



RESEARCH REPORT

Exploring Teen Food Insecurity in Portland, Oregon

Designing a Pilot Teen Food Program

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Executive Summary

Food insecurity can strain teens' growth and future success, leading some to make risky decisions when facing a lack of options. Teens have reported that services like food pantries and school lunch programs do not fully meet their needs because of real or perceived barriers to access or concerns about stigma.

A community near Portland, Oregon, set out to tackle this challenge by engaging teens in their community through teen-led and teen-informed programs. A collaboration between teens, service providers, and researchers designed and piloted a program to improve young people's access to food in New Columbia. In this mixed-income housing community, over 70 percent of respondents reported experiencing food insecurity in 2012, compared with only about 15 percent of households in the United States.

This nearly three-year effort aimed to design and launch a teen-centered, teen-informed food program that would increase teens' access to food, reduce the stigma associated with using food assistance, and, ultimately, reduce risky behavior as a response to food insecurity. We also determined ways that service providers can work directly with low-income teens to improve their understanding of the food system and their access to food programs.

The Urban Institute's ongoing partnership with Feeding America, with funding from the ConAgra Brands Foundation, allowed us to partner with Home Forward (the housing authority of Portland and Multnomah County, Oregon), the Oregon Food Bank, and Food Works—a local teen employment and leadership program—to work closely with teens in the New Columbia community.

Project Phases

The project involved two phases, each spanning approximately one year. The first focused on planning and program design, with Urban playing a convening and technical assistance role, and the second centered on launching the pilot program.

The availability of a core group of local organizations willing to participate in the effort, including a forward-thinking housing authority willing to host the project and well-established local service providers and staff, was key to launching the teen food project.

Teen participation was also crucial to this effort. We convened a board of local teens who participated in a series of facilitated discussions to explore the causes of, and potential solutions to, teen food insecurity. We aimed to give teens a voice in the program design process and to serve as “idea incubators,” allowing them to safely explore how their community experienced food insecurity.

During the second phase, which ended in early 2017, the Portland partners enlisted teen participants, hired a part-time program manager, launched a monthly fresh food distribution known as the New Columbia Harvest Share, and piloted a teen food literacy course to educate and empower teens in the New Columbia Community. The curriculum and facilitator’s guide for the course, known as the Teen Food Literacy Program (TFLP), is provided as a companion document to this report (Lipman and Thompson 2017).

Throughout both phases, about a dozen teens participated in the Youth Community Advisory Board (YCAB), 11 completed the first food literacy program, 668 households received food from at least one Harvest Share, and dozens more volunteered at the monthly Harvest Shares. Three teens have stepped into leadership roles, coordinating sets of about 10 to 15 adolescents and teens who volunteered at each Harvest Share. The teen participants also organized a “Teen Summit” community event in spring 2017 that convened local teens and teen-serving organizations to strengthen their relationships and spread awareness of their work.

Looking Ahead

The work under way in New Columbia aims to strengthen the connections between teens and the organizations that can support them. We hope to improve how teens view and access food assistance and to make providers more aware of teens’ specific needs and preferences. The work is new and continues to evolve, but we hope that some of the early lessons are useful to other organizations interested in developing and testing locally relevant programs to help low-income teens experiencing food insecurity. The **recommendations for implementing similar services focus on three key aspects of the Portland work: getting started, launching services, and working with teens.** Some of these lessons include

- communicating consistently and transparently with teens and organizational partners throughout the process;
- adjusting programs and curricula to appropriate age groups and community context; and

- maintaining consistent program staff.

Going forward, the Portland partners plan to offer the food literacy program annually to new cohorts of teens, create a pipeline of young community leaders to act as resources for their peers on issues related to food insecurity, and help coordinate the ongoing Harvest Shares. The Harvest Share and food literacy program will be launch pads for other food-related events or programs. The services developed in Portland draw directly from insights gathered from teens in the design phase, and they rely on ongoing teen participation.

These programs alone will not end teen food insecurity in New Columbia. The roots of this issue are embedded in structural problems of poverty, an inadequate safety net for teens and their families, and a lack of stable jobs with wages high enough to support families' basic needs. But we hope that improving how service providers engage with one another and with teens can help minimize the impacts of food insecurity on young people. Equipping teens with more knowledge about their food environment could empower them to take a leadership role in advocating for better solutions.

Introduction

This report describes an approximately three-year collaboration by a group of teens, service providers, and researchers to design and pilot a program to improve young people's access to food in the New Columbia community in Portland, Oregon. We discuss the origins and launch of the Portland teen food work and provide guidance to inform similar efforts in other communities.

This project is part of a larger body of work started in 2013 through the Urban Institute's Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST) demonstration project in the three public housing communities. See box 1 for an overview of the origins of the Urban Institute teen food insecurity work.

Our partnership with Feeding America, with funding from the ConAgra Brands Foundation, allowed us to partner with the Home Forward housing authority, the Oregon Food Bank, and Food Works, a local teen employment and leadership program. Together, we worked closely with teens in a Home Forward mixed-income housing community to design and launch a teen-centered, teen-informed food program. The objectives of the effort were to increase teens' access to food, reduce the stigma associated with using food assistance and, ultimately, to reduce risky behavior as a response to food insecurity. We use the US Department of Agriculture's definition of food insecurity as limited or uncertain access to adequate food; this can range from having anxiety about having enough food at home to having poor quality or variety of food available to not having enough to eat.¹

An additional goal, and the purpose of this report, was to demonstrate ways that local service providers can work with low-income teens to improve their understanding of the food system and their access to food programs.

Urban brought a deliberate community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach to the project. This approach strives to improve the balance of researcher, service provider, and community members' input into research and program development work. As described by Hartwig, Calleson, and Williams (2006), "The intent in [community-based participatory research] is to transform research from a relationship where researchers act upon a community to answer a research question to one where researchers work side by side with community members to define the questions and methods, implement the research, disseminate the findings and apply them." The Youth Community Advisory Board (YCAB) and the deliberate planning process were intended to provide that opportunity to New Columbia teens.

BOX 1

Behind This Report

Work around teens and hunger emerged from the Urban Institute's work on the Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST) demonstration project, which explores the potential for using housing as a platform for providing intensive, whole-family services to stabilize vulnerable families (see Popkin and McDaniel 2013 for an overview of HOST). We knew from a survey we conducted in the three HOST sites (Portland, OR; Chicago, IL; and Washington, DC) that rates of food insecurity were very high and rates of employment rates were very low (Scott et al. 2013). But we also knew that these families received housing subsidies so were stably housed, and most also received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits. However, our work in our DC HOST site raised our awareness about the kinds of risky behaviors teens might be resorting to cope with food insecurity.

The Urban Institute research team connected with the research team at Feeding America, the nationwide network of food banks. With support from the ConAgra Foundation, Feeding America agreed to partner with the Urban team to explore three key questions: How do teens experience food insecurity in their families and communities? What coping strategies, including risky behavior, do they use? And, what are the barriers to teen participation in food assistance programs?

In 2014, Urban researchers held six focus groups in the three HOST sites and heard that even these stably housed teens were painfully familiar with what it meant to not have enough food for themselves and their families. The teens spoke about the stigma of being food insecure, about feeling the weight of adult worries and responsibilities, and about teens' unhealthy coping mechanisms when faced with food insecurity. In 2015, we expanded our work to seven additional communities nationwide, and, with support from the Ford Foundation, our findings were presented in *Impossible Choices: Teens and Food Insecurity in America* (Popkin, Scott, and Galvez 2016) and in *Bringing Teens to the Table: A Focus on Food Insecurity in America* (Waxman, Popkin, and Galvez 2016). An online feature presents the two reports alongside a video highlighting the Portland work.^a

Impossible Choices reveals how food insecurity affects teens. Youth across the 10 communities painted a disturbing picture of how food insecurity may threaten their well-being. The teens discussed stigma and the weight of adult worries and responsibilities. They also talked about how food insecurity can drive teens to desperate choices—skipping meals, working under the table, and in some cases dealing drugs or engaging in exploitative sexual relationships.

