurity exists in the United States for a variety of reasons affected by a variety of institutions perpetuated by a variety of sectors of society. Therefore, to deal with childhood food insecurity adequately, it must be addressed on every level of government, including the federal, state, and local levels, as well as taken up by all private sectors, including nonprofit, faith-based, and corporate.

Texas Hunger Initiative uses this multisectoral model to engage in community organizing for the purposes of alleviating childhood food insecurity in one state. Texas Hunger Initiative considers the multiple systemic levels that are involved in perpetuating childhood food insecurity and utilizes organizing strategies focused on policy makers and local communities to achieve its goals.

The Problem

At the onset of Texas Hunger Initiative's conception, 3 primary reasons for childhood food insecurity were identified. The first was the absence of infrastructure to promote public and private collaborations. The federal government and state government each have infrastructure, as do the nonprofit and corporate sectors; however, there is no infrastructure to bring all of these entities together to address food insecurity. Thus, there are wide gaps in service in some areas and duplication of service in other areas. This lack of infrastructure also means that there is no accountability for how resources are used or comprehensive measures to determine if they are truly effective. Without infrastructure, no one entity, organization, or agency is *responsible* for food security. The result is that 17 million children in America are food insecure.[1] The tragedy becomes more profound with the realization that there are adequate resources already allocated to address this issue. In 2010, there were approximately $90

billion of public and private funds allocated or available to address the issue of domestic food insecurity. However, without cross-sector infrastructure, only 59% of households that were food insecure participated in a federal food and nutrition program, so the allocated resources were greatly underutilized.[7] This perpetuated widespread food insecurity.

The second reason for childhood food insecurity is a lack of plans to scale. This nation has learned to address macro problems with varying levels of success. This past decade has forced the nation to address terrorism, economic meltdown, and major natural disasters. When these problems arise, the brightest minds from universities, think tanks, corporations, and government are enlisted to address the issue. Unfortunately, hunger and poverty have simply never garnered adequate attention. In fact, issues of food insecurity are typically only heard about in relation to the denigration of public support given to those in need of it. As a result, plans to address the large scale of need have not been developed. Most responses are limited to particular expressions and are thus not scalable. Therefore, they are unable to address the problem of food insecurity in its totality.

The third reason childhood food insecurity exists is a lack of collaboration between the entities already committed to working in the area of food insecurity. By no means is this the intended outcome for these groups but rather an indirect, logistical consequence. Most community-based organizations are busy administering programs for those who are food insecure and thus do not have the luxury of time to address the system in place. Furthermore, who among them has the power to convene all of the entities? The federal and state governments are the entities that can effectively play the role of convener; however, due to political constraints, leading in this area is limited and not prioritized. Therefore, when these sectors do convene, their coming together is often met with frustration and a lack of clear direction.

The Response of Texas Hunger Initiative

The process of choosing the subject to address can be as important as the process of actually working together. When considering the scope of issues surrounding poverty, hunger is a rare arena that has traditionally seen bipartisan political support, corporate support, and involvement of the faith community. This is why Baylor University and the Baptist General Convention of Texas came together to take on hunger. Each group believed that hunger could be a starting place for conversations on other poverty issues in the future. Organizing around hunger can serve as the

impetus our nation needs to continue the difficult task of eradicating poverty.

Deciding to address the issue of hunger, the Baptist General Convention of Texas partnered with Baylor University to create Texas Hunger Initiative as a capacity-building, collaborative project. Texas Hunger Initiative was created to establish multisectoral collaborations to improve outreach, community organizing, advocacy, and service coordination among federal, state, and local communities to serve children at risk of hunger more effectively. Texas Hunger Initiative states in its core values that faith-based communities, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies must partner together in order to alleviate poverty and hunger. Acting on this value, Texas Hunger Initiative helps foster partnerships within communities to raise awareness about hunger and nutrition, advocate for policy change, and help create effective service delivery.

