Business Proposal: Community Garden to address Food Deserts in Washington D.C.

Problem Statement:

In many neighborhood in Washington, DC., there just aren't enough grocery stores that sell fresh and affordable produce. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), communities with limited access to fresh food, referred to as food deserts, make it harder for people to maintain a healthy diet. Research also shows that adults who face food insecurity, such as living in a food desert, are 2 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC also highlights a lack of access to nutritious food as a leading cause of food insecurity. Students also struggle because healthy food isn't always easy to get near campus.

Almost 20% of kids and teens are obese and 16% are overweight, which can lead to health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea. Food insecurity is also higher in urban areas such as D.C. at (12.2%), rural areas facing insecurity at (11%) and suburban areas (8.8%) according to the CDC. Our project is trying to help with these by creating ways for the community to grow and access better food without having to travel far or pay high prices. These ways include starting a community garden, working with farmers markets, and partnering with food banks to make fresh food more available.

Project Plan:

Create a community garden with the help of the community, food bank, and farmers markets. Farmers markets are a good source of education in teaching the community the logistics of creating a garden. Food banks can provide food outside of fruits and veggies. The community is responsible for the community garden such as maintaining the garden and distributing the food throughout the community. The garden can hold events such as "pop-up farmers markets" that provide food to the community.

Timeline:
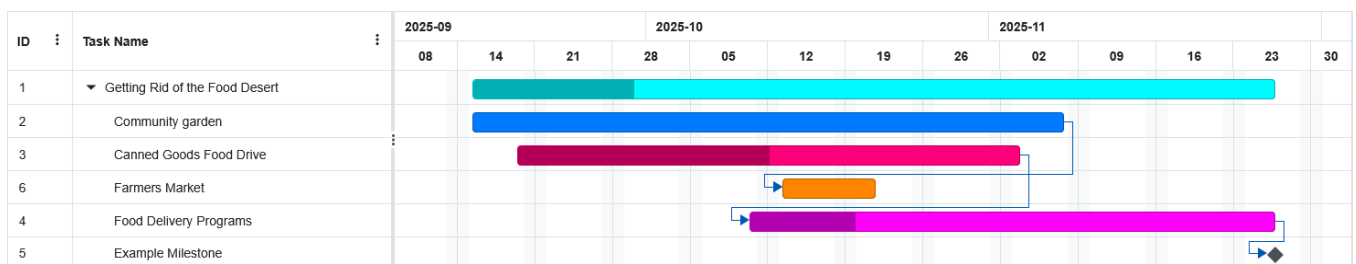
Deliverables:

Community garden (Once set up and is producing, we will put together our own farmers' market) (~30-60 days):

- Within this 60-day period, we will be able to provide crops like lettuce, cabbage, snap beans, carrots, etc.
- The first 30 days will consist of community outreach, resourcing and finding location. The next 30 days will be planting the crops and preparing for the garden to be open for the community 24/7.

Farmers markets: (reaching out so they can provide help with getting the garden started and once we have our own, we will be able to provide produce to students in an area closer to campus) (halfway through the canned food drive).

- Creating a farmers market using our own garden while outsourcing to local gardeners to create more products.

Can goods drive: (provides non-perishable food items that the garden cannot provide) (~1-2 weeks, can be done without garden being done)

- Partnering with local churches and Howard University students. These goods will be available in the garden during the day and restored bi-weekly through profit of the farmer's market.

Food delivery programs: (making food more accessible by bringing it to students) (~3/4 weeks or after the garden is set up).

- Grocery delivery system partnering with the Starship Technology delivery robots that are offered on local campuses.

Division of Tasks:

To ensure smooth coordination and equitable contributions, our team will divide responsibilities across five core roles. Each team member will also collaborate across roles when needed, since this project requires flexibility and shared accountability.

Project Lead – Basanta Baral

Basanta oversees overall progress, manages the project timeline, and ensures that all deliverables are completed on schedule. He also serves as the primary point of contact with community

partners such as food banks and farmers' markets and ensures alignment between research, operations, and communications team.

Research Lead – Couro

She conducts surveys and interviews with students and community members to understand current food access challenges. The research findings will help determine the best location for the community garden, identify priority needs (e.g., produce vs. canned goods), and provide evidence for measuring the project's long-term impact.

Operations Lead – Erick Addison

Erick designs and manages the logistics of the project, including setting up the community garden, sourcing seeds and tools, and building partnerships with farmers' markets and food banks. He also coordinates the schedule for food drives and oversees the food delivery program to ensure consistent distribution.

Communications Lead – Aaliyah

Couro also leads community outreach and engagement, using both in-person and digital strategies. This includes creating flyers, managing social media updates, and promoting events such as garden volunteer days and pop-up farmers' markets. She also works to increase student awareness and participation.

Evaluation Team – All Members

All our team members collect feedback from community members, track participation rates in events, and measure the quantity of food distributed. We will then prepare progress reports and suggest improvements to ensure the program continues to meet community needs.

We did not use AI for this project. All the work came from us as a group. We talked through the ideas, wrote everything ourselves, and split up the tasks. We also brainstormed the idea for a community garden and the steps it would take to develop one. We decided not to use AI to foster a realistic plan using real life problem we encounter in D.C. We didn't run into any problems with self-creativity.

References: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023, October 19). *Rural–urban differences in overweight and obesity, physical activity, and food security among children and adolescents*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2023/23_0136.htm

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