Bringing Teens to the Table examines how teens' insights can inform improvements in federal nutrition and charitable feeding programs and strategies to generate youth employment opportunities. Their stories highlight the ways current strategies fail to address teen food insecurity and reveal the pressures families face, teen coping strategies, and teens' feelings of embarrassment, stigma, and isolation.

^a Martha M. Galvez, Micaela Lipman, Susan J. Popkin, Priya Saxena, Molly M. Scott, and Elaine Waxman, "Impossible Choices," Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2016, <http://apps.urban.org/features/food-insecurity/>.

The Portland project involved two phases of work, which took place in tandem with ongoing qualitative research conducted with teens in a set of low-income communities nationwide (figure 1). The first phase was dedicated to planning and program design, with Urban playing a convening and technical assistance role, and the second phase focused on launching the pilot program. Each phase spanned approximately one year. By the end of the second phase, the Portland partners had successfully enlisted teen participants, hired a part-time program manager, launched a monthly fresh food distribution known as the New Columbia Harvest Share, and piloted a teen food literacy course intended to educate and empower teens in the New Columbia community. The curriculum and facilitator's guide for the course, known as the Teen Food Literacy Program (TFLP),² is provided as a companion document to this report (Lipman and Thompson 2017).

Since the launch of the New Columbia pilot, about a dozen teens have participated in the YCAB, a group of 11 teens completed the first TFLP cohort, and 668 unique households received food from at least one Harvest Share. Three teens stepped into leadership roles coordinating sets of about 10 to 15 teen volunteers at each monthly Harvest Share. The TFLP participants also organized a "Teen Summit" community event that convened local teens and teen-serving organizations to strengthen their relationships and spread awareness of their work.

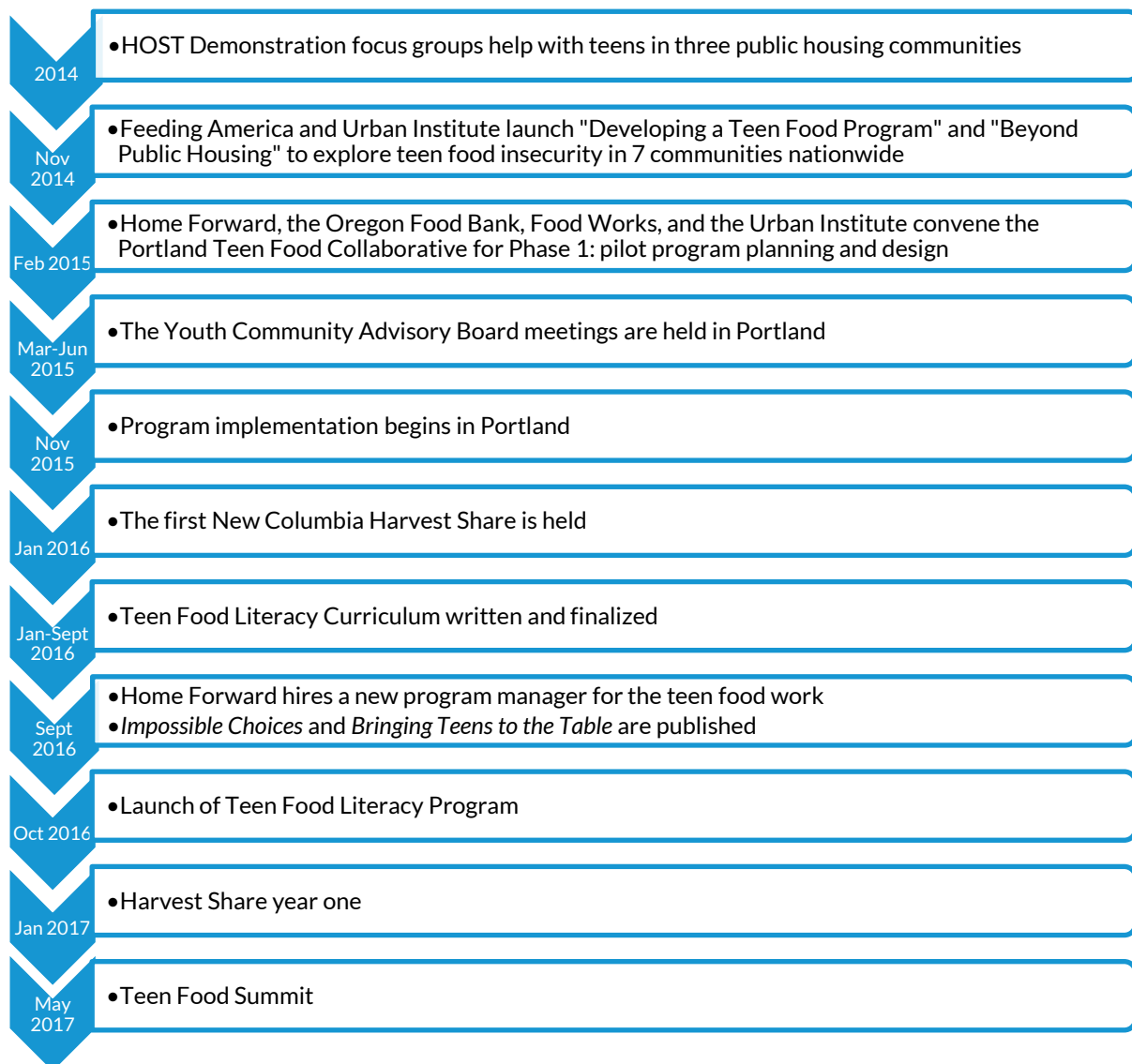
Going forward, the intention is for annual cohorts of teens to participate in the TFLP, creating a pipeline of teen leaders who can be resources to their peers on issues related to food insecurity and help to coordinate the ongoing Harvest Share, using the curriculum as a launch pad for other food-related events or programs in their community.

The Portland work is still evolving, but some early lessons may prove useful to others interested in developing local efforts to support low-income teens experiencing food insecurity. Communities interested in providing new services for teens might adapt the food literacy curriculum and instructor's guide to their context and consider hosting a Harvest Share or a similar food distribution event. Coupled with teen involvement, a teen-led food distribution can help bring food to teens and their families, reduce the stigma associated with receiving food assistance, and provide leadership opportunities for teens. The process of launching these services was itself a meaningful opportunity to work directly with teens and to learn how food assistance can be made more accessible to them. Communities interested in engaging teens in a collaborative process to identify new program opportunities can also consider convening teen advisors to be a sounding board for ideas, using Portland's youth advisory board as a model.

In the sections that follow, we first describe the New Columbia community and two phases on the Portland teen food project, before providing some promising practices for launching a similar effort. The Phase 1 section describes the Portland program design and launch, as well as feedback gathered from teens about food insecurity and food programs. The Phase 2 section describes program implementation and discusses challenges and lessons learned from the process.

FIGURE 1

Timeline of Program Development Activities



Phase 1: Designing a Teen Food Program in Portland, Oregon

About New Columbia

New Columbia is a mixed-income housing community managed by Home Forward and located in North Portland's Portsmouth neighborhood. The community has 852 units, including 556 subsidized housing units.³ Beginning in 2001, Home Forward invested over \$120 million through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI program to revitalize the New Columbia community to include mixed-income apartments and homes with on-site services and amenities. New Columbia is adjacent to the Tamarack Apartments, another Home Forward public housing development, and Tamarack residents can access the services at New Columbia.

New Columbia is racially and ethnically diverse. As of 2011, the population was 60 percent white, 22 percent black or African American, and 24 percent Hispanic or Latino, with a large and diverse immigrant and refugee population (Hailey and Saxena 2013). About 38 percent of residents of New Columbia's census tract speak a language other than English at home—nearly double the percentage for the City of Portland or Multnomah County as a whole.⁴

Based on a 2012 community survey conducted for the HOST Demonstration program, over 70 percent of New Columbia respondents reported experiencing food insecurity—the highest rate among the three HOST sites (Scott et al. 2013).⁵ In contrast, only about 15 percent of households in the United States were food insecure at some point during 2012 (Coleman-Jensen, Nord, and Singh 2013).

