

No Food Security without Economic Security: Addressing Hunger in Two Albuquerque Communities



July, 2022



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

No Food Security without Economic Security: Addressing Hunger in Two Albuquerque Communities

Background

Food security is when you can get healthy, affordable, familiar food easily in your neighborhood. It means you can get enough food to stay healthy and not be hungry.

Economic security is when you have enough money to cover what it costs to live. In the US this means you have enough money to pay for transportation, childcare, healthcare, housing, and utilities.

When people live in communities with limited income and a high rate of poverty, it is hard to make sure there is enough money for healthy food. New Mexico has the second highest rate of poverty in the nation.

Food Insecurity in New Mexico

- 1 in 8 **people** in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.
- 1 in 8 **seniors** in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.
- 1 in 5 **children** in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.
- Nearly 1 in 3 **college students** at the University of New Mexico is at risk of hunger.

New Mexico People of Color:

- 1 in 6 **Hispanic** persons in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.
- 1 in 5 **Black** persons in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.

*This is compared to 1 in 13 **non-Hispanic White** persons in New Mexico who is at risk of hunger.*

More Data for Other Racial / Ethnic Groups

- 1 in 6 **Vietnamese Americans** is at risk of hunger.
- 1 in 5 **Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander** persons is at risk of hunger.
- 1 in 5 **Native Americans** is at risk of hunger
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, one study found that 1 in 2 Native Americans was at risk of hunger

Immigrant and Refugee Groups:

- Risk of hunger for **immigrant and refugee** groups ranges from 1 in 3 to as much as 4 out of 5

This report looks at two specific neighborhoods in Albuquerque, New Mexico: the International District and the South Valley.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Neighborhood Data

The International District is a neighborhood to the east of central Albuquerque. It has a population of about 29,000 people. Immigrant and refugee populations create a diverse mix of cultures in the International District, with about 1 in 5 people being born in another country. The International District is a rich mix of racial groups, including a higher percentage of Native Americans (10%) than in the South Valley or the city of Albuquerque.

The International District neighborhood also has a higher rate of some challenges than the City of Albuquerque overall.

- Median household income is less than half of the median income for Albuquerque
- Poverty rate is more than twice the poverty rate for Albuquerque
- Food insecurity is 10% higher than Albuquerque

It also experiences higher rates of crime than Albuquerque. Many of these challenges can trace their roots back to neighborhood changes. In the 1970's, Route 66 was rerouted and caused many businesses to close. Around the same time, when Kirtland Airforce Base relocated base housing onto the base, many houses and apartment buildings were boarded up or sold to absentee landlords.

Despite these challenges, the International District has strengths that are directly tied to the diversity of its residents. It offers a variety of ethnic stores and restaurants that are valuable to the City of Albuquerque. It is also home to the state fairgrounds.

The South Valley is a neighborhood on the southern border of the City of Albuquerque, in Bernalillo County. It has a population of about 40,000 people. Nearly 4 out of 5 people in the South Valley are Hispanic, but there are many different racial groups among this Hispanic population.

The South Valley neighborhood has a higher rate of some challenges than the City of Albuquerque overall.

- Median household income is only 71% of Albuquerque
- Poverty rate is 6% higher than Albuquerque
- Food insecurity is 2% higher than Albuquerque

The South Valley also has a rich history and culture and a beautiful landscape. This area has been occupied by Spanish and Mexican families for centuries and many families have been living here for generations. It has traditionally been a farming community and still has irrigation ditches linked to the Rio Grande.

In April and May 2022, we talked to 76 community members from these two neighborhoods. We asked them more about their thoughts and ideas related to food security. Everyone we talked to was a recipient of food distribution services in one of these neighborhoods.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings

People in the South Valley and International District have a vision of living in neighborhoods where they have increased food access by growing their own food and being able to go to food stores nearby. They also have a vision of living in clean neighborhoods with green space where they can afford available foods and the other costs of living.

- *Community gardens would be in the ideal neighborhood to help with food access and affordability (VBMS)*
- *Should have more [farmers] markets... in the area...Markets are cheaper than stores...(SVDP)*
- *Would be a nice clean neighborhood, people would be more active and outside more (RGFP)*

To improve food access, they see a need for businesses and organizations to support locating food stores in the area. They also see community members and groups working together and building resources to support community gardening.

- *Lack of available [food] stores –not many options within walking distance (JAMS)*
- *The city working more with communities. City Council and the mayor coming together (RGFP)*
- *Finances from the government to produce dairy, vegetables, etc. (SVDP)*
- *The community to help each other learn how to grow things (VBMS)*
- *The people here are a really good team for helping (SVDP)*

To improve economic security, community members see a need to address poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, crime, and safety. Community members see a need to improve the affordability of food and other costs of living. They can imagine working with community centers, places of faith, volunteers, healthcare providers, and others to make this happen. Indeed, they see many of these groups already engaging in some activities to help out.

- *Better income to afford food (RGFP)*
- *A lot of homelessness in the area (JAMS)*
- *Drug addiction is a big issue – people don't know where to go for the help (TGRC)*
- *Safety is a big issue for the community – how can community relationships improve to protect all the members of the community? (TGRC)*
- *The hardest thing is having your bags stolen while you're walking home (JAMS)*
- *If there can be [other kinds of] help—to pay rent and bills (RGFP)*
- *More food, medicine, and education (RGFP)*
- *Help with shoes, clothes, and toys for children would be really helpful (RGFP)*
- *South Valley is county rather than a part of the city - can't vote for mayor of Albuquerque, but those decisions affect the community...Political jurisdictions - paying the same taxes but not having the same resources and access as the city (SVDP)*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *Politicians - the governor should see what's going on in the neighborhoods...Where is the tax money going? (VBMS)*
- *Getting together with police to discuss issues, interactions with police to make things safer (RGFP)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

Findings in Context

Money is one of the biggest sources of stress for many people. A study by MIT says that it would take \$39.36 per hour, or about \$83,000 per year, for one adult and two children to be able to afford all of the usual costs of living in Bernalillo County, New Mexico.

The cost to live in the U.S. has gone up steadily for decades. Food, transportation, childcare, healthcare, housing, and utilities are all more expensive, but the amount we are able to buy with our wages has barely changed in forty years. Policies can influence economic trends. A recent report showed that CEO pay has skyrocketed 1,322% since 1978 and CEOs were paid 351 times as much as the typical worker in 2020.

If people have more physical access to food but less money to purchase food, they will still have food insecurity. To have long-term food security, we also need efforts to improve economic security to support housing, employment, education, and healthcare.

Racial differences in economic opportunity are often a result of “systemic barriers to wealth accumulation, wage gaps, and numerous biases in hiring practices based on racial identity alone.” Racial gaps in economic security also affect food security. Many studies show that the main barrier to accessing healthy food is cost. Low-income communities and communities of color do not have a wide variety of available grocery stores with affordable prices and variety of food. For some low-income communities, the nearest grocery store can be more than 20 miles away. Without grocery stores nearby, people may get their food at fast-food restaurants and gas stations. These places do not have varieties of produce and other healthy food that is part of a balanced diet. When there is a racial gap in economic security and neighborhood resources, that can have a domino effect. It can lead to racial gaps in food options that then lead to racial gaps in health outcomes. In Bernalillo County, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino populations all have higher rates of diabetes than White populations. These populations of color also report that they are unable to get needed medical care due to cost at higher rates than White populations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendations

The following is a list of key recommendations Roadrunner and other partners could consider to take action in addressing hunger in the International District and South Valley neighborhoods of Albuquerque.

What can we do to support food security at the community level?

- Support a coalition approach to increase access to community gardening resources.

Examples include:

- [International District Urban Agriculture Plan through Bernalillo County](#)
- [Sembrando Salud](#) through the Center of Southwest Culture, Inc

What can we do to support food security through work with businesses, government, and elected officials?