Texas Hunger Initiative is attempting to address the problems above to move Texas toward food security. It is important to note that this project is housed within a major university, not within a state agency or service provider. It is also not a natural convener of all of the sectors at play. For these reasons, Texas Hunger Initiative focuses on what it can do: researching and developing new methods of addressing a problem that has plagued Texas and the United States for too long. It is also important to note that Texas Hunger Initiative is a project in process, one that is still learning, strategizing, partnering, and developing. Texas Hunger Initiative has played the role of convener in Texas thanks to the willingness of federal and state agencies, the nonprofit and for-profit sectors, and the faith community. Though these entities have been willing to experiment with Texas Hunger Initiative to see if coordinated services can mean increased food security, particularly among children, the results are not yet conclusive. Basic examples of the work Texas Hunger Initiative has done are presented here, but more evidence will be gathered as Texas Hunger Initiative establishes its model across the state.

Texas Hunger Initiative is developing infrastructure for achieving food security for the state of Texas. This is achievable by creating a collaborative structure that functions through communication, education, and organization. Childhood food insecurity is both solvable and preventable—there is depth and breadth to the knowledge and expertise in the realm of hunger, food policy, and nutrition, as well as the impact of childhood food insecurity on poverty. Texas can become food secure through a dynamic pluralist approach—most people find it absurd that there are hungry children and families in Texas, as well as the nation.

Texas Hunger Initiative desires to be an impetus toward creating common ground that reaches across political and religious lines, where both conversation and action take place, and hopes to use its strategy of community organizing on all levels to accomplish this goal. Following is a detailed explanation of the primary organizing strategies used by Texas Hunger Initiative to work toward these goals.

Community Organizing for Texas Hunger Initiative

There are many approaches to bringing people together for change, each having unique potential depending on the matters at hand.[8] Models focus on social action for change through methods ranging from conflict[9] to consensus.[10] Hanna and Robinson[11] talk about the individual and collective values required in working to build support for social change. For Rubin and Rubin,[12] organizing includes processes of helping people understand their shared problems, encouraging them to join together in working for change, building on networks to create strong bonds, and building the capacity to bring about change.

The strategies Texas Hunger Initiative has employed are largely consensus-building and collaborative in nature, while firmly rooted in a commitment to lasting change. As an initial strategy, recognition of current strengths and needs in a community is seen as an essential element in organizing but so is attaining knowledge of past organizing efforts as well as establishing future goals.[13] Bankhead and Erlich[14] also suggest obtaining skills in participation and evaluation research; an asset-based assessment is helpful here as are plans that consider organizing outcomes. Capacity building is also key to the work of an organizer; enhancing the abilities of organizations that address food security allows them to achieve their desired results more effectively. Another essential strengths-based strategy is the ability to express a vision that inspires hope and the possibility for change.[14]

Texas Hunger Initiative utilizes each of these strategies but also engages in a unique organizing strategy: working across systems of change. Being strengths-based, research-oriented, capacity-building, and hope-focused are vital, but Texas Hunger Initiative's work hinges upon the ability to be multisectoral. Much organizing literature focuses on the organization of people living in poverty as they seek to engage people in power. Organizing people who face food insecurity is an important element of Texas Hunger Initiative's work, but this is not entirely Texas Hunger Initiative's role as privileged and powerful outsiders; people facing food insecurity also need to work with the food secure.[15] Recognizing their own power as organizers has led people living in poverty to work across

all branches of government as well as among the grassroots of local communities. The approach described as multisectoral includes working with the traditional for-profit and nonprofit, private and public entities as well as working with people who experience food security and insecurity. It includes local, state, and national organizations, and the narrative below highlights the results of Texas Hunger Initiative's first 2 years of organizing. This multisectoral strategy is central to Texas Hunger Initiative as it works for social change that advances food security by organizing local communities as well as policy makers.

Texas Hunger Initiative's work is based upon the presupposition that food insecurity is a solvable problem when all the stakeholders work together to develop solutions. This entails numerous groups, organizations, and individuals working though some mistrust that may have existed in the past. Texas Hunger Initiative has found the only way to do this is through the community organizing strategy of building trust.

This approach to organizing recognizes all entities as a part of the solution, acknowledging that it will take something from each entity to build a goal toward which the group can collectively work. This way of organizing contends that all parties involved must sit down together to discuss decisions all groups can support and establish how each participating member can contribute. Like every process, building trust can have its limitations; however, working on issues that the group has in common is crucial to the process of developing that trust.