New Columbia is physically attractive and service rich, with Home Forward service coordinators and space for multiple nonprofit service providers, an elementary school, a Boys and Girls Club, public parks and playgrounds, two community gardens, a coffee house, and a community center. Village Market, a small, locally sourced corner store, is also located in New Columbia. The market is managed by Janus Youth (a project partner, as discussed below), that aims to help fill the neighborhood's need for fresh, affordable groceries. Customers who receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can get discounts on a range of healthy food items, and free, healthy snacks are available for any youth.⁶

Still, the closest full-service grocery stores are nearly two miles away. In discussions with teens, they talked about the lack of affordable grocery stores in the surrounding area and the relative availability of corner stores perceived as more expensive.⁷ The teens also lamented that unhealthy fast food meals were more affordable than a healthier option from grocery stores.

Not surprisingly, given the number of subsidized housing units in the area, New Columbia and the surrounding community have high poverty rates. Five-year American Community Survey data show New Columbia's 2015 census tract had a poverty rate of about 38 percent compared with about 18 percent in Portland and Multnomah County.

Mobilizing Stakeholders

A key factor facilitating the launch of the Portland teen food project was the availability of a core group of local organizations willing to participate in the effort, including a forward-thinking housing authority willing to host the project and well-established local service providers and staff. Together, the organizations formed the Portland Teen Food Collaborative (PTFC, see box 2 for organization descriptions).

The key people who collaborated in the effort included staff from Home Forward, Food Works, the Oregon Food Bank, and local consultants contracted by Home Forward to provide youth programming on-site in New Columbia. The Collaborative's goal was to work with local teens to design and implement a pilot food program targeting teens, with an approximately one-year timeline for a design phase. The expectation was that each participating organization would provide one or more representative to attend regular meetings, help recruit and engage teens, and help design and implement the pilot program. Each PTFC partner brought different perspectives, resources, and skills to the program design process.

Home Forward was instrumental to the work, providing management support and on-site coordination, access to local teens, space for regular meetings for teens and partners, capacity to host events and food distributions, and responsibility for hiring and managing a part-time project manager brought on board in the second phase of the project. Home Forward also contributed in-kind staff time to the project on the part of the resident services program supervisor and director of education and youth initiatives, and they mobilized Home Forward resources as needed to support the work. A consultant on staff at Home Forward included a community outreach coordinator who was part of the original team working on the HOST demonstration. As a mental health therapist, she was equipped to

work closely with teens experiencing trauma. Her original charge through HOST was to work with immigrant teens, as she held close ties to local families, especially among New Columbia’s immigrant and refugee communities. An additional community outreach coordinator played a similar role with local elementary school-age boys.

BOX 2

Portland Teen Food Collaborative Partners and Roles

Home Forward: The public housing authority for the city of Portland and Multnomah County, Home Forward provides assistance to approximately 9,200 families annually and owns and manages New Columbia and the Tamarack Apartments.

The Oregon Food Bank: The Oregon Food Bank collects and distributes food through a network of four branches and 17 independent regional food banks. It focuses on addressing the root causes of hunger by offering nutrition education, strengthening local food systems, collaborating with community groups, and advocating for hunger relief. In 2014, the Oregon Food Bank launched an effort to open a network of school-based pantries and was committed to expanding their reach into schools and communities.

Food Works: Food Works is one of four programs operated by Village Gardens, a project operated by the parent organization Janus Youth Services, which provides residential care and other services for at-risk youth and is one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the Pacific Northwest. Food Works is a youth development and employment program based in New Columbia that works with teens ages 14 to 18 in North Portland low-income neighborhoods and operates a 2.25-acre youth-staffed organic farm.

Urban Institute: The Urban Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Washington, DC. Urban researchers provided technical assistance to the Portland partners and conducted a formative evaluation to document the program design and implementation process. This included periodic site visits, interviews and focus groups with teens and partners, and data collection from the Harvest Share.

Feeding America: Feeding America is the nation’s largest domestic hunger relief organization, with a national network of over 200 food banks. Feeding America provided technical assistance to Urban throughout the project and secured financial support from the ConAgra Brands Foundation for Urban and each of the Portland partners’ involvement.

The Oregon Food Bank, which was actively expanding their services for school-age youth, brought knowledge of existing food service models and a commitment to providing food and logistical support for a food distribution. Food Works brought experience working with teens and young adults in New Columbia, specifically on issues related to food access, employment, and leadership skills, along with a

commitment to developing a teen-led intervention that emphasized employment and leadership skills. Food Works' program supervisor and youth program leader participated in the PTFC, provided input on YCAB recruitment and discussion protocols, and cofacilitated sessions.

Both the Oregon Food Bank and Food Works contributed significant time working directly with teens during the YCAB component of the project. The Oregon Food Bank also played an ongoing role in the Harvest Shares, providing training to volunteer event coordinators and support at the events, adjusting their standard procedures to meet the needs of the teens and the community, and revising their data collection tools to help Urban collect more detailed information about households beyond what is typically collected at other Harvest Shares operated by the food bank.

The Urban team played a dual research and technical assistance role, helping to facilitate meetings and convene partners, documenting the implementation process and program activities, and tracking feedback from participating teens and stakeholders. Feeding America secured support from the ConAgra Brands Foundation for Urban's involvement, as well as limited financial support for each organization's participation in the initiative. This included funds to support the half-time project manager position and stipends for participating teens (See Lipman and Thompson 2017 for an overview of initiative funding). Feeding America also played an active role in overall project design and in integrating the Portland work into the larger body of research on teen food insecurity.

Beginning in February 2015, the PTFC's first meetings focused on establishing a collective understanding of each organization's potential role in a new food program and the set of characteristics a new food program should have. For example, the organizations prioritized having employment or skills-based components rather than exclusively offering emergency food assistance. In addition, PTFC members agreed that the program should provide healthy food, be sustainable, and complement other food assistance programs or fill a service gap as opposed to offering a substitute for other food services or resources in the community. Finally, the group voiced a commitment to developing a program that was teen focused and teen led, with opportunities for teens to develop leadership skills and take ownership of their own programming.

The full group met monthly during the first year, with individual team members meeting more frequently by phone, as often as weekly, on specific elements of the program design work. In particular, PTFC members worked closely during the first phase of the project to develop discussion guides and facilitate group meetings with teens (discussed in the "Mobilizing Teens" section). As elements of the program were later implemented, meetings were held less frequently, with monthly calls between Urban and Home Forward staff and periodic calls with the entire PTFC as needed. Urban team

members made six site visits to Portland in 2015 and 2016 to convene partners, facilitate discussions with teens, and gather feedback from the partners and teens about implementation progress.

Mobilizing Teens

The Portland effort was envisioned as teen led and teen informed. To achieve this goal, the PTFC convened the YCAB of local teens to participate in a series of facilitated discussions. The discussions explored the causes of, and potential solutions to, teen food insecurity in an effort to inform potential new intervention approaches (box 3). The hope was that the YCAB discussions would give teens a voice in the program design process and be “idea incubators” where the teens felt safe to explore how their community experienced food insecurity.

The Home Forward community outreach coordinator recruited some YCAB members from the teens who participated in the original HOST project focus groups who had expressed an interest in participating in food insecurity work. This allowed the partners to quickly form and coordinate the YCAB within months of launching the project. Home Forward and Food Works team members conducted additional recruitment to engage more members, with an eye toward gender balance and a broad age range of participants. The final YCAB included six boys and six girls ages 12 to 18 from New Columbia. The teens met over the course of approximately five months, for seven roughly two-hour sessions at Home Forward’s Community Education Center, which was an accessible and familiar location for the teens and their families.

