**Introduction**

Addressing Food Insecurity

The *Cooking Matters* Program aims to empower families at risk of hunger with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to prepare healthy and affordable meals. 12.3% of American households were food insecure at least some time during the year in 2016. Understanding the barriers to accessing these types of programs is important to better understand the issues that those who are food insecure face every day. This project aims to shed light on some of these issues.

![Image of people cooking](Image)

**Objectives**

Determining Driving and Limiting Factors

- Determine limiting and driving factors to program participation
- Develop solutions to encourage program participation
- Develop comprehensive outreach packet for program coordinators and partner agencies

![Graph representing participant responses to the question “How did you find out about this class?”](Image)

**Method**

Community Outreach

Research
- Best outreach practices
- Community assessment

Outreach
- Interviews
- Dialogue sessions

Results
- Outreach toolkit
- Participant perspective

**Results**

A Community Leader is key when it comes to recruiting for programs. Individuals within an agency or school energized about the program drive program recruitment success. Perceived barriers (childcare, transportation, perceptions of inaccessibility) were overcome when participants were encouraged by a trusted community member.

Many participants expressed need for continued connection to Cooking Matters through social media platforms like Facebook Groups.

**Discussion**

This project represents a snapshot of programming trends in America. I learned that difference in perception of program access causes discrepancies between participants, partner agencies, and coordinators. The perception that families don't have enough time for the program is dismissed when everyone who finishes it wishes there were more. Being able to meet people where they are, and having a community champion are key to driving program participation and success. These findings can hopefully guide marketing strategies to better meet the needs of the target population while also fulfilling other stakeholder engagements.

**Next Steps**

- Utilization of updated Outreach toolkit
- Continue to identify key leaders within each community
- Develop online media platform for program outreach & communication

“This is a great opportunity to spend time with your kids and give them hands on learning and they even teach you!”

-CM Gilford Participant

**Program Benefits**

- Creating Family Time
- Introducing Kids to Cooking
- Sense of Community
- Quick method for Quick Meals
- Free Food

![Graph representing participant responses to the question “What did you like most about the class?”](Image)

**References**

2. Image retrieved from [http://cookingmatters.org/sites/default/files/Kids_Class_Graduation_-_South_Carolina_1.jpg](http://cookingmatters.org/sites/default/files/Kids_Class_Graduation_-_South_Carolina_1.jpg)