The following sections detail Texas Hunger Initiative's approach to organizing—both on the policy and local levels. The initial efforts of Texas Hunger Initiative to organize policy makers and at the same time local leaders and people affected by food insecurity have helped make great strides in addressing the problems facing the State of Texas.

Organizing Policy Makers

The USDA administers 15 federal programs that contribute to reducing food insecurity. Texas receives 14 of these programs with an estimated allocation of $15 billion. Three state agencies are responsible for implementing the programs in Texas. The Texas Department of Agriculture receives federal funds to administer programs to fight childhood food insecurity (i.e., National School Lunch Program and Summer Food Programs), the Texas Health and Human Services Commission administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly know as the Food Stamp Program), and the Department of State Health Services administers the Women, Infants, and Children Program. From the beginning, it has been important to engage these federal and

state agencies in order to address food insecurity in Texas; however, before specifically addressing these needs, developing relationships with individuals within these agencies was a critical first step.

Shortly after Texas Hunger Initiative was developed, the USDA received a press release about the work of Texas Hunger Initiative and the organization's goals. The Southwest Regional Administrator of Food and Nutrition Services within the USDA hosted a meeting for Texas Hunger Initiative staff. The first meeting was met with openness and even excitement, and the request for information to develop a strategic plan was granted. The USDA Southwest Regional Administrator inquired about the organization's initial needs, and Texas Hunger Initiative responded that, aside from USDA data, it simply needed time. The Southwest Regional Administrator requested a follow-up meeting in 6 months to explore more in depth the Texas Hunger Initiative strategy. This amount of time seemed reasonable on the USDA's end to study long-term goals and solutions, and Texas Hunger Initiative began its planning.

It came somewhat as a surprise when the USDA Southwest Regional Administrator requested a follow-up meeting 1 month later after returning from Washington, DC, where his supervisor, our ambitious new President, instructed the USDA to develop a plan to end food insecurity. Several emerging policy partners attended the second meeting with Texas Hunger Initiative staff. Prior to that meeting, 1 of these partners wanted to address a poorly run USDA program, the smallest of the 14 nutrition programs for which Texas receives federal funding. This partner intended to let the USDA know, in a confrontational manner, that it needed to do a better job interpreting and implementing this program in Texas; however, the Texas Hunger Initiative staff felt there needed to be a different agenda. Texas Hunger Initiative did not want to take the USDA to task over one program but over all 14 programs. There also was not sufficient social capital to do this in the second meeting—Texas Hunger Initiative felt that it would not be wise to cash in its chips for the smallest of programs in Texas. Rather, the Texas Hunger Initiative's intent was to partner with the USDA to build a better, more comprehensive system. That is exactly what happened. Since that second meeting, the USDA's Southwest Regional Administrator has worked tirelessly with Texas Hunger Initiative to organize state agencies and local community outreach efforts to better serve families and children who are food insecure. He has essentially become the gatekeeper for Texas Hunger Initiative.

Moving forward, it became the combined intention of Texas Hunger Initiative and USDA to create a space for federal and state agencies to dialogue about ways to increase access to healthy food for Texans. The

only way to make Texas food secure is to hold public and private entities accountable for food insecurity in the State of Texas. As a result, the USDA and Texas Hunger Initiative convened what became known as the Texas Hunger State Operations Team.

The Texas Hunger State Operations Team is comprised of the USDA, OneStar Foundation, Texas Department of Agriculture, and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The collaboration of the Texas Hunger State Operations Team gives public food insecurity stakeholders the opportunity to change internal policies and solve internal problems as they arise. This will enable state agencies to administer federal food programs more efficiently and effectively. The primary goal of the Texas Hunger State Operations Team is to maximize public and private outreach efforts and enroll more eligible families in federal food programs under guidelines that already exist in federal and state law. The Texas Hunger State Operations Team has met as needed thus far to address limited participation in the Summer Food Programs and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In 2010, these meetings increased participation in the Summer Food Service Program by 2 million meals served to children and increased Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program participation by 700,000 individuals. The group also worked to develop ways to provide Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program accessibility at all Texas Department of Agriculture farmers' markets in Texas.