Early in the planning process, PTFC members committed to compensating teens for the time they spent participating in YCAB activities. Providing a modest stipend (\$20 per two-hour session) was important to encourage consistent participation and to reflect the teens’ role as contributors to the project. The team also provided food at each meeting.

At least three PTFC members were present at each YCAB and helped organize the sessions. Home Forward’s community outreach coordinator had primary responsibility for scheduling and organizing sessions. A graduate student notetaker from a local university was present to document the discussions, and one or more members of the PTFC or Urban research team facilitated the discussions.

BOX 3

Overview of Youth Community Advisory Board Discussions

The YCAB was a group of approximately 12 teens ages 12 to 18 who met seven times during the spring and summer of 2015 to discuss teen food insecurity and existing food resources and to give feedback on potential approaches to pilot in New Columbia. The sessions were as follows:

Session 1: Introduction, Orientation, and Mapping Home: Participants met, were introduced to the project's goals, created guidelines for engagement, and completed a community asset mapping exercise.

Session 2: Young People Have Power: Participants explored how they defined their community within physical, social, and political contexts and discussed food-related community problems.

Session 3: Food Availability: Participants revisited the community asset map from the first session and discussed pros and cons of various resources in their community.

Session 4: Building a Food Intervention and Talking about Risky Behaviors: Participants were presented with demo food distributions, including the Harvest Share mobile food distribution model. Teens discussed coping behaviors.

Session 5: Talking about Trauma and Sex: Participants explored issues of trauma and coping with struggles at home with little support.

Session 6: Youth Empowerment Movement: Building the Movement: Participants learned about different leadership styles and examples of teen-led social change drawn from around the country.

Session 7: Debrief and Lessons Learned: Participants discussed their takeaways. They reviewed and discussed issues identified in the community, possible solutions and next steps, and their understanding of their roles as leaders in the community.

Though the PTFC identified broad goals for each of the YCAB sessions, the individual session discussion guides were developed over the course of the spring and summer to incorporate feedback from teens and facilitators. Each session included group discussions and hands-on activities and concluded with a written questionnaire asking teens for their impressions of the session and suggestions for the next session. Early in the process, teens also developed and agreed to a set of basic guidelines for participation, including maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect, with no cursing, no lecturing by adults, and a commitment to *check your swag*—demonstrate a willingness to be vulnerable.

After each session, PTFC members would debrief on conference calls about group dynamics and major takeaways, using a standardized protocol to help them identify areas for improvement and themes or topics areas to build on for the following session. Urban and the PTFC members would then develop the discussion guide for the next YCAB session. The combination of feedback from individual

PTFC members, detailed notes from the YCAB sessions, and the written comments from teens helped ensure that each session incorporated teen feedback and built on the momentum developed in previous sessions.

The discussion sessions, and the project goals as a whole, touched on potentially sensitive topics of stigma, poverty, and risky or illegal behavior. Working with teens—particularly in a low-income community and around sensitive topics—requires some unique planning and considerations (box 4).

BOX 4

Considerations for Working with Low-Income Teens

Obtain permission from a parent or guardian. Programs involving young people typically require permission slips signed by parents or guardians, and research may require more formal documentation from caregivers and youth. Partners should identify any organizational requirements for working with teens and establish standards for gathering parent buy-in for participation. Project leaders should be able to clearly articulate the project’s purpose, expectations for teen participation, and any relevant privacy, safety, or security measures. Staff should be available to answer questions about the program.

Create a safe teen-oriented space. Fostering safe spaces promotes healthy, productive, and positive interactions. This includes a designated and welcoming physical space where teens feel empowered to express themselves. Setting guidelines for accountability can also encourage open and respectful exchanges and collaboration. Teens can create ground rules for discussions, such as avoiding hurtful or discriminatory language, to help ensure they are respected. Teens can also sign confidentiality pledges, which, along with ground rules, can be reinforced with reminders at each meeting.

Allow teens to avoid personal responses. Directly asking teens, particularly in groups, to describe their personal experience with food insecurity, stigma, or what they do when they are hungry can be alienating. Instead, facilitators can ask teens to describe what they observe in their community and what teens may do when there is not enough food at home. This can help teens feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and opinions without assigning behavior to themselves. If teens choose to discuss their own experiences, they can do so on their own terms.

Compensate teens for their time. Low-income teens often work to support themselves and their families, and time in food-program activities may conflict with their other responsibilities. New Columbia teens were paid \$20 or roughly \$10 per hour for every YCAB or food literacy program session attended. This payment structure was consistent with stipends typically provided to participants in research focus groups. Payments can offset some of the opportunity of participating in program activities, encourage attendance, and communicate the value of teens’ time.

Provide healthy food at each meeting. Especially when participants may be food insecure, it is important to provide healthy food at each meeting. This allows an opportunity to model healthy snacks

and meals and ensures the teens are well fed for the sessions. Sharing a meal also provides community-building opportunities. Providing healthy food was a priority for the Portland work.

Enlist teens in data collection. Teens can collect data and other feedback from community members on ways to improve events. For example, teens can be trained on tablets or use written surveys.

Encourage group cohesion. Participants and facilitators should encourage supportive relationships among participating teens through team-building exercises, group activities, field trips, or group reflection exercises. This builds trust and promotes collaboration and can encourage open conversations. Establishing an appropriate number of participants in group activities is part of encouraging group cohesion. In New Columbia, 10 to 12 teens in discussion groups was an appropriate number to spark lively conversations and allow for enriching interactions.

Be prepared to provide access to supportive services. Discussing sensitive topics may be traumatic for teen participants or adult facilitators, and it is difficult to anticipate when challenging moments will occur. Adults working with teens should know where to turn if someone needs immediate support or counseling or if they are struggling in their role. Project leaders should have a plan for referrals or other supports and understand how to advocate for teens to access services.

Train teens, and set expectations for participation. Teens need structure and guidance to fulfill their roles. Some basic training, with clear participation expectations, will help set them up for success.

Teen-Identified Problems and Solutions

Over the course of the YCAB discussions, teens described the shortcomings of the existing food resources for teens and ways that teens in their community coped with food insecurity. They note that when food and money were low at home, some teens may turn to peers for support, steal, date older men, or associate with gangs. These themes echoed findings from focus groups conducted with teens in other low-income communities nationwide (Popkin, Scott, and Galvez 2016). Teens also recognized the scale of the structural problems driving food insecurity and the need for more resources to address food insecurity and risky behavior (box 5).

BOX 5

Teen-Identified Problems Related to Food Access and Availability

“I feel like the cycle starts with not enough food, so you steal, then you realize that’s wrong, so you wanna make money instead, so you date someone older or join a gang for money to help your fam and siblings.” -YCAB participant

A stigma associated with charitable food options. Teens did not want others, especially their peers, to know they were struggling and needed help. Teens noted they avoided school pantries, worried about what their friends might think, and feared the possibility of bullying.

Accessible food options perceived as low quality. Teens noted the most accessible places to buy food did not offer affordable healthy options, felt school meals were unappetizing, and perceived food pantries as offering expired or processed food.

Affordable food may be unhealthy food. Healthy foods are often unaffordable for low-income families, especially at convenience stores. Instead, families prioritized foods that could be bought in bulk and could be stored and prepared easily, which are often foods processed to be shelf-stable.

Cooking fresh food is challenging. Teens noted that people are deterred from buying fresh ingredients because of the price, time, and resources required for preparing and cooking fresh food. Many also lack knowledge about how to preserve fresh foods.

Transportation is a barrier. Preferred grocery stores with a variety of fresh, wholesome foods were too far away for teens and some families to access easily without a car.

Some food resources exclude teens. Teens believed that some food pantries and other charitable feeding programs required recipients to be at least 18 years old to receive food, limiting where teens could go to get food in an emergency.

During one of the YCAB sessions, facilitators presented members with possible options to address teen food insecurity through three frameworks: direct service; advocacy, education, and organizing; and direct participation in political decisionmaking. Tangible examples of how each could address the problems teens identified helped them think about ways to provide food to teens in their community. Box 6 summarizes some of the insights and possible solutions teens raised, several of which evolved into the core components of the New Columbia teen food pilot program.