- Make sure city, county, and state-level officials are engaged in addressing community food security and economic security needs and their contributions are visible to community members
- Support local legislators to work together with businesses to incentivize and potentially subsidize food stores being located in neighborhoods with low food access. For example:
 - [Lessons learned from Pennsylvania and Maryland on how to incentivize fresh food retail in neighborhoods with low food access](#)
 - [Ideas on how to promote local government's role in food security](#)
 - Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's [Food, Farm, and Hunger Initiative](#)

What can we do to support food security by improving economic security and quality of life?

- Support coalition-building across groups addressing crime, safety, health, education, senior supports, refugee needs, places of faith, and food pantries to work on common efforts to build economic security
- Consider having the coalition support tools that could benefit all different types of economic needs, such as [Universal Basic Income](#). This tool has been [proven to have a positive impact on food security](#) in many different studies and in different populations.
- This concept could expand on programs that are already in effect, such as the [Guaranteed Basic Income program for undocumented or mixed-status immigrant families](#) being piloted by the New Mexico Economic Relief Working Group.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendations (continued)

What can food banks and food pantries do to improve what they are already doing?

- Engage with all food banks & pantries in the area to make sure there is shared awareness and support of activities, planning, and resources
- Tailor resources to support specific populations in need, such as those who are unhoused, those with nutrition-related chronic health conditions, and immigrant and refugee groups.

What are some overall recommendations to consider?

- There is no food security without economic security. Combine short-term food access efforts with long-term economic security efforts. This can help make sure you have sustainable outcomes over time.
- Spend time thinking about how you explain the need for economic security efforts. Explore the different [narratives](#) that people in the U.S. use to talk about poverty. Decide which one explains your approach to addressing economic security. This can help you clarify messaging and long-term goals.
- Understand [how policies play a part in racial wealth imbalances](#) and different economic opportunities for different racial groups. Make sure efforts to improve economic security take this context into account.
- Changes in policy and the built environment will have the biggest impact, so prioritize efforts in these areas, while also supporting local community efforts

This report was authored by Apex Evaluation in collaboration with Roadrunner® Food Bank of New Mexico. For more community findings, recommendations, and references, please see the full report here.

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Apex is a consulting and technology services company specializing in systems evaluation. We have been serving the public and nonprofit sectors for over two decades, providing program planning, evaluation, facilitation, and technical assistance, including technology for data collection and reporting.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 BACKGROUND

What is food security?
What creates food security?
How does food security touch different parts of our lives?
What other factors are related to food security?
What does food insecurity look like in New Mexico?

7 NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

What do we already know?
What can we still learn?

20 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

21 FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

Why isn't it enough to improve access to food?
What about long-term trends, like rising costs of living?
Are these needs the same for everyone? What about racial differences?

24 RECOMMENDATIONS

How can we get started to improve food security for the South Valley and International District neighborhoods?
What can we do to support food security at the community level?
What can we do to support food security through work with businesses, government, and elected officials?
What can we do to support food security by improving economic security and quality of life?
What can food banks and food pantries do to improve what they are already doing?
What are some overall recommendations to consider?

27 ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

30 REFERENCES

35 APPENDICES

BACKGROUND

Roadrunner® Food Bank of New Mexico is a member of Feeding America, a national network of food banks. Roadrunner is the largest nonprofit working to provide food to New Mexicans facing hunger. Roadrunner and its statewide network provided nearly 60 million pounds of food to New Mexicans facing hunger in fiscal year 2020. The network is made of hundreds of hunger relief partners in all 33 New Mexico counties and includes food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, group homes, school partners, healthcare locations, senior housing sites and centers, and regional food bank partners. Every week, the statewide hunger relief network touches the lives of tens of thousands of children, families, adults, and seniors struggling with hunger. In 2022, Roadrunner and Apex Evaluation conducted an evaluation of the South Valley and International District neighborhoods of Albuquerque. The goal of the evaluation was to see what additional support was needed for their current hunger relief programs and what resources they already had.

What is food security?

When you feel secure about something, you feel confident and safe. Food security means...

You can feel confident you can get food when you need it.

You can get enough food to stay healthy and not be hungry.

You can get healthy food.

You can get food that is familiar to you and your culture.

You can afford the food.

You can get healthy, affordable, familiar food easily in your neighborhood.

Food *insecurity* means you cannot feel confident about these things. In fact, thinking about these things may make you feel worried, anxious, or afraid.

What creates food security?

The United Nations has an agency that is called The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). This agency leads global efforts to defeat hunger. It defines food security as:

When all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.¹

BACKGROUND

The FAO says food security is made up of four parts.¹ These parts are always working together at the same time.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Physical availability of food | Grocery stores, farmer's markets, or community gardens in your neighborhood. |
| 2. Economic and physical access to food | Food that is affordable and you have transportation to get to it. |
| 3. Food utilization | Food that is familiar to you and your culture, so you are more likely to eat it. Making sure food is not wasted. Preparation of food and distribution of the food between household members. |
| 4. Stability of the three over time | You can't just have any of the first three things once in a while. You always need all three of them at the same time. |

Some experts say we should also make sure people have control over these factors themselves and that the factors are set up in a sustainable way.²

How does food security touch different parts of our lives?

There are many reasons behind food insecurity. Hunger experts and public health workers use a tool they call the Socio-Ecological Model (SEM) to explain how these reasons relate to each other. The SEM shows nesting circles that make up different parts of our lives. The SEM theory says that changes in the largest circle will have the biggest impact. Using the SEM, we can look at how food security touches different parts of our lives and find ways to create change.

BACKGROUND

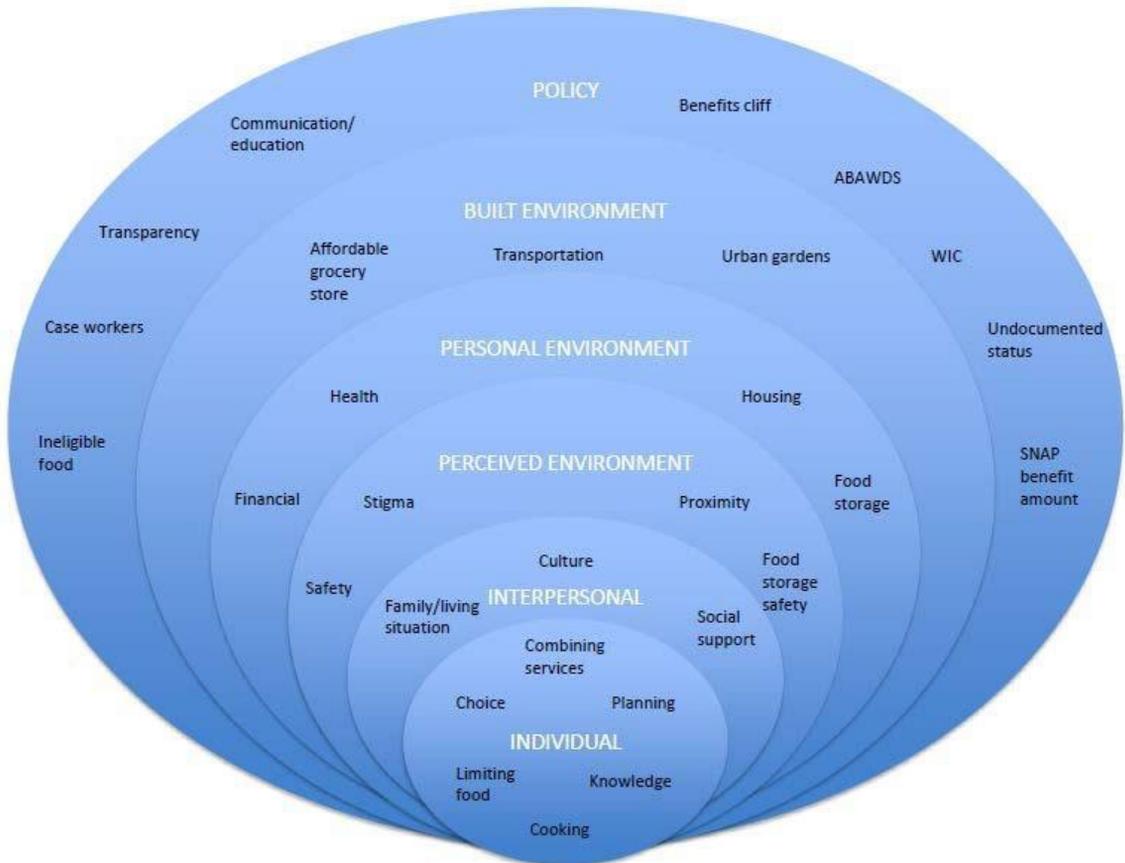


Figure 1. Social ecological model of food insecurity in the Portland, Oregon region.³

What other factors are related to food security?

