

J. Walsh, T. Thomas, J. Fee, J. Bartley

## Program Overview

Harrisonburg, Virginia is a refugee resettlement city:

- +50 languages spoken in the local school system
- 1/3 of households primarily speak English
- 90% of adults have incomes < \$30,000
- 80% children receive free or reduced-price school lunch

The Neighborhood Produce Market (NPM) is a collaboration among university, nonprofit, and private partners to distribute fresh produce to families that may encounter economic, social, or physical barriers to accessing fresh foods.

Through coordination with an existing mobile literacy program, the NPM has sought to address these barriers with "The Good Food Truck" by:

- visiting 13 neighborhood sites in 2019
- providing free literacy programming, nutrition education, and fresh produce to families
- serving an average of 304 households (approximately 1,298 individuals including 657 children) each month
- distributing nearly 55,000 pounds of food over an 8-month period

Previous research has identified mobile food markets as a strategy to increase access to fruit and vegetables for limited-resource families;<sup>i,ii,iii</sup> however, there has been less research on the feasibility and benefits within culturally and linguistically diverse populations.



## Study Aim

### Purpose:

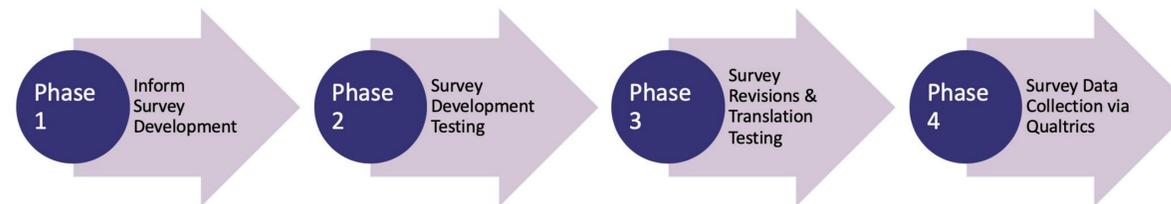
To assess the feasibility of the mobile pantry model to reduce barriers to accessing fresh, healthful food among culturally diverse families; identify perceived pantry benefits; and offer recommendations.

### Objective:

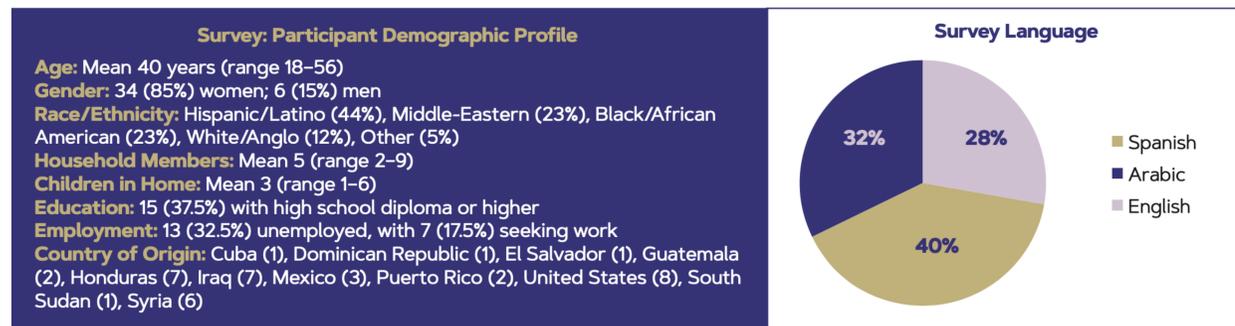
To evaluate the participant experience of the Neighborhood Produce Market (NPM), a mobile fresh food pantry, in a small Mid-Atlantic city.

## Evaluation Methods

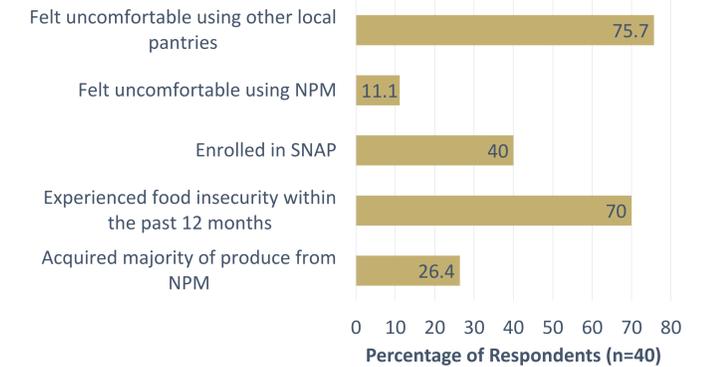
Four phases were used to develop and implement a 32-item survey for adult NPM participants with children in the household and primary language of English, Spanish, and/or Arabic. The survey was developed based on themes that emerged from interviews with NPM participants including use of food resources and benefits. Most survey item response options were based on a 3-point Likert scale (agree, neutral, disagree) with two open-ended items at the end. Certified translators assisted with survey translations and interpreters assisted with online survey testing and administration using tablets at the NPM. Descriptive statistics were conducted.



## Respondents (n=40)



## Food Resources



## Conclusion

There may be benefits to pairing a mobile fresh food pantry model like NPM with an existing mobile program, especially for multilingual communities. Most participants were comfortable using the NPM and reported several benefits. Findings may be useful to nutrition educators to address fresh food access in similar communities.

## References



## Results

### Benefits of the Neighborhood Produce Market

#### Access to Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

- 100% reported the NPM provides high quality fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 90% reported that they eat more fruits while 86.8% eat more vegetables because of the NPM.
- 89.2% reported that household members eat more fruits and vegetables because of the NPM.

#### Financial Relief

- 97.4% reported being helped financially by NPM to have money for other needs.

#### Introduction to New foods

- 97% reported being introduced to new foods they liked and 80.6% reported their children had.

#### Fostering Community

- 95% reported that the NPM helped them feel more connected to people in their community/neighborhood.

#### Cultural Appropriate and/or Preferred Foods

- 94.6% reported being happy with the variety of foods the NPM offered.
- 92.2% reported that the foods provided are liked by someone in their household.

#### Health Effects

- 92% reported the NPM has positively impacted the health of someone in their household
- 82.4% reported the NPM has positively affected their own health.

## Acknowledgements

The Blue Ridge Area Food Bank support and staff the Neighborhood Produce Market. Translators and interpreters for Spanish and Arabic languages made this work possible, including Dr. Aram Shahin, Associate Professor of Arabic at James Madison University.

## Funding

James Madison University College of Health and Behavioral Studies Collaborative Grant