Among the direct-service ideas discussed, the community Harvest Share, which is a charitable food distribution organized by the Oregon Food Bank to resemble a traditional farmer’s market (with food provided free of charge), appealed to the teens. The food bank already planned to expand their network of Harvest Shares in the area and was willing to implement a Harvest Share quickly and work with the teens to make it more teen oriented and culturally relevant.

In addition, the teens valued the YCAB opportunity and venue to meet and discuss these issues and felt that a similarly structured opportunity (e.g., a teen discussion group that offered food literacy and leadership development opportunities) would be a powerful resource for the community and could engage more teens. The teens emphasized the need for a designated safe meeting space for teens that could be a hub for these discussions and ongoing teen food work.

Finally, the YCAB teens wanted to stay involved in the next steps of the program and help engage more teens. They continued to meet weekly even after the formal YCAB sessions ended, with the community outreach coordinator's support and ongoing modest stipends provided to teens for consistent participation (a \$20 gift card after three weeks of attendance). The teens retained the YCAB name for their group and weekly meetings.

Other solutions the YCAB teens considered were working with local food pantries at schools and elsewhere to develop teen programming and help maintain and manage the pantries and to work with local corner stores to encourage teen discounts or emergency food stashes for kids and families in need. Teens also discussed teen-led community campaigns to change local ordinances or educate the community about the link between food and health issues.

BOX 6

Teen-Identified Solutions to Providing Food to Teens

"I don't think a food program would solve the issue of youth doing bad stuff, but I think it would really minimize it. A lot of kids are just stuck in the cycle, and some people might think, 'Oh I don't have to do this anymore!'" -YCAB teen

Couple food distributions with supportive services or events. Food distribution could be coordinated with or occur during activities that are appealing to teens, like a basketball tournament, movie night, a cookout, or cooking demonstration. Colocating food services with other events could reduce the stigma associated with using food assistance by providing other reasons for teens to be present.

Teen-led food distributions would attract teens. Teen-led programming was discussed as a way to reduce the stigma associated with hunger and encourages teens to get the help they need from other teens. Creating opportunities for teens to play active roles in food distributions or services could also present opportunities for employment and to develop leadership skills.

Social service providers could do more teen-specific work. Integrating teen employment opportunities, adapting outreach strategies to attract teens, holding events for teens, removing age limits, and creating feedback mechanisms to acknowledge and incorporate teen voices are ways to make food services more appealing and accessible to teens.

Teens experience food insecurity through and with their families. The teens acknowledged that they are embedded within their families, so the ideal intervention would address the underlying problems of scarcity facing both teens and their families.

Cultural competency matters. Many YCAB participants were from immigrant families, and teens noted they were unfamiliar with some of the products at food pantries. Teens stated it would be helpful if food pantries understood different communities' food preferences and provided more tips and information on new foods and how to prepare them.

Phase 2: Implementation, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

As the planning phase ended, four pilot program components emerged, building on the work with teens. Each component, and considerations that emerged during implementation, are discussed below.

- **A New Columbia Harvest Share.** A monthly food distribution would directly provide mainly fresh food to the community, engage teens as both recipients and leaders, and reduce the stigma associated with accepting food support. The housing authority agreed to mobilize teen volunteers, and provide space, staff time, and materials to host and sponsor the events in New Columbia. The Oregon Food Bank committed to providing the food and working with teens to tailor the offerings to the New Columbia community. The food distribution was launched in January 2016.
- **A Teen Food Literacy Program.** The TFLP course would be developed and made available to small cohorts of teens to teach leadership skills through the lens of food literacy⁸ and advocacy and to help develop peer mentors equipped to support teens. Urban took the lead in developing the curriculum, with support from the Home Forward social worker and Food Works staff. The first cohort of 11 teens participated in the course in late 2016 and early 2017, with sessions facilitated by a newly hired teen food program manager.
- **Community engagement.** Teens who participated in TFLP would be expected to plan events and activities through which food could be made available to the community in a nonstigmatizing way. Program staff and other community teens would support the production of such events, which might include movie nights, teach-ins, discussion groups, or other activities in conjunction with the Harvest Shares. The Teen Summit, described below, was launched in May 2017 as part of the first community engagement effort. In addition, the program manager would provide access to supportive services or referrals to teens and their families. Home Forward staff had raised the need for trauma-related mental health and counseling services for teens and families. Teens would inform these services, but the program manager and community outreach coordinator would develop and implement them. This component of community engagement was not fully implemented (see the “Community Engagement” section).

- **A dedicated staff person.** PTFC members dedicated significant time to the planning phase. Successful implementation would require a dedicated staff person to launch the program and work with teens on an ongoing basis. A half-time contract program manager position was created and housed at Home Forward, with the full PTFC participating in the hiring process. The program manager would be responsible for day-to-day program management, including being the main point of contact for teens and families, facilitating TFLP sessions, coordinating the Harvest Share, and communicating with Urban and other PTFC members as needed. The project manager was also initially expected to develop recommendations for community engagement services. With this in mind, the PTFC felt the ideal program manager would have a combination of food advocacy experience, familiarity with New Columbia, and experience working with teens in low-income communities. A professional background in mental health services would be useful, but the partners emphasized the importance of ties to the community.

The YCAB teens felt pride and ownership over the work growing from their discussions, and the service provider partners wanted to keep them engaged in ongoing program development. All of the program components provided opportunities to keep YCAB members engaged, with support from the program manager. These included incorporating the YCAB teens into the food literacy program as cofacilitators or participants of meetings if they wished to do so; having teens lead, volunteer at, or recruit volunteers for the Harvest Shares; and having them help organize periodic community events or activities to draw teens and support the broader community.

The New Columbia Harvest Share

The Home Forward housing authority committed to hosting a monthly Harvest Share in its Community Education Center and supporting the event with staff. The Oregon Food Bank, which operates several other Harvest Share mobile food distributions in the Portland region, contributed food, expertise, volunteer and staff time, and other materials to support the distributions. In addition to providing training for the on-site coordinators and offering their time at the events, the organization adjusted its usual food offerings to meet the New Columbia community's specific needs and preferences.

Notably, the food bank supplemented typical Harvest Share offerings with food items purchased specifically for New Columbia to offer more fresh produce and items teens or community members specifically requested. This additional cost to the food bank was covered by a combination of Feeding America's support and funds received separately from a local source. In addition, the Oregon Food Bank

adapted food offerings to accommodate cultural preferences. For example, the Harvest Share offered some salads packaged with bacon, which some shoppers avoided because they did not eat pork. This created some confusion as to which salads were processed with pork, causing shoppers to avoid the salads and leaving extras at the end of the day. Once teens realized this, they communicated with the project manager who asked the Oregon Food Bank to modify the food provided. This feedback loop, and the Oregon Food Bank's willingness to work closely with the teens, was crucial to the success of the Harvest Share.

The first Harvest Share took place in January 2016. For the early Harvest Shares, Home Forward's community outreach coordinator managed the events, with support from Oregon Food Bank staff and teen volunteers. As the events gained traction, the number of teen volunteers grew. The Harvest Share was intended to be teen led to the extent possible, with local teens volunteering at each month's event.

As of June 2017, three original YCAB teens held primary responsibility for managing teen volunteers at the Harvest Shares, which included greeting the teen volunteers and discussing what roles the volunteers will fill that day. Adult community members also volunteered at the events. About 10 to 15 teens volunteered at each Harvest Share, and each received a bag of groceries. In addition, a set of elementary school boys working with the Home Forward community outreach coordinator often helped to set up food and publicize events. The boys were too young to participate in the YCAB or TFLP, but they volunteered for the Harvest Share and would be eligible to participate in future cohorts of the TFLP.