People are healthy or unhealthy because of many factors. Where someone lives, the education and job that they have, and the people in their lives can all influence health. (See Figure 2.) Food security is related to these factors, too, and is important for health.

BACKGROUND

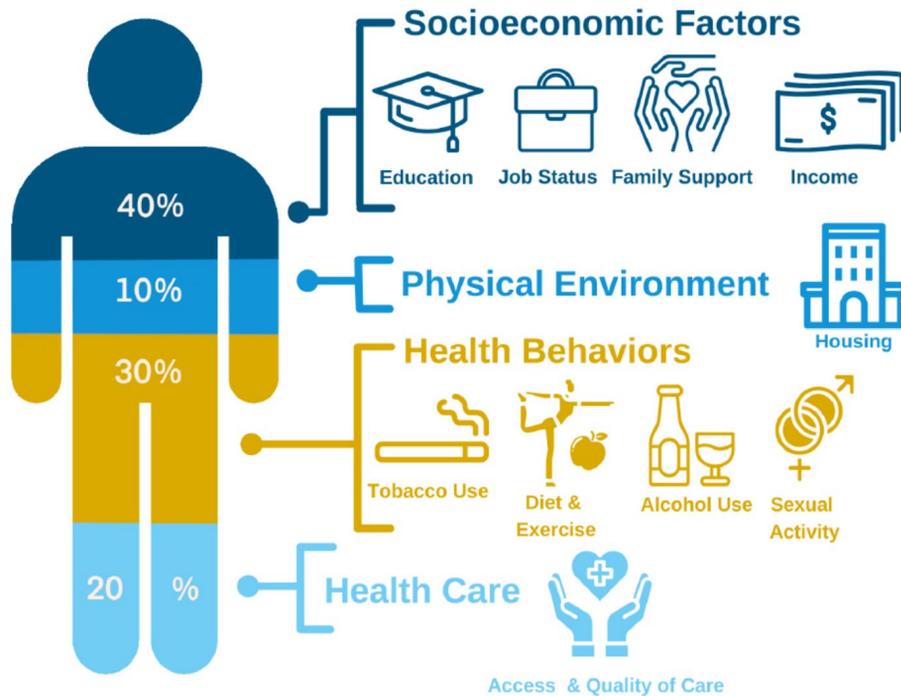


Figure 2. Social Determinants of Health
Source: [UCLA Health. Social Determinants of Health](#) ⁴

People have enough money for food when their income can at least cover what it costs to live. The cost of living in America includes many different kinds of expenses. Food is one of those expenses, but people also need to pay for transportation, childcare, healthcare, housing, and utilities. When income is limited, people must make tough decisions on how to pay for necessities like food, medicine, and power for their homes. People who are food insecure are also less likely to get good jobs, go to college, receive healthcare, and have safe housing.

People who are food insecure can also be nutrition insecure. Nutrition insecurity means not having access to enough nutritious foods to stay healthy.⁵ Four out of five people who are food insecure choose inexpensive unhealthy foods as a way to cope with not having enough food.⁶ People who are food insecure can also sometimes cope by eating more when food is available and less when food is not available. This can lead to nutrition insecurity.

Nutrition insecurity can lead to nutrition-related chronic disease over time. In communities with high rates of food insecurity, we also see high rates of diet-related disease. This can create

BACKGROUND

what is called the “cycle of food insecurity and chronic disease”.⁷ When people don’t have enough money for healthy food, they eat more unhealthy food. This can make them sick. When they get sick they need more money for medicine and doctor visits. This means less money for food. And the cycle continues. It is estimated that adults in New Mexico who are food insecure spend an average of \$173 more per year for healthcare costs than adults who are food secure.⁸

What does food insecurity look like in New Mexico?

When people live in communities with limited income and a high rate of poverty, it is hard to make sure there is enough money for healthy food. New Mexico has the second highest rate of poverty in the nation.⁹ High poverty rates can have an impact on food insecurity and risk of hunger for people living in New Mexico.

New Mexico: 1 in 8 people in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.¹⁰

New Mexico Children: 1 in 5 children in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.¹⁰

New Mexico Seniors: 1 in 8 seniors in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.¹¹

New Mexico People of Color:

- 1 in 5 Black persons in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.¹⁰
- 1 in 6 Hispanic persons in New Mexico is at risk of hunger.¹⁰
- This is compared to 1 in 13 non-Hispanic White persons in New Mexico who is at risk of hunger.¹⁰

Data on food insecurity for Asian American persons in New Mexico are not available. There are limited data available on this population in other regions. Findings show that food insecurity for Asian populations differs based on ethnicity, and is closely related to the immigration histories of each different ethnic group.¹²

The most common Asian ethnic groups in Bernalillo County, NM are: Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, Japanese, Korean, and Thai.¹³

- 1 in 50 Japanese Americans is at risk of hunger.¹²
- South Asian, Korean, Chinese, and Filipino Americans are all at risk of hunger at rates below the national average of 1 in 10.¹²
- However, 1 in 6 Vietnamese Americans is at risk of hunger.¹²
- We were not able to find any specific information on hunger in Thai Americans.

Food insecurity can be greater for Asian populations that have a more recent immigration or refugee history.¹⁴ Similar to Asian populations, there are also no data available on food insecurity for immigrant and refugee populations who live in New Mexico.

BACKGROUND

Immigrants come to a country to live there, temporarily or permanently.¹⁵ Refugees have to flee their home country because they are being persecuted. They have to show proof that this is happening and apply for refugee status before they come to the US. Only specific kinds of persecution are considered, such as persecution based on race, religion, nationality, member in a social group, or political opinion.¹⁶

Even at the national level, there is limited data on food insecurity for immigrant and refugee populations across the US. What we do know is that food insecurity is very often a problem for these populations. The severity of the problem varies depending on their specific population histories and experiences.

- Risk of hunger for immigrant and refugee groups ranges from 1 in 3 to as many as 4 out of 5.^{17,18}

There are no data on food insecurity for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations in New Mexico. National data shows that:

- 1 in 5 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander persons is at risk of hunger.¹⁴

There is no data on food insecurity for Native Americans in New Mexico. However, national data shows that:

- 1 in 5 Native Americans is at risk of hunger¹⁹
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, one study found that 1 in 2 Native Americans was at risk of hunger²⁰

I've heard often that there is no word for hunger or poverty in Keres or other indigenous languages, because no one would be left hungry or without what they need to survive. But now, Native Americans have some of the highest rates of food insecurity, and highest rates of diabetes. We need to provide our Tribal communities the necessary resources for a New Mexico traditional meal and to have food on their tables.

- U.S. Representative Teresa Leger Fernández²¹

College Students at the University of New Mexico:

- Nearly 1 in 3 college students at the University of New Mexico is at risk of hunger.²²

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

What do we already know?

This report looks at two specific neighborhoods in Albuquerque, New Mexico: the South Valley and the International District.

The lack of fresh, healthy foods is most apparent in two of Albuquerque's most populated areas: urban International District and rural South Valley. A drive through major streets in both communities reveals the abundance of fast food restaurants and convenience stores, but a scarcity of healthy food options like farmers' markets and supermarkets.

- Leigh Caswell, Vice President for Community Health, Presbyterian Health Services²³

The International District is a neighborhood to the east of central Albuquerque. It has a population of about 29,000 people. Immigrant and refugee populations create a diverse mix of cultures in the International District, with about 1 in 5 people being born in another country. The International District is a rich mix of racial groups, including a higher percentage of Native Americans (10%) than in the South Valley or the city of Albuquerque.