Another way Texas Hunger Initiative works to organize policy makers is through task forces. Beginning in late 2012, Texas Hunger Initiative will annually identify priority programs and create task forces to focus on improving nutrition program implementation. For example, during the first year, priorities include school breakfast and summer meal efforts, so Texas Hunger Initiative will convene task forces to address each program. Texas Hunger Initiative will form Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Women, Infants, and Children Program task forces in the second year. Each task force will include both public and private stakeholders within that particular program and will come together regularly to work on its particular issue. At least one Texas Hunger Initiative staff member, and possibly a USDA representative, will facilitate the task force meetings. Facilitators will structure task force conversations in a way that demonstrates Texas Hunger Initiative's key organizing strategies: limiting focus to agreed-upon tasks, building infrastructure to address the problems, and working across public and private sectors to address food insecurity.

Organizing Local Communities

Texas Hunger Initiative's vehicle for organizing communities throughout the state is called Food Planning Associations. Food Planning Associations are committees of organizations and individuals in a locality (city, county, or region) committed to making their community food secure. Food Planning Associations are composed of government and civic leaders, food security stakeholders, corporate representatives, people experiencing food insecurity, and volunteers from the community. Texas Hunger Initiative relies on Food Planning Associations to work on the local level in communities, assessing the structure and procedures of food delivery systems, identifying resources and gaps, making decisions for change, and implementing their action plans in order to provide healthy and nutritious food to an increased number of people. Currently, Food Planning Associations are operating in Tom Green and McLennan Counties. The communities of Austin, Dallas, Lockhart, and Midland are currently in the process of developing Food Planning Associations.

Texas Hunger Initiative has established a set of expectations for Food Planning Associations in order to receive Texas Hunger Initiative support. Food Planning Associations are asked to stay linked to Texas Hunger Initiative and to the Texas Hunger State Operations Team in order to address the entire system and not just individual aspects of food insecurity. Food Planning Associations must also collaborate with those working in the area of food insecurity to organize the process of addressing the issue, train others to organize in their own communities, and partner with Texas Hunger Initiative to raise funds to support the operating costs of the Food Planning Association. Another important requirement of Food Planning Associations is that they must include in the decision-making process people who are living with food insecurity. This allows the community's input and helps ensure that the Food Planning Association does not develop a plan that makes sense on paper but would not be applicable to the people who need it most.

A detailed structure has been outlined for Food Planning Associations. First, associations have 2 co-chairs. One of these chairs should be an elected official; the other should be a food bank director or local anti-hunger champion. The co-chairs work to gather community members and leaders and offer support to the grassroots organizers and volunteers. These leaders provide presence, stability, and support for those actively leading the Food Planning Association.

Each Food Planning Association also has a steering committee comprised of 6 to 8 members. This steering committee includes key leaders in the community food system, such as nonprofit leaders, major

food pantry leaders, school food service, and business leaders. This is the first committee formed, and it meets monthly or bimonthly in order to assess and plan for its particular Food Planning Association. The steering committee makes the decisions on how the Food Planning Association will move forward.

Working alongside the steering committee will be several task committees of 8 to 12 members each. The Food Planning Associations' task committees, different from the task forces within the Texas Hunger State Operations Team, help make decisions, bring vital information to the table, and help coordinate efforts in specific areas of their community. Task committees are made up of community experts who have specialized knowledge in certain areas or aspects of food insecurity, as well as community members directly affected by food insecurity who want to be an active voice on behalf of their community.

Food Planning Associations comprise a diverse group of local individuals. Along with elected officials and food bank directors/anti-hunger champions who co-chair, Food Planning Associations should include other key food bank staff and community members living with food insecurity. Food Planning Associations should also include leaders involved in areas of the food system such as grocery store chains, farmers markets and local farm associations, school food service, free and reduced lunches, summer meals, Meals on Wheels, food pantries, nutritionists, senior nutrition program centers, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Women, Infants, and Children Program, local restaurant associations, and community gardens. It is also important to include community leaders from the municipal government (e.g., municipal court and recreation services), school district, county extension service, and hospitals as well as physicians, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, and congregational leaders.