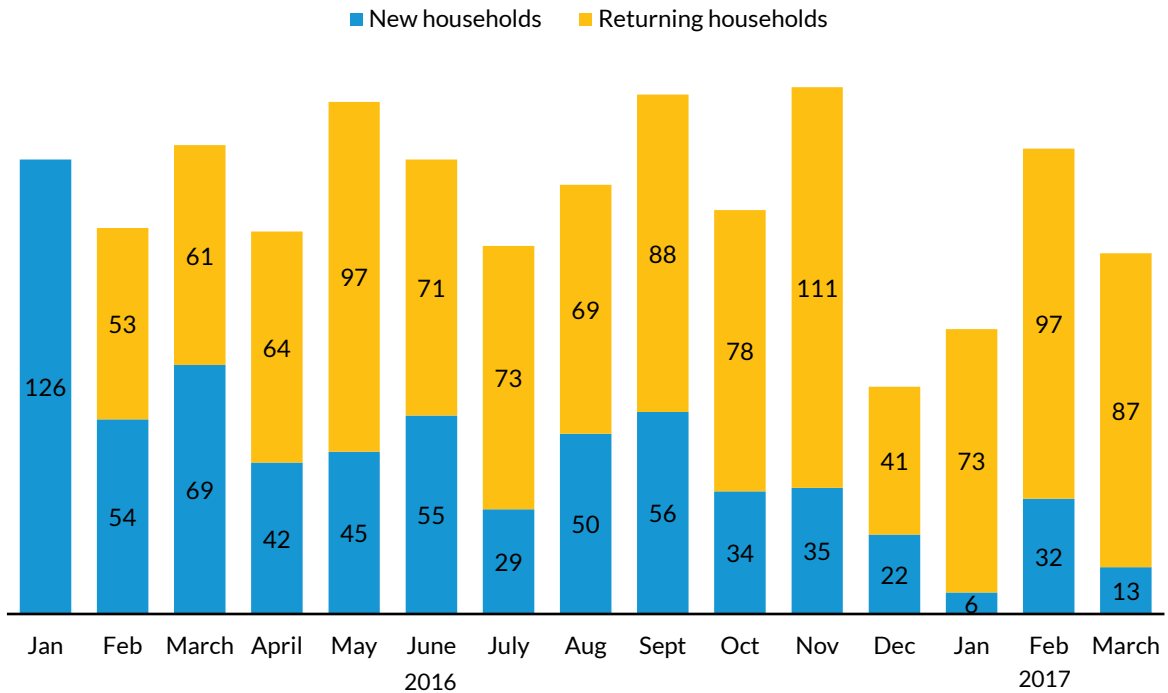
To prepare for each Harvest Share, teen volunteers helped by setting up tables and chairs, meeting the delivery truck and unloading the pallets of food, setting up food stations, printing food menus, and sorting and bagging food. Teens also played a role in advertising the Harvest Share, putting up signs and passing out flyers in the community. They even created a video about the Harvest Share to post to YouTube. During the Harvest Share teen volunteers greeted shoppers at the sign-in table, collected intake data,⁹ provided translation services when needed, acted as personal shoppers, managed the line that often extended past the community center doors, refilled food stations, and directed customers as to how many of each item they should take. The Harvest Share operated for at least two to three hours but ended early if the food was gone. After each event, the teens cleaned up, recycled boxes, and then "circled up" with the program manager to debrief and discuss lessons learned for the next Harvest Share. Table 1 shows some challenges to the Harvest Shares and provides suggested solutions.

Based on data collected from intake forms over the course of the 15 Harvest Shares conducted in 2016 and early 2017, an average of 115 households made up of 499 individuals receive food at each

Harvest Share (figure 2). Each month, the Harvest Share reached new households. About 22 percent of all households served included a teen age 13 to 18, and 60 percent included a child of any age. In total, between January 2016 and March 2017 about 37 percent of all Harvest Share food recipients were youth younger than 12, 23 percent were teens between the ages of 13 and 18, and about 39 percent were adults over 18.¹⁰ Data are not available to document the total number or share of teens in the New Columbia community, and it may be that the proportion of teens who attended Harvest Shares reflects the population as a whole. Nevertheless, it is notable that teens represented the smallest share of overall participants. Going forward, program staff hope that adding events and programming targeted at teens will increase the share of teens accessing food through Harvest Shares.

FIGURE 2

Households Served by the New Columbia Harvest Share, January 2016 through March 2017



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Monthly Harvest Share reports January 2016 to March 2017.

For the July 2016 Harvest Share, Urban staff trained a set of YCAB teens to administer a brief questionnaire at the Harvest Share. Urban developed an eight-item questionnaire for teens and then trained four data collectors whom the group of 14 YCAB participants selected. The teens were selected by in part because they spoke a total of six languages between them. They were also paid for their time. The brief survey included questions about customer satisfaction, shoppers' other food resources, and

ways to improve the Harvest Share for teens. Teens collected 37 surveys in total and found most shoppers reported being “very satisfied” with the food offerings, had heard of the Harvest Share through word of mouth, and accessed food from a variety of sources. About half of the respondents had at least one teen in their household. The survey data collection was envisioned as an opportunity to introduce teens to a new set of skills and as a way to help teens gather community feedback.

TABLE 1

Harvest Share Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenge	Lesson learned
<p>Setting up and cleaning up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Harvest Shares required a substantial time commitment from teens and adult volunteers: up to eight hours to set up and break down. ▪ Volunteer attendance by teens was inconsistent, ranging from 7 to 35 volunteers at individual Harvest Shares. A combination of unclear expectations for teens, timing of the Harvest Share launch, the lengthy initial commitment, and conflicting schedules with school, work, extracurricular activities, religious commitments, and family obligations all contributed to the erratic attendance. 	<p>Plan the logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a comprehensive plan with established roles, timing and tasks for setup and cleanup, to reduce the time needed to make the Harvest Share successful and make the events predictable and orderly for volunteers and shoppers. ▪ Plan for 2 to 3 hours, create waiting areas for shoppers, adjust registration and distribution procedures as needed to avoid bottlenecks, and assign roles for setup and cleanup. ▪ Create a large volunteer pool, including younger participants, can ensure enough volunteers to support events and help develop a pipeline of youth to participate in the Teen Food Literacy Program or to lead events. ▪ Maintain consistent timing. Hold distributions, including setups and cleanups, at a consistent time, run distributions in a consistent way, and use a variety of outreach mechanisms to ensure that community members and teens are aware of the distribution’s timing and structure.
<p>Engaging teens in leadership roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Harvest Share sought to include teen-focused activities with a nontraditional food distribution to reduce stigma and engage teens. In practice, launching teen-focused events was a challenge, including identifying and engaging teens to develop and lead these events. 	<p>Help teens develop early programming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ During the planning phase of the project, identify events and programming that can be launched early in the implementation phase by adult staff or partners can help engage teens in leadership roles and encourage ownership of ongoing programming. ▪ Include TFLP participants in the teen events as facilitators to help encourage other teens to attend. ▪ Take teen food preferences into account. Teens can provide insights into preferred foods, whether customers will recognize all the foods offered and whether samples, recipes, or food demos might be useful for shoppers or teens. Teens and program coordinators should communicate regularly with the food bank to convey food preferences of the community.

Teen Food Literacy Program

The YCAB teens felt empowered by their experience and wanted to extend a similar opportunity to other teens by incorporating a deeper dive into some of the issues that surfaced during the YCAB discussions and providing opportunities for teen-led initiatives. The TFLP curriculum was developed to introduce teens to food justice issues and to explore themes of identity, community, empowerment, and leadership (box 7). The courses' goals are to reduce stigma among food insecure teens, increase food literacy, and empower teens to be community leaders and advocates. With input from PTFC partners, the Urban team drafted a detailed facilitator's guide and curriculum.

The curriculum was piloted with 11 teens in mid-October 2016. Home Forward's community outreach coordinator led the TFLP recruitment process, relying primarily on her established network of engaged families. Recruitment also involved community information sessions, which were used to convey the expectations for consistent attendance and active participation, for interested teens and parents. The project manager was the facilitator for each session, with teens who participated in the YCAB acting as cofacilitators for some sessions. The curriculum was then revised based on the program manager's detailed feedback.