The International District neighborhood also has a higher rate of some challenges than the City of Albuquerque overall.

- Median household income is less than half of the median income for Albuquerque
- Poverty rate is more than twice the poverty rate for Albuquerque
- Food insecurity is 10% higher than Albuquerque

It also experiences higher rates of crime than Albuquerque overall. Many of these challenges can trace their roots back to neighborhood changes, as described by the East Central Ministries community group on their website.²⁴ Route 66 used to be the residential and commercial heart of the neighborhood. But in the 1970's when the interstate was constructed through the center of Albuquerque, Route 66 was re-routed. This caused many businesses like restaurants, hotels, and gas stations, to close. Around the same time, Kirtland Airforce Base relocated base housing onto the base. Many of the houses and apartment buildings were boarded up or sold to absentee landlords. These two historical changes contributed to the challenges of this neighborhood.

Despite these challenges, the International District has strengths that are directly tied to the diversity of its residents. It offers a variety of ethnic stores and restaurants that are valuable to the City of Albuquerque. It is also home to the state fairgrounds.

The South Valley is a neighborhood on the southern border of the City of Albuquerque, in Bernalillo County. It has a population of about 40,000 people. Nearly 4 out of 5 people in the South Valley are Hispanic, but there are many different racial groups among this Hispanic population. (See Appendix 1 for more details.)

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

The South Valley neighborhood has a higher rate of some challenges than the City of Albuquerque overall.

- Median household income is only 71% of the median income for Albuquerque
- Poverty rate is 6% higher than the poverty rate for Albuquerque
- Food insecurity is 2% higher than the food insecurity rate for Albuquerque

The South Valley also has a rich history and culture and a beautiful landscape. This area has been occupied by Spanish and Mexican families for centuries and many families have been living here for generations. It has traditionally been a farming community and still has irrigation ditches linked to the Rio Grande.²⁵

What can we still learn?

We decided to talk to residents of the South Valley and International District directly to ask them more about their thoughts and ideas related to food security. In April and May 2022, we talked to 76 community members from these two neighborhoods. Everyone we talked to was a recipient of food distribution services in one of these neighborhoods. For more information on how we structured this study, please see the “About this Evaluation” section of this report.

There were 59 survey respondents

- 42 survey respondents from the South Valley
 - 21 from Rio Grande Food Project (RGFP)
 - 20 from SVDP Holy Family (SVDP)
- 18 survey respondents from the International District
 - 18 from Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)

There were 17 focus group participants

- 8 focus group participants from the South Valley
 - 8 from John Adams Middle School (JAMS)
- 9 focus group participants from the International District
 - 8 from Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico (TGRC)
 - 1 from Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)

We asked all participants the same five questions:

- What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like?
- What keeps this from being a reality?
- Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?
- What additional help from others could make it a reality?
- What activities are already in process to address these needs?

The following section includes community responses to these questions, organized by theme.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

		What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like?	What keeps this from being a reality?	Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?	What additional help from others could make it a reality?	What activities are already in process to address these needs?
Physical Access to Food	Community	Locally grown fresh food / community access to water to grow food	Lack of access to water, time, and resources for family gardens	Community members / groups	Support from community groups	
	Business	Food stores that are close by	Lack of food stores nearby	Businesses / Organizations	Support from businesses	
Economic Security / Affordability	Costs of Living and Quality of Life	More affordable options for food / support to afford costs of living	Lack of farmer's markets for affordable food Poverty and homelessness Drug addiction Crime and lack of safety	Community centers Places of faith Volunteers	Support for other costs of living Support from healthcare providers	Schools, places of faith, community leaders, clinics, senior center, food distribution, Roadrunner
		Clean neighborhoods that provide green space and physical activity				
	Government		Lack of political representation for neighborhood needs	Politicians / Government	Support from government	

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

FOOD ACCESS: COMMUNITY THEME

What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like?

Locally grown fresh food / community access to water to grow food

- *Grown vegetables, more beans grown locally (SVDP)*
- *Irrigation ditches don't have much water, have a hard time planting garden, no access to water limits can be done in communities (RGFP)*
- *Would be nice to have a neighborhood garden that everyone is involved in. Would have fresh foods available (VBMS)*
- *Gardens - making the food more accessible and affordable (VBMS)*
- *Community gardens would be in the ideal neighborhood to help with food access and affordability (VBMS)*
- *Would be nice to have gardens for local and fresh produce (JAMS)*

What keeps this from being a reality?

Lack of access to water, time, and resources for family gardens

- *Not being able to water - would like to grow own food (SVDP)*
- *Wish the government would pay for growing food, need more people to grow food (SVDP)*
- *Gardening is a lot of work - people are working full time jobs, don't have the time to garden (VBMS)*

Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?

Community members / groups

- *The community to help each other learn how to grow things (VBMS)*
- *Local groups, people who live here... (VBMS)*
- *People that get together and work as a team - the people here are a really good team for helping (SVDP)*

What additional help from others could make it a reality?

Support from community

- *Working together as a community to find help for everyone (RGFP)*
- *Group of people coming together, taking time to donate and volunteer (SVDP)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

FOOD ACCESS: BUSINESS THEME

What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like?

Food stores that are close by

- *Having stores closer to you. Other stores have closed, but nothing has opened up since (VBMS)*
- *Grocery stores closer, just all houses, Walmart is the only thing close by. Smaller grocery stores like bodegas (RGFP)*

What keeps this from being a reality?

Lack of food stores that are close by

- *Lack of available stores –not many options within walking distance (JAMS)*
- *Family Dollar nearby closed because it was too dangerous (robbed a lot) and there was not enough staff (JAMS)*

Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?

Businesses / Organizations

- *More businesses - instead of throwing away food, call to have it picked up. This could create jobs and stop food waste (SVDP)*
- *Maybe some organizations to help with homelessness (VBMS)*

What additional help from others could make it a reality?

Support from businesses

- *Stores or businesses could donate (SVDP)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

ECONOMIC SECURITY: COSTS OF LIVING AND QUALITY OF LIFE THEME

What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like?

More affordable options for food / support to afford costs of living

- *More helpful to have more options. Food and gas is too expensive (VBMS)*
- *More affordable food - right now everything is expensive (SVDP)*
- *If there can be [other kinds of] help—to pay rent and bills (RGFP)*
- *Food prices have gone up significantly since last month...Eggs have gone up nearly \$5 for 60 dozen (from \$10 to \$15) ... On disability, can't get food stamps (VBMS)*
- *More food, medicine, and education (RGFP)*

Clean neighborhoods that provide green space and physical activity

- *Would be a nice clean neighborhood, people would be more active and outside more (RGFP)*
- *More parks for sports (RGFP)*
- *Need more things for the kids - not a lot of community spaces to interact in, to become familiar with the neighborhood (VBMS)*

What keeps this from being a reality?

Crime and lack of safety

- *Too much crime, you don't feel safe in the streets (RGFP)*
- *This area is hard, safety is a big concern (VBMS)*
- *International District is having a hard time - people aren't safe (VBMS)*
- *You can't go a lot of places without people bothering for money...You don't feel safe, you want to help others, but you're scared (RGFP)*
- *Safety is a big issue for the community – how can community relationships improve to protect all the members of the community? (TGRC)*
- *The hardest thing is having your bags stolen while you're walking home (JAMS)*

Drug addiction

- *Drug addiction is a big issue – people don't know where to go for the help (TGRC)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

ECONOMIC SECURITY: COSTS OF LIVING AND QUALITY OF LIFE THEME (continued)

Poverty and homelessness

- *Lack of funds, there's no work and no money for food (RGFP)*
- *Homelessness...People not working, not going out into the community (SVDP)*
- *Better income to afford food (RGFP)*
- *A lot of homelessness in the area...Violence and safety issues...Don't feel comfortable going out (VBMS)*
- *A lot of homelessness in the area (JAMS)*
- *The prices of things are too expensive (JAMS)*

Lack of farmer's markets for affordable food

- *Should have more markets - no more farmers markets in the area...Markets are cheaper than stores...(SVDP)*

Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?

