Revisiting Strategies to Improve Access and Education Resources to Increase Healthy Lifestyle Change in Underserved Communities

A Pilot Initiative Developed by
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Premise for the Project

• The problem of Obesity has been a public health concern for many years, surfacing as a major focus of efforts to combat this disease in 2006 with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy Schools program. Four years later, the “Let’s Move” initiative was launched, under the leadership of First Lady Michelle Obama to help promote physical activity and eliminate obesity.
Premise for the Project

• Within each of these initiatives, a focus on families and communities was implemented, with the understanding that health begins at home. The source of obesity and chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol stems from not only the lack of exercise, but the absence of healthy food choices, which leads to unhealthy eating habits.
Premise for the Project

• In Chicago, many efforts have been implemented to target the problem of food desserts in underserved areas, where access to healthy food choices is scarce. More recently, a partnership was established in the Englewood community and Whole Foods with the opening of a neighborhood store, which also provided jobs for members of the community.
The Problem

• While this serves as a step in the right direction, there remains the issue of affordability, especially as it relates to produce. So, the question becomes, how do we bridge this gap that continues to hinder the progress of efforts to reduce and eliminate obesity and chronic illness? This is where the idea for the Link Project was birthed.
The Problem

- In a community publication written by Marcie Hill, it was noted that perceptions of Whole Foods pricing serve as a barrier to accessing fresh produce. The article also mentioned that while there are also corner stores and mini markets in the community, they provided either limited or no access at all to produce.
The LINK Project

This project will serve as the pilot for the launch of the LINK Center initiative. The goals of this project are to:

• Connect residents with access to resources that will:
  • Connect them to affordable food choices that are healthy, by forming partnerships with grocers and farmers who believe in investing in the health and wellbeing of the communities in which they do business.
  • Educate community residents on options that can help them to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles and eating habits, without compromising quality and taste.
The Plan

I have personally developed the proposal and plan for this initiative, which include the establishment of partnerships within communities who have a vested interest in seeing change in the health of its families.

Outreach and requests to partner with eligible communities, individuals and organizations has already begun, and will continue until the end of October. The goal is to send invitations out for the first meeting, which will take place in January of 2018 by December 2017.
The Plan

Additionally, I would like to expand the scope of the project, to include other states, with communities who are experiencing similar issues. Considering that the focus of this summit was aimed at efforts to target obesity concerns in the southern states, should there be a state that would like to serve as the pilot, it is certainly feasible.
References


2. The Alliance for a Healthier Generation
   https://www.clintonfoundation.org/our-work/alliance-healthier-generation

3. Let’s Move!
   https://letsmove.obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/