Written consent was required from parents or guardians of teens younger than 18, and parents received a flyer that described the TFLP program and goals. Participating teens signed a form that described the program and the expectations of participation. Teens were compensated for their participation and received \$20 for each session attended, with payment in the form of a gift card provided at the following session. An expectation was that the teens would help run the Harvest Share each month, although, as discussed below, this initially proved challenging for the teens.

BOX 7

Overview of the Teen Food Literacy Program (TFLP) curriculum

The 12-session TFLP curriculum (Lipman and Thompson 2017) was developed to reduce stigma among food insecure teens, increase food literacy, and empower teens to become community leaders and advocates.

Session 1. Defining Our Space: Participants began developing trust as a team, thinking of communal goals, and identifying individual reasons for joining TFLP.

Session 2a. Food and Our Body Part One: Teens began thinking critically about the food they eat and how food impacts health. This session focused on sugar and processed food.

Session 2b. Food and Our Body Part Two: Teens continued learning how food impacts health, focusing on fat. Participants also learned to read nutrition labels and choose healthier options.

Session 3. What Is Food Insecurity?: Teens cooperated in a team challenge, defined food insecurity, talked about how hunger relates to food insecurity, and brainstormed how to create a more food-secure community.

Session 4. Our Food System: Teens were introduced to phases of the food stream and began to explore the actors and institutions that impact the food system.

Session 5. Food Choice: Teens developed knowledge of factors determining the health, affordability, accessibility, and appropriateness of certain foods to broaden their knowledge of the food system.

Session 6. My Community, My Home: Teens applied the concepts of food deserts, food choice, and food systems to their own community.

Session 7. Identities and Food: Teens explored how their personal identities and the identities of others interact with the food system.

Session 8. Our Food Justice: Participants developed their knowledge of the social, economic, and political forces at play creating unequal food environments within the community.

Session 9. Tying It All Together: Teens reflected on and drew connections between topics covered.

Session 10. Action Campaign Goals: Teens began planning action campaign projects, creating a vision of teen food security for their community.

Session 11. Organizing Our Action Campaign Project: Teens practiced identifying short-term goals, developing action tasks to reach their goals, and adopting strategies for dividing up work.

Session 12. What Do We Need to Move Forward?: Teens decided on next steps to start on their plan or campaign, worked on those steps, and celebrated the end of the TFLP training.

The TFLP sessions were organized into three units: the first provided a base knowledge of food literacy; the second explored structural inequities that relate to food insecurity; and the third provided teens with the skills to organize and advocate for food justice.¹¹ Teens were encouraged to redefine concepts of food literacy and justice for themselves during the course and to begin planning a community engagement event that would be officially launched during the final session. Throughout the course, teens learned how to run meetings, develop event or campaign ideas, and identify goals for achieving positive change in their community—with adult support as needed but without an adult actively directing or managing their work. At the end of the course, the group is expected to identify an actionable goal for a community engagement activity or event and is encouraged to meet regularly to make progress on their plans. Urban also collected baseline and follow-up data from participating teens' self-reported food insecurity.¹²

A second TFLP cohort is planned for fall 2017. The program will be combined with New Columbia's existing "K-Ching" summer youth employment program, which will expand to a year-round program and the resident services supervisor manages. Connecting the two programs will give teens the opportunity to take on additional leadership roles and shift from weekly to monthly meetings.

There are lessons learned from launching the first literacy program cohort that will inform future iterations of the program. Table 2 describes the major challenges and the lessons learned through navigating those challenges.

TABLE 2

Teen Food Literacy Program Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenge	Lesson learned
<p>Making group dynamics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YACAB teens were included as cofacilitators of sessions, creating unanticipated tension between TFLP teens and the YACAB teens who felt ownership over the program yet disconnected from the TFLP. 	<p>Make roles clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish training, protocols, and expectations for teens in peer mentor or facilitator roles to help avoid tensions and encourage open communication among teens.
<p>Reaching vulnerable teens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program did not appear to reach teens experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity. Participating teens reported having reduced quality and variety of food in their diets but had sufficient food to maintain normal health and eating patterns. The program manager reported that TFLP participants did not appear to associate stigma with free or reduced-priced school lunch, mainly because it is the norm in the community. 	<p>Recruit strategically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants were recruited opportunistically through preexisting relationships, limiting the pool of teens recruited to those already engaged in programming. The program manager suggested that reaching teens experiencing the highest levels of food insecurity will require targeted efforts and additional supports. Despite the modest stipends and food provided, the time required to participate may have deterred teens experiencing family instability or extreme food insecurity.
<p>Communicating with teens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because of staffing changes, project delays, and shifting priorities, clear communication was lacking between program staff and teens. This eroded teen trust in the program. 	<p>Make communication a priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure communication is consistent and transparent to teens, and involve teens in decisionmaking throughout the process.
<p>Completing an action-packed curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum was long and difficult to fit into the time frame allotted. It was difficult for teens to stay engaged for the full two hours. The younger youth were more engaged than older youth and needed less group discussion and more interactive activities to stay engaged for the full time. 	<p>Adjust the curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The curriculum was revised for future cohorts, and instructors should adjust it to be relevant in specific community contexts. For example, adapt it to an appropriate age range and, if targeting younger youth, build in more organic time and adjust activities to be as interactive as possible to maintain constant engagement.

Program Management

As the program proceeded through the planning phase and prepared for implementation, it was clear that finding a dedicated staff resource would be necessary to coordinate work with teens and program partners and to launch the program effectively.

The implementation phase of the program included funds for a half-time program manager position. The role was expected to assume day-to-day responsibility for managing Harvest Share and TFLP and work directly with teen participants, as well as develop the community engagement component and coordinate with the Urban team and other PTFC members. Establishing where the program manager position would be housed, the appropriate hiring mechanism and compensation, and developing the job description required several months of discussions and coordination. A program manager was initially hired in January 2016, with input from YCAB teens and PTFC members. However, the initial manager took medical leave soon after joining the program, resulting in a second hiring process several months later. A permanent program manager was not hired until September 2016.

As the project staffing was resolved, a New Columbia resident was hired on a temporary basis until the position was permanently filled and the community outreach coordinator assumed the role of coordinating teens and attempting to maintain the momentum generated from the initial YCAB work. The community outreach coordinator continues to hold a leadership role in the program as a trusted adult to New Columbia teens. And the program manager was ultimately able to build strong relationships with participating teens. However, the delays in bringing a permanent project manager on board put a strain on the relationships with teens.

Launching a new effort, particularly one that involves multiple partner organizations and teens, requires ongoing attention to coordinating partners and establishing, clarifying, and communicating roles and expectations. Table 3 identifies some of the challenges encountered and lessons learned along the way.

TABLE 3

Program Management Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenge	Lesson learned
<p>Maintaining communication between partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from interviews with PTFC partners noted that communication among partners was sporadic when Urban was not on site or coordinating meetings and that roles and responsibilities were not clear as the effort moved from planning into implementation. 	<p>Set clear roles and expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing expected roles and capacities of each partner organization and creating plans for ongoing communication and sustainability between partners could have improved implementation.
<p>Achieving transparency with teens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teens expressed confusion over their role in the ongoing programming and the roles of the organizations involved. YCAB teens especially expressed confusion over their ongoing involvement after their active role in the design phase ended. 	<p>Keep teens in the loop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make roles clear to teens at each stage of the project, including the design, transition, and implementation phases. Establish adult partner points of contact for teens to help reduce confusion and maintain communication with teens. Be consistent about stipends, meeting times and resources to help keep teens engaged and bought-in to program efforts.
<p>Maintaining consistent staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The program manager was hired late in the design phase and changed during implementation, as did Urban staff. Staffing changes were disruptive to the work with teens. Low-income teens and their families are familiar with programs launching and then ending in response to funding or staffing changes, which can undermine trust in new programming. Staff from the PTFC attempted to fill roles a program manager could have fulfilled, but no one organization was equipped to fill all of them. 	<p>Plan for staffing transitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent management and coordination with teens should be a priority for work with low-income teens and their families. Having a system in place to communicate changes and maintain open communication may ease confusion and length of time required for rebuilding relationships after staff transitions. Hiring an on-site project coordinator during the design phase could have helped streamline communication, identify questions about program structure and roles, get components of the work off the ground quickly, and ensure a mechanism to keep teens engaged.