Community members / groups

- *The community to help each other learn how to grow things (VBMS)*
- *Local groups, people who live here... (VBMS)*
- *People that get together and work as a team - the people here are a really good team for helping (SVDP)*

Community centers

- *Community centers should help out more, more spaces available for people to come to (RGFP)*

Places of faith

- *Churches (SVDP)*
- *Churches may be helpful (VBMS)*

Volunteers

- *More volunteers, more people talking about the help (RGFP)*
- *The good people that help out – volunteers (SDVP)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
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NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

ECONOMIC SECURITY: COSTS OF LIVING AND QUALITY OF LIFE THEME (continued)

What additional help from others could make it a reality?

Support for other costs of living

- *Help with shoes, clothes, and toys for children would be really helpful (RGFP)*

Support from healthcare providers

- *More hospitals and doctors close by (RGFP)*
- *Giving out medicine for the elderly (VBMS)*

What activities are already in process to address these needs?

Roadrunner

- *No others, Roadrunner and Rio Grande Food Project are what people mainly know (RGFP)*
- *We have Roadrunner and no one else (SVDP)*
- *Just know of Roadrunner, don't think there's anything else out there (VBMS)*
- *Only know of Roadrunner, they really help out and are convenient (Note: this respondent worked at the school where the distribution takes place, so they're able to pick up a box during their work break) (VBMS)*

Food pantries

- *Food Bank project, Casa de Salud, Casa Esperanza (RGFP)*
- *Just the food distribution at the State Fair (VBMS)*
- *Picking up for older neighbors who can't make it to distributions...One distribution site at the State Fairgrounds (SVDP)*
- *Storehouse is a really good resource for a lot of support (TGRC)*

Schools

- *Schools do a lot too - Atrisco Heritage does a food bank (RGFP)*
- *Highlands, Manzano Mesa schools have help (VBMS)*
- *School on Alamosa used to have a food bank, but not anymore...SVDP is only one I know of now*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

ECONOMIC SECURITY: COSTS OF LIVING AND QUALITY OF LIFE THEME (continued)

What activities are already in process to address these needs? (continued)

Places of faith

- *Catholic Services help out (SVDP)*
- *Churches are good for gas, utility, food, etc. help (TGRC)*

Health clinics

- *First Choice clinic (SVDP)*
- *Goes to South Valley Clinic and they are great at telling people about what's going on (SVDP)*

Senior Center

- *Goes to senior center for help (RGFP)*

Neighborhood

- *Sometimes there are resources set up outside the building - couple weeks ago gave out free phones...Serves a good purpose (RGFP)*
- *There's a lot of places that help (RGFP)*

Nonprofits

- *The free store/ReStore is helpful for household items (TGRC)*
- *Goodwill/The Salvation Army is helpful (TGRC)*

Community leaders

- *Ana Margarita (JAMS Community Coordinator) has been helpful in sharing resources (JAMS)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

ECONOMIC SECURITY: GOVERNMENT THEME

What keeps neighborhoods with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods from being a reality?

Lack of political representation for neighborhood needs

- *South Valley is county rather than a part of the city - can't vote for mayor of ABQ, but those decisions affect the community...Political jurisdictions - paying the same taxes but not having the same resources and access as the city" (SVDP)*
- *Politicians - the governor should see what's going on in the neighborhoods...Where is the tax money going? (VBMS)*

Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?

Politicians / Government

- *The city working more with communities. City Council and the mayor coming together (RGFP)*
- *Politicians should concentrate on helping (RGFP)*
- *The government would be able to help, they're supposed to support us...It's not good to help others somewhere else and not help their country (SVDP)*
- *More security/police in the neighborhoods (VBMS)*

What additional help from others could make it a reality?

Support from government

- *Finances from the government to produce dairy, vegetables, etc. (SVDP)*
- *Getting together with police to discuss issues, interactions with police to make things safer (RGFP)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

BONUS FEEDBACK

Although we did not ask these questions directly, people also responded with their thoughts about Roadrunner and the food pantries they use...

How do people feel about current food bank and food pantry supports?

- *Roadrunner has really done a lot; people here are so nice... (RGFP)*
- *Roadrunner helps a lot in this area (VBMS)*
- *Roadrunner is giving a lot of help already with the food (VBMS)*
- *Appreciate Roadrunner for all their help (VBMS)*
- *Holy Family does a great job...My parents used to come, now I come...Neighborhoods in this area like this one due to Holy Family accommodating the handicap (SDVP)*
- *Sometimes we don't have anything and they give us oil, eggs, milk, all the basics (SDVP)*
- *Apart from food, I don't know what else Roadrunner can give away (VBMS)*
- *Roadrunner has been a great help, huge help for us...They and the school (Van Buren MS) let us know what's happening (VBMS)*

What challenges do these food banks and food pantries experience?

- *The number of clients almost doubled since the pandemic started (VBMS)*
- *Serving a high-risk population –still practicing COVID safety (VBMS)*
- *Not sure if other places have reopened after the pandemic (VBMS)*
- *Food that people don't know how to use can get thrown away (TGRC)*
- *Clients who also serve as volunteers (VBMS)*
- *Staffing limits how many days the bank can be open –La Mesa went from 5 days a week to 3 days because of staffing (VBMS)*

Improvements: More food banks and food pantries

- *To have more food banks in the community (SVDP)*
- *Have applied for stamps but haven't gotten, so more food banks would be helpful (RGFP)*
- *Would like more distribution in more spaces (VBMS)*
- *More food (VBMS)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

BONUS FEEDBACK (continued)

Improvements: What's offered in distributions

- *Good if there were more options...Before COVID, used to set up in the church and you can pick out what you need. The box with items you might not use, can give the stuff to neighbors to use...(RGFP)*
- *Some tips on how children can eat healthier (VBMS)*
- *Recipe cards or having someone at the distribution site who can walk through what the foods are (TGRC)*
- *Would like recipe cards on some of the things in the box (JAMS)*
- *Having a list of what's included in the box each week (TGRC)*
- *Maybe could give seeds so each family can grow things (VBMS)*
- *Open to community members, but targeted towards families that go to the school (VBMS)*
- *Offer pet food alongside other food (TGRC)*
- *Would like to have Roadrunner provide reusable shopping bags –helpful for transporting food, especially for those who don't have a car (VBMS)*

Improvements: Where / when distributions happen

- *Food distribution is often during the day during work hours –hard to get to if they overlap with working hours (JAMS)*
- *Mobile food deliveries for people who can't make it to locations (TGRC)*
- *Would like a list of dates/times/locations to know where they can go for food (JAMS)*

South Valley	JAMS - John Adams Middle School RGFP - Rio Grande Food Project SVDP - SVDP Holy Family
International District	TGRC - Transgender Resource Center of NM VBMS - Van Buren Middle School

NEIGHBORHOOD DATA

Community leader insights

We shared early findings from community members with the community leaders who helped recruit participants. These are leaders who serve the South Valley and International District neighborhoods and facilitate food distributions. Our goal was to see if there was anything missing in the data and if our interpretations sounded right to them.

Community leaders were a little surprised to hear that people were interested in locally grown food and community gardening. Some said they had never heard these interests from community members directly. Others said they had offered some support in the past and found little interest. They all agreed that it was worth it to explore the topic some more. They thought it might be the case that this interest was only mentioned by residents of the South Valley, and that residents of the International District might have other priorities to address first (such as being chronically unsheltered). We were able to review the data and found that this was not the case - residents from both neighborhoods mentioned an interest in this topic. See Appendix 2 for a listing of findings organized by neighborhood.

Community leaders all confirmed that folks are hungry and struggling with where to find food that is good for them.

