**Healthy Community Retail**

*A proposal for conducting community based market research to improve access to healthy foods, decrease access to tobacco, and encourage small business development in East Gainesville.*

Chronic disease morbidity and mortality rates are often higher in low income and high minority population areas. While there are many factors that lead to metabolically related chronic diseases, the exposure to a unhealthy food environment in food insecure areas can lead to many related negative health outcomes (diabetes, heart attack, stroke). These areas can suffer from lack of access to healthy food sources as well as over access to high risk food and substance sources (fast food, liquor stores, tobacco). This type of access often occurs through proliferation of convenience stores and an absence of other types of business development.

  East Gainesville has experienced a lack of business development as well as an decrease of operating grocery stores in recent years. The USDA has identified portions of East Gainesville as a "food desert" and many residents have consistently lobbied elected officials for improved food access. Historically, East Gainesville is where the majority of African-American residents in Alachua county reside. In conjunction with the decreases in food access, disparities in chronic disease related health outcomes among African-Americans in Alachua county have increase in recent years.

**Proposal**

In order to increase access to healthy foods and decrease access to unhealthy substances, this plan would develop a community based survey to comprehensively study the market capacity for healthy foods in a given community. The team would work with the East Gainesville community to develop a thorough, data driven, assessment of consumer habits and community desires so that local businesses in the area can be informed on accurate business models for delivering healthy food to the community. Similarly, this survey can assess purchasing habits, opinions, beliefs, and desires of the community on access to tobacco and alcohol for the sake of informing policy makers and businesses on how to best prevent underage initiation and maintain healthy profitability. The results would be aggressively disseminated in order for current and potential business owners to take advantage of opportunities in business surrounding healthy food and lifestyles.

**Goals**

This project would be referred to as "Healthy Community Retail". The focus would be to create data driven community food business models that do not rely on liquor and tobacco for profitability. Our goal would be to do the market research so our local entrepreneurs can build their own solutions in the community. This approach would be combined with a second phase effort where small businesses are recruited to take advantage of the results and provided with a range of benefits, supports, and programs to encourage the adoption of Healthy Retail. While the information would be openly disseminated to best allow for exposure, the goal would be to identify, capitalize, and foster small business development from East Gainesville community members first.

The broad goals would be to develop a movement of small business development focused on healthy retail that leads to a cultural and infrastructure change towards better health and equity. Integrating healthy food access with a profitability model limits tobacco can allow for better integration of chronic disease goals as well as allowing for more broad grant based partnerships. Similarly, by addressing economic development, community involvement, and healthy food access together we create a strong opportunity to improve health and quality of life collaboratively in East Gainesville.

**Participating Groups**

The program would be a collaboration of Working Food and Tobacco Free Alachua in partnership with community and neighborhood organizations in East Gainesville. The partnership would seek funding from the RWJF for two separate prizes related to tobacco based racial disparities in the South as well as healthy eating research among disparate communities. Depending on the appropriate structure, the funding can be awarded to one group and sub awarded to other groups to best execute the plan. While the University of Florida, would not be directly involved, research experts could be integrated in order to best capitalize on available research resources in the area. Similarly, the City of Gainesville and Alachua County would also be integrated to take advantage of available small business opportunities.

The specific grant proposals are mentioned below:

Healthy Eating Research

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/funding-opportunities/2019/healthy-eating-research.html>

Tobacco Inequity Research

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/funding-opportunities/2019/building-capacity-to-reduce-tobacco-inequities-in-the-south-and-midwest.html?rid=00344000024DVXoAAO&et_cid=1764976>