Community Engagement

Community engagement was initially envisioned as a combination of teen-led events and activities driven by TFLP graduates and partner-led social services. Whereas the Harvest Share and TFLP were intended to provide leadership and food literacy skills to smaller groups of teens, community engagement services were intended to reach more teens and families in crisis and help address causes and effects of food insecurity.

The first cohort of TFLP teens identified the Harvest Share's success and sustainability as one of their community engagement goals, and they were committed to devoting volunteer hours, improving outreach, and developing activities or events to include at the Harvest Shares that could appeal to teens. This pledge was in direct response to some initial difficulty maintaining a reliable teen volunteer force at Harvest Shares, requiring adult Home Forward and Oregon Food Bank staff to step in and younger New Columbia youth taking on volunteer roles. Another goal was to develop a "Teen Summit," working with teens from the original YCAB group. The teens envisioned the Summit as a forum where teens from surrounding communities could come together to share their experiences in leadership, activism, and organizing, and build solidarity across organizations.

The Summit was held in May 2017, with over 50 teens attending and 10 youth-serving organizations represented. Participating organizations included Home Forward, Regence Boys & Girls Club, Charles Jordan Community Center, Portland Youth Corps, and Food Works. Teens from each program or organization gave five-minute overviews, discussing how their programs could interact with the community and how other teens could get involved. Each organization set up tables with educational materials, job applications, and teen representatives available to answer any questions. During the event, teens were given cards to stamp for each table they approached. Once a teen received six stamps they could enter a raffle for a prize. The Portland teens and program manager intend for the Teen Summit to become an annual event.

The adult-led services were not fully scoped out when the program was launched, with the expectation that the program manager would be tasked with drafting a proposed service plan for PTFC members' input and approval. However, the part-time program manager did not have the capacity to design a complex additional component while launching TFLP and managing the Harvest Share and needed additional support and expertise from the PTFC. To be successful, this ambitious component would require a lead service partner specializing in case management and mental health services for teens and families, with the capacity to help design and roll out a new initiative (table 4). A more robust community engagement component is still aspirational and may be integrated into a next generation of the program if resources become available.

TABLE 4

Community Engagement Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenge	Lesson learned
<p>Organizing events at the Harvest Share</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program leaders had goals for multiple teen-led events or activities connected to the Harvest Shares proved overly ambitious, particularly given the time commitments for the Harvest Share itself. 	<p>Add events into the planning phase</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the planning phase, program organizers could dedicate time to thinking about how teen-led events could be incorporated into the Harvest Share.
<p>Considering the capacities of each partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since this was the first time this program launched in the New Columbia community, and the first time some of these partners worked together, it was difficult to gauge each partner’s capacity and definitive role in the programming, leaving program managers to resolve issues as they came up rather than being prepared ahead of time. 	<p>Modify strategy to accommodate capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the goals for the program go beyond the existing expertise of the partners, consider enlisting new partners as a foundational step. The long-term project goals can be ambitious, but efforts are more likely to be successful if they focus on manageable short-term goals that leverage existing resources and expertise. Build in more time than you need for each stage of the project to prepare for program delays, such as staffing transitions and developing program materials.

Conclusion

Since 2014, the Urban Institute has been exploring how low-income teens experience food insecurity. One of the early themes from conversations with teens is that services like food pantries and school lunch programs do not fully meet their needs, because of real or perceived barriers to access or concerns about stigma (Popkin, Scott, and Galvez 2016). The work under way in New Columbia is an effort to address teen food insecurity directly, by engaging teens with issues in their community. In doing so, we aim to improve how teens view and access food assistance and to sensitize providers to the needs and preferences of teens. The work is new and continues to evolve, but we hope that some of the early lessons from the collaborative process prove useful to other organizations interested in developing new programs or improving existing programs to help low-income teens experiencing food insecurity.

An important and innovative aspect of this work that can be replicated elsewhere is the service partnership between the Home Forward housing authority, the Oregon Food Bank, and Food Works. Breaking down service silos allowed the three organizations to develop something new and promising for the teens in their community. And, by adapting the TFLP and Harvest Share or developing new approaches in collaboration with teens, communities can experiment with ways to help teens develop food literacy, strengthen leadership skills, and improve access to food assistance.

The TFLP and Harvest Share alone will not end teen food insecurity in New Columbia. The roots of food insecurity are embedded in structural problems of poverty, an inadequate safety net for teens and their families, and the lack of stable jobs with wages high enough to support families' basic needs. Teens were vocal about this during the Portland work and in the focus groups with teens nationwide. Expanding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, improving summer feeding programs, and helping connect teens and their families to stable jobs that pay meaningful wages would all help teens navigate food insecurity (see Waxman, Popkin, and Galvez 2016 for recommendations to improve teen access to food and food assistance). But, we hope that improving how service providers engage with one another and with teens can help minimize the impacts of food insecurity on young people. And we hope that equipping teens with more knowledge about their food environment will empower them to advocate for better solutions.

Notes

1. For the full definition of food insecurity and levels of food security that we use, see “Definitions of Food Security,” US Department of Agriculture, last updated October 4, 2017, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security/>.
2. The New Columbia Teen Food Literacy Program was originally called Youth Empowerment Program (YEP).
3. See Home Forward’s website for more information about New Columbia, <http://www.homeforward.org/development/property-developments/new-columbia>.
4. Data from the American Community Survey five-year estimates, 2011–15.
5. Food insecurity reported among the three HOST sites was 60 percent in Chicago, 71 percent in Portland, and 67 percent in Washington, DC. Survey respondents were the adult leaseholders for their households.
6. See Village Market’s website for more information, <http://www.villagegardens.org/village-market/>.
7. There is some evidence that at items such as fresh produce and baby formula costs more at corner stores than at full-service grocery stores (Rogus 2015).
8. We apply Vidgen and Gallegos’s (2014, 54) definition of food literacy as “the scaffolding that empowers individuals, households, communities or nations to protect diet quality through change and strengthen dietary resilience over time. It is composed of a collection of interrelated knowledge, skills and behaviors required to plan, manage, select, prepare and eat food to meet needs and determine intake.”
9. An intake form was used to collect the following information from shoppers in five languages: whether households were returning or new participants, residential zip code, household size, and household members’ ages.
10. Participant data identifying families with teens were collected starting with the May 2016 Harvest Share.
11. Food justice is defined as “a social movement with ‘multiple layers... of producers, processors, workers, eaters, or communities,” for whom race, ethnicity, class, and gender issues are at the forefront of an agenda that includes a mix of “producing food, local preference, environment, economic development, health food for all, preparing, cooking and eating, and public health and nutrition” (Holt-Giménez and Wang 2011, 88).
12. The food insecurity questionnaire developed by the Urban team used (1) nine food insecurity measures drawn from the self-administered Food Security Survey Module for youth ages 12 and older (see “Measurement,” US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, last updated October 4, 2017, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement/>); (2) seven indicators of dietary behavior from the National Youth Physical Activity and Nutrition Study (NYPANS); (3) five self-efficacy indicators developed by Martin et al. (2016); and (4) four items from the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale measuring resiliency (Connor and Davidson 2003). The survey was administered at the first, sixth, and last TFLP sessions to all teens in attendance. “Survey Tools: Self-Administered Food Security Survey Module for Children Ages 12 Years and Older,” US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, last modified October 4, 2017, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/survey-tools/#youth>

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