Community leaders offered some additional insights about current food distribution practices in these neighborhoods and emphasized the need to coordinate these efforts and raise awareness of all offerings for community members. They also suggested additional ways to coordinate with Roadrunner that will be listed below in the Recommendations section.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Hunger is a particular risk for children, college students, the elderly, people of color, and immigrants and refugees in New Mexico. The South Valley and International District neighborhoods have a higher rate of hunger than the City of Albuquerque or the state of New Mexico, on average. And New Mexico already has a high rate of hunger. Hunger and other economic needs are related to historical and community changes.

People in the South Valley and International District have a vision of living in neighborhoods where they have increased food access by growing their own food and being able to go to food stores nearby. They also have a vision of living in clean neighborhoods with green space where they can afford available foods and the other costs of living.

To improve food access, they see a need for businesses and organizations to support locating food stores in the area. They also see community members and groups working together and building resources to support community gardening.

To improve economic security, community members see a need to address poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, crime, and safety. Community members see a need to improve the affordability of food and other costs of living. They can imagine working with community centers, places of faith, volunteers, healthcare providers, and others to make this happen. Indeed, they see many of these groups already engaging in some activities to help out.

FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

Why isn't it enough to improve access to food?

Food security means that people have food available and are able to access it. Being able to afford food is linked to other costs of living, like housing, transportation, childcare, and healthcare. A study by MIT says that a living wage for one adult and two children living in Bernalillo County, New Mexico would be \$39.36 per hour, or about \$83,000 per year.²⁶ This is the amount it would take to be able to afford all of the usual costs of living.

If other costs of living become more expensive, it can be difficult to afford food. Sometimes specific events in life can lead to not being able to afford food. This includes losing a job, reduced hours at a job, illness, disability, sudden and big bills (such as medical bills), moving to a rural area with fewer options, and becoming homeless.

Economic security means that people have enough money to meet all of their needs. Economic security is connected to food security. If people are able to grow their own food, they have better access to food that does not depend as much on having more money. However, if people do not have enough money and there are not a lot of options for food, people may have a hard time accessing food. In the same way, if people have more physical access to food but less money to purchase food, they will still have food insecurity. To have long-term food security, there must be both increased food access and availability and decreased money stress.

Efforts to improve food security are important to also improve the health of individuals, families, and communities. But we also need efforts to improve economic security to support housing, employment, education, and healthcare. These efforts should be combined for long-term success.

What about long-term trends, like rising costs of living?

Money is one of the biggest sources of stress for many people. Many people face economic insecurity, where they do not have enough money to meet all of their needs. Many people struggle financially because of how expensive goods and services have become. The costs of food, housing, childcare, and healthcare have gone up the past couple of years. In April 2022, food prices went up almost 11 percent compared to the year before.²⁷ In particular, prices for meat (including chicken, turkey, and fish) and eggs went up 14 percent compared to last year. Meat and eggs being more expensive is something community members in the International District and the South Valley talk about. For example, a dozen eggs used to be around \$1-\$2, but those same eggs are now over \$5. While some programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help people struggling to get by to afford food, it doesn't cover everything and healthy groceries are not always affordable. SNAP benefits have also not kept up with inflation. And not everyone who needs help qualifies for SNAP.

FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

High costs of living also relate to financial struggles. As things cost more, salaries should also go up to help people afford rent, food, and other costs of living. In the U.S., the minimum wage is not going up to match the high costs of goods. People are not able to buy as much with their money because things are too expensive. For example, \$20 used to be about 10 packages of eggs, but with higher food prices that same \$20 is only 4 packages of eggs.

Another area that is more expensive is the cost of gas, with the average cost of \$4.67 per gallon in the U.S..²⁸ As gas prices go up, people may have less money to spend on food and other costs of living. Higher gas prices keeps people from being able to get food when grocery stores are far away and only accessible by car.

This is not just a recent trend. The cost to live in the US has gone up steadily for decades, but our wages (when adjusted for inflation) have barely changed in forty years.²⁹ Food, transportation, childcare, healthcare, housing, and utilities are all more expensive, but individuals and families do not have more money. People must make tough decisions on how to pay for necessities like food, medicine, and power for their homes. People also make hard choices when getting food, as the same amount of money can buy fewer household needs. People who are less likely to get good jobs, go to college, receive healthcare, and have safe housing are also more likely to be food insecure. Policies can influence economic trends. A recent report showed that CEO pay has skyrocketed 1,322% since 1978 and CEOs were paid 351 times as much as the typical worker in 2020.³⁰

Are these needs the same for everyone? What about racial differences?

As Feeding America states, "Hunger in African American, Latino, and Native American communities is higher because of systemic racial injustice. To achieve a hunger-free America, we must address the root causes of hunger and structural and systemic inequities."

It is not an accident when communities of color have higher rates of food insecurity, health problems, and economic insecurity. It is not an accident when communities of color have fewer job opportunities, lower quality housing, and less access to quality healthcare and education. It is not because people who live in these communities don't try as hard. It is because these communities have not received the same support and investment as other communities. It is because many different institutions and policies have created these differences in support and investment.³¹

We do not have enough data to talk about these differences in support and investment for every different racial and ethnic group discussed in this report. Information about racial differences in food systems and economic security often focuses on the differences between Black and white

FINDINGS IN CONTEXT

populations. Sometimes information is also included for Latino/a groups. Data are often missing to talk about the needs of Native American populations. (Abigail Echo-Hawk, Director of the Urban Indian Health Institute, calls this issue [data genocide](#).³²) And information about Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander populations often mixes together information about different ethnicities with different backgrounds and opportunities, which can mask the needs of some groups. So, we have some information to talk about this issue. But we need more. A lack of data does not mean a lack of need.

While people of all backgrounds deal with economic insecurity, people who identify as Latino/a or Black may have more concerns about money.³³ Recent polls show more than 75% of Latino/a voters and 61% of Black voters say they have regular money stress.³³ Long-term economic insecurity can affect people's ability to create a better life for themselves and their families. Economic insecurity can keep people from opportunities to improve their economic security. Many people of color who work in the food industry are paid very little and do not have benefits from their employer like paid sick leave, parental leave, or health insurance.³⁴ People of color are also less likely to be in higher positions such as management. Many people who work in food services or distribution deal with food insecurity because of the low pay. On the other side, CEOs of these companies are more likely to be white men. CEOs also make over 300 times the average pay of the average employee and do not deal with economic or food insecurity.³⁰

These racial differences in economic opportunity are often a result of “systemic barriers to wealth accumulation,³¹ wage gaps, and numerous biases in hiring practices based on racial identity alone.”³³ For example, Latino/a South Valley residents who are interested in efforts to produce locally grown food may face greater challenges than non-Hispanic white residents³⁵ due to structural racism present in institutions, policies, and funding including the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA),³⁶ the U.S. Farm Bill,³⁷ and land grant institutions such as government and higher education.³⁸

Racial gaps in economic security also affect food security. Many studies show that the main barrier to accessing healthy food is cost.^{39,40,41} Low-income communities and communities of color do not have a wide variety of available grocery stores with affordable prices and variety of food. Latino/a or Black neighborhoods have fewer grocery stores or have to travel longer distances to the stores compared to other neighborhoods.⁴² For some low-income communities, the nearest grocery store can be more than 20 miles away. Without grocery stores nearby, people may get their food at fast-food restaurants and gas stations. These places do not have varieties of produce and other healthy food that are part of a balanced diet.⁴³ When there is a racial gap in economic security and neighborhood resources, that can have a domino effect. It can lead to racial gaps in food options that then lead to racial gaps in health outcomes. In Bernalillo County, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, and Hispanic/Latino populations all have higher rates of diabetes than White populations. These populations of color also report that they are unable to get needed medical care due to cost at higher rates than White populations.⁴⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

How can we get started to improve food security for the South Valley and International District neighborhoods?

The Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger is a model that could be followed to increase food security in New Mexico. The Blueprint is “a multi-year plan to end hunger for all Coloradans” that began in 2018. The approach builds upon a statewide network of existing partners, programs, and projects. For example, the Blueprint staff and steering committee identified five priority areas.⁴⁵

1. Leverage federal, state, county, community, and school resources
2. Improve healthy access to food
3. Expand outreach and education
4. Maximize federal programs
5. Strengthen the food safety net

We recommend that food security work in New Mexico draws upon the work of the Blueprint by replicating some of the ways the blueprint has worked. New Mexico could also forge a new path for anti-hunger work that is very collaborative, works across sectors, provides leadership to stakeholders across the state, and creates its own priority areas.

The following is a list of recommendations Roadrunner and other partners could consider to take action in addressing hunger in the International District and South Valley neighborhoods of Albuquerque. The first effort of this report was to understand these communities. What follows will guide Roadrunner in identifying some key opportunities to implement recommendations in the next couple of years. It can also inform ongoing strategic efforts.

What can we do to support food security at the community level?

- Support a coalition approach to community gardening resources - share what others are doing to support community access to resources like gardening supplies, water access, seed access, and education on how to garden. Keep in mind that time poverty may still be a barrier to people implementing this option, even if resources are available. Examples include:
 - [International District Urban Agriculture Plan through Bernalillo County](#)⁴⁶
 - [Sembrando Salud](#) through the Center of Southwest Culture, Inc⁴⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can we do to support food security through work with businesses, government, and elected officials?

- Make sure city, county, and state-level officials are engaged in addressing community food security and economic security needs and their contributions are visible to community members
- Support local legislators to work together with businesses to incentivize and potentially subsidize food stores being located in neighborhoods with low food access. For example:
 - [Lessons learned from Pennsylvania and Maryland on how to incentivize fresh food retail in neighborhoods with low food access](#)⁴⁸
 - [Ideas on how to promote local government's role in food security](#)⁴⁹
 - Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's [Food, Farm, and Hunger Initiative](#) includes an investment of more than \$24 million in food banks, hunger relief organizations and farmers – building up their capacity to feed New Mexicans dealing with food insecurity.⁵⁰

What can we do to support food security by improving economic security and quality of life?

- Support coalition-building across groups addressing crime, safety, health, education, senior supports, refugee needs, places of faith, and food pantries to work on common efforts to build economic security
- Consider having the coalition support tools that could benefit all different types of economic needs, such as [Universal Basic Income](#).⁵¹ This tool has been [proven to have a positive impact on food security](#) in many different studies and in different populations.⁵²
- This concept could expand on programs that are already in effect, such as the [Guaranteed Basic Income program for undocumented or mixed-status immigrant families](#) being piloted by the New Mexico Economic Relief Working Group.⁵³

What can food banks and food pantries do to improve what they are already doing?

- Engage with all food banks and pantries in the area to make sure:
 - There is shared awareness of what is being offered to community members
 - Information about all food distribution resources is shared with community members
 - Include information for community members about other food resources as well, such as the free meals that are available at the Presbyterian Hospital cafeteria
 - Resources are not competing either in terms of days/times or food offerings
 - There is awareness and support for the vision each food bank and pantry has to support food security

RECOMMENDATIONS

What can food banks and food pantries do to improve what they are already doing? (continued)

- Work to support specific populations in need. For example:
 - Maximize mobile deliveries to neighborhood hubs for those with the most challenges transporting food donations home (unhoused, those without personal transportation, those who may be ill or have trouble leaving home)
 - Tailor food access services for unhoused individuals and families to their unique needs. (Non-perishable, light and easily transportable, does not require cooking, small amounts in packaging that is easy to transport)
 - Offer medically-tailored food boxes for people managing nutrition-related chronic health conditions. Make sure these options are also respectful of cultural food preferences.
 - Challenge the idea of what is “healthy” food. Current definitions reflect food options that are more common for white individuals of European descent.
 - Consider collaborating with an organization like [Global 505](#)⁵⁴ to better understand the unique needs and strengths of immigrant and refugee populations in the International District and the South Valley neighborhoods
 - Increase awareness of funding opportunities for specific populations, such as the [Honor the Earth grants](#) available to Native American populations to create food security utilizing Indigenous varieties and organic production.⁵⁵

What are some overall recommendations to consider?

- There is no food security without economic security. Combine short-term food access efforts with long-term economic security efforts. This can help make sure you have sustainable outcomes over time.
 - Use the economic mobility resources provided by Feeding America is developing to support member agency food banks in this work
- Spend time thinking about how you explain the need for economic security efforts. Explore the different [narratives](#) that people in the US use to talk about poverty.⁵⁶ Decide which one explains your approach to addressing economic security. This can help you clarify messaging and long-term goals.
- Understand [how policies play a part in racial wealth imbalances](#) and different economic opportunities for different racial groups.⁵⁷ Make sure efforts to improve economic security take this context into account.
- Remember that the SEM theory says that changes in policy and the built environment will have the biggest impact, so prioritize efforts in these areas, while also supporting local community efforts.

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

Purpose and Goals:

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide a community perspective on what is needed to support food security for the South Valley and International District neighborhoods of Albuquerque, NM, and what assets are available to meet these needs. The purpose is also to understand how food security is related to the social determinants of health.

Apex Blend:

The Apex Blend includes leveraging systems thinking, utilization-focused, and participatory approaches to equitable evaluation. Apex aims to match the learning need with the method, while considering the burden of data collection methods on providers and clients. Finally, Apex aims to deliver stakeholder-friendly final deliverables to be used for program improvement and decision making.

Systems-thinking

The Apex team used [a variation on the 5 why's tool](#) and the iceberg model to explore the behaviors, trends, structures, and mental models of food insecurity with RRFB partners and create a shared understanding.

We then applied the concept of [accumulations and rates of change](#), as [described by Systems Intelligence expert Chris Soderquist](#), to further explore the definition of food insecurity and what is needed to effect sustainable change.

Utilization-focused

The findings from this evaluation will be used to support programming decisions and to support advocacy and awareness communications and messaging for key

stakeholders, including legislators, program staff, community members / clients, and the general public.

Equitable evaluation

The Apex team convened a group of neighborhood community leaders, identified by RRFB staff, to provide guidance on what methods to use, proposed questions to ask, how to best reach out to community members, what form of compensation to offer, what languages might be needed, and any other supports to offer. We also consulted with this group to engage in sense-making after data collection was complete, to confirm appropriate interpretation of the findings.

Compensation: Focus group participants were offered a \$60 Walmart gift card. Survey respondents (who answered survey questions verbally and responses were recorded by an evaluator/interpreter) received a \$25 Walmart gift card.

Language accessibility: An interpreter was available for all events to do consecutive interpretation in Spanish for focus groups and to interpret survey questions in Spanish and responses back in English. An additional Navajo interpreter was available if needed, as requested for one focus group. Promotional fliers for focus groups and survey distributions were also circulated in Spanish as well as English.

Childcare was provided for focus groups when requested.

Food was provided for focus group participants.

ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

Location, Day, and Time: Data collection events were held in locations and on days and times that are familiar and accessible to community members, such as food distribution events hosted by community leaders or drop-in hours at a resource center.