Finally, Texas Hunger Initiative remains in partnership with Food Planning Associations by placing field organizers in communities with Food Planning Associations. These people are responsible for helping develop Food Planning Associations by coordinating and facilitating the steering and task committee meetings, identifying and developing relationships with key leaders in their assigned community, and completing logistical and administrative tasks for their Food Planning Association. Currently, Texas Hunger Initiative has placed field organizers in McLennan County, Dallas, and Austin. Additionally, Texas Hunger Initiative was able to place three AmeriCorps VISTAs in McLennan County and two VISTAs in San Angelo for a summer to support and expand their local summer meals outreach. Moreover, Texas Hunger Initiative is

serving as a facilitator between Food Planning Associations and the Texas Hunger State Operations Team. This allows Food Planning Associations to approach any state-level barriers that affect communities locally.

Texas Hunger Initiative also created a community assessment toolkit, whereby communities can evaluate and understand the needs and, most importantly, the assets and resources within their areas that can increase the number of food secure individuals. Texas Hunger Initiative is currently conducting community assessments in Val Verde, Caldwell, and McLennan Counties, and other communities are beginning the process as well. By completing this assessment, communities will understand the accessibility, production, and effectiveness of their resources. This frontline, exploratory research allows communities to be well informed and actively begin processing, partnering, and identifying stakeholders. As Food Planning Associations create partnerships between people who may not normally work together, communities are able to take a multi-perspective, holistic approach to community change. Some of these priorities include expanding the Summer Food Service Program, the effective implementation of Universal Breakfast in the Classroom, as well as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program outreach.

Evidence of Local Success

Though the Food Planning Association model is in the early stages of implementation, it has already proven to be successful. For example, the Food Planning Association in Tom Green County brought together leaders from numerous local congregations from across denominations, as well as local elected officials, representatives from the school district, and other nonprofit leaders to organize around the Summer Food Service Program in San Angelo, Texas. This group met regularly over the course of a year in order to strategically and creatively plan ways to increase the participation in the program and went from serving 1,000 meals in the summer of 2009 to serving 25,000 meals during the summer of 2010.

The Texas Hunger Initiative wants to ensure that its Food Planning Associations will work in communities of all sizes. While its success in the midsized community of San Angelo, population of approximately 93,000, is evident, it does not guarantee success in larger, metropolitan areas.

However, recent work in Dallas, Texas, with a population of approximately 1.2 million, has shown the potential for this model to succeed in communities with much greater population. In Dallas, the Texas Hunger Initiative partnered with Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson, the city's mayor, and several large, local nonprofits to host a hunger summit. This summit was used to raise awareness and gauge

interest in moving forward with Food Planning Association work in Dallas. Approximately 200 people attended the summit and represented a vast array of groups. Faith-based groups, nonprofits, businesses, and concerned citizens all attended the meeting. This hunger summit was significant as it brought together constituent groups that had not previously collaborated on hunger issues. Out of this summit grew a core group that now represents the Dallas Food Planning Association. This group is still in the exploratory stages but has been meeting consistently. The collaboration that has already taken place simply through the Food Planning Association's first few meetings is significant and points toward the power of gathering groups around the same table. The early synergy in Tom Green County and of the Dallas Food Planning Association points to a promising future for the Texas Hunger Initiative's Food Planning Association model in communities of all sizes.

Walking alongside and educating communities throughout the process are pivotal steps in tasking communities to work toward food security in their areas. At the local level, Texas Hunger Initiative builds rapport in communities by assuming the specific role of a resource. Partnerships with local Food Planning Associations allow Texas Hunger Initiative to be both a support and a resource for communities.

Conclusion

Texas Hunger Initiative is excited about what it has been able to achieve thus far. Texas Hunger Initiative has had its missteps and false starts, but its strategy has led to unique consensus-building and collaborative activities around the state.

The Texas Hunger Initiative is a young project with great ambitions, and its multisectoral strategy for organizing sets it apart from other organizations. Many organizations organize people who are food insecure, while others do so while also administering direct services. Some organizations focus on the power of the food secure, as lobbyists and traditional anti-hunger advocates are effective in changing social policies to promote food security. Texas Hunger Initiative's approach is unique in that it organizes all of the above sectors and brings this diverse constituency together across lines of experience and power to enhance the ability of each group to address food insecurity more effectively.

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