Methods:

At Apex we recognize that many of the topics we evaluate qualify as “wicked problems”. Wicked problems are problems that are made up of complex, interacting issues evolving in dynamic social systems and contexts.⁶⁰

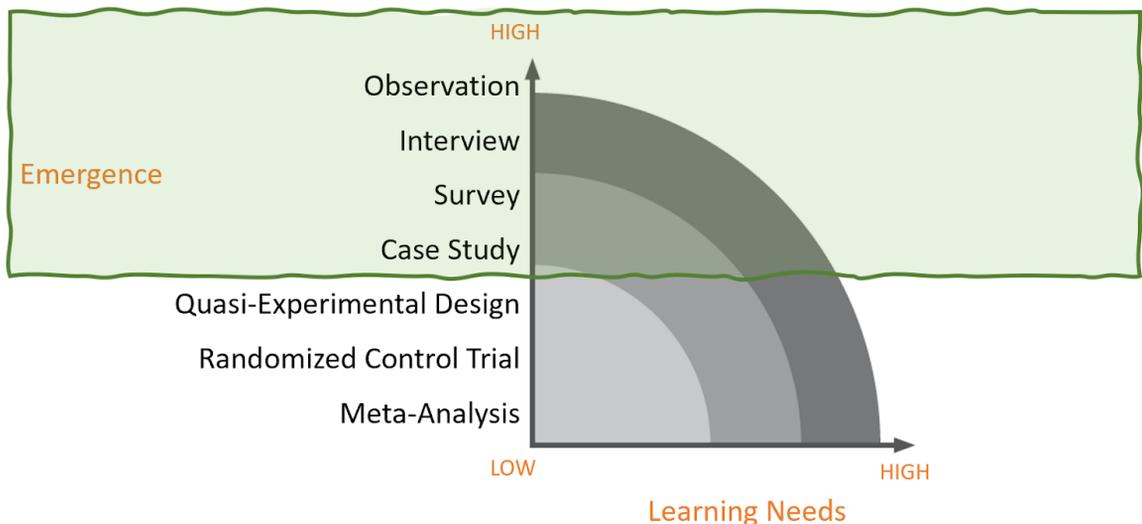
A tame problem is well-defined and stable and can be compared to similar problems and solutions; those solutions can be tested in controlled conditions and objectively evaluated as effective or ineffective.

Wicked problems, on the other hand, are not well-defined and it is difficult to reach consensus on root cause or solutions. They are defined from a particular point of view, which involves subjective moral, political, and other self-interests.

For this reason, Apex intentionally focuses on evaluation methods that support high learning needs, emerging ways of understanding these complex and wicked problems, and participatory ways to include community members in the evaluation.

For this evaluation, a variety of methods were offered to community leaders, including surveys, focus groups, [photovoice](#),⁶¹ and a [collage-based approach](#). Each method was described and pros and cons were offered for each.

Learning-Methods Matching Matrix



ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

Community leaders reported that community members have inconsistent access and use of technology, so photovoice was not a viable option to electronically send back pictures taken. They mentioned that focus groups would work for some locations and surveys would work better for others, so those two primary methods were used but tailored to the site and event. An additional suggestion was offered to provide paper and drawing materials to allow drawings as responses in focus groups to prompt further discussion.

Community leaders assured us that surveys administered to people waiting in line for food distribution would not be considered “taking advantage of a captive audience” if fliers about the data collection activities were distributed in advance, with information about compensation that would be provided. Community leaders offered to distribute these fliers so they would come from a source that was trusted to community members.

In the International District neighborhood, two community leaders helped to host two different data collection events. One was a focus group at a resource center and one was a focus group at a middle school. The middle school focus group did not achieve sufficient recruitment due to timing and other constraints, so a follow-up survey distribution was hosted during a regularly scheduled food distribution at the middle school.

In the South Valley neighborhood three community leaders helped to host four different data collection events. Surveys were distributed at two different sites during a food distribution at each site. One focus group was hosted at a middle school. In addition, one community leader separately distributed surveys at a school event.

A total of 17 focus group participants and 59 survey respondents provided responses to the same core open-ended questions. Responses were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Sense-making Session:

Community leaders from each neighborhood were reconvened after data collection activities to review, confirm, challenge, and expand data analysis. Draft analyses were shared with the leaders and they were asked the following questions:

- What surprised you about the data?
- What was confirmed by the data that you already knew?
- What was missing in the data that you thought you would see?
- What other meanings do you see in the data that we haven't already discussed?
- What other comments do you have about the data?

Responses were incorporated into the report.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Demographic Data for the International District and the South Valley Neighborhoods

	South Valley	International District	Albuquerque	New Mexico
Population	38,000	29,000	560,500	2.1 million
Median age	41	35	37	39
Foreign born	15%	19%	10%	9%
Hispanic (of all races)	81%	58%	49%	49%
White, non-Hispanic	16%	25%	38%	37%
Native American, non-Hispanic	2%	10%	5%	11%
Black, non-Hispanic	1%	3%	3%	6%
Asian, non-Hispanic	<1%	2%	3%	2%
Two or more races, non-Hispanic	12%	5%	9%	3%
Female*	49%	48%	51%	51%

- Population is rounded to nearest 500, all other figures are rounded to nearest whole number
- *Sex/Gender data only include percentages for male and female
- From mapping the South Valley and International District and overlaying the 2020 census tract map, the following were identified as the correct tracts. This following resource was used: https://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/DC2020/PL20/st35_nm/censustract_maps/c35001_bernalillo/DC20CT_C35001.pdf
 - International District: 9803, 5.01, 6.03, 6.05, 9.04, 9.05, 9.06, 9.07, 9.08
 - South Valley: 74520, 23.01, 23.02, 23.03, 44.01, 44.02, 45.01, 45.02, 46.03, 46.02 46.03, 46.04

APPENDIX 1

Demographic Data for the International District and the South Valley Neighborhoods

	South Valley	International District	Albuquerque	New Mexico
Population	38,000	29,000	560,500	2.1 million
Median Household Income per year	\$42,000	\$26,000	\$55,500	\$52,000
Poverty	21%	40%	17%	19%
Food insecurity*	17%	25%	15%	16%
Disability	16%	11%	10%	11%

- Median household income rounded to nearest \$500, all other figures rounded to nearest whole number
- Unemployment is based on Bernalillo County data, not Albuquerque data.
- South Valley profiles: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/southvalleycdpnewmexico>, and [https://datausa.io/profile/geo/south-valley-nm/#:~:text=The%205%20largest%20ethnic%20groups,%2DHispanic\)%20\(1.71%25\)](https://datausa.io/profile/geo/south-valley-nm/#:~:text=The%205%20largest%20ethnic%20groups,%2DHispanic)%20(1.71%25)).
- There is no comparable profile for the International District. Data for the International District were accessed at the census tract level (before being combined and analyzed) using a tool provided by Geospatial and Population Studies at the University of New Mexico: <https://gps.unm.edu/census2020/NewMexicoCountyCCCDDataPortal>
- Albuquerque profile: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/albuquerquecitynewmexico>, and <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/albuquerque-nm>
- New Mexico profile: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NM>, and <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/new-mexico>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like?

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
South Valley	John Adams Middle School (JAMS)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally grown fresh food / community access to water to grow food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Would be nice to have gardens for local and fresh produce</i>
	Rio Grande Food Project (RGFP)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally grown fresh food / community access to water to grow food Food stores that are close by Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more affordable options for food / support to afford costs of living Clean neighborhoods that provide green space and physical activity Bonus feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Irrigation ditches don't have much water, have a hard time planting garden, no access to water limits can be done in communities</i> <i>Grocery stores closer, just all houses, Walmart is the only thing close by</i> <i>Smaller grocery stores like bodegas</i> <i>If there can be [other kinds of] help—to pay rent and bills</i> <i>Would be a nice clean neighborhood, people would be more active and outside more</i> <i>More food, medicine, and education. More parks for sports</i> <i>Roadrunner has really done a lot; people here are so nice</i>
	SVDP Holy Family (SVDP)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally grown fresh food / community access to water to grow food Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> more affordable options for food / support to afford costs of living Bonus feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Grown vegetables, more beans grown locally</i> <i>More affordable food - right now everything is expensive</i> <i>Holy Family does a great job...My parents used to come, now I come...Neighborhoods in this area like this one due to Holy Family accommodating the handicap</i> <i>To have more food banks in the community...Sometimes we don't have anything and they give us oil, eggs, milk, all the basics</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What would a neighborhood with access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable foods look like? (continued)

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
International District	Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)	<p>Physical access to food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally grown fresh food / community access to water to grow food • Food stores that are close by <p>Economic security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more affordable options for food / support to afford costs of living <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gardens</i> • <i>Would be nice to have a neighborhood garden that everyone is involved in Would have fresh foods available</i> • <i>Having stores closer to you</i> • <i>Other stores have closed, but nothing has opened up since...</i> • <i>More helpful to have more options</i> • <i>Food and gas is too expensive</i> • <i>Making the food more accessible and affordable</i> • <i>Food prices have gone up significantly since last month...Eggs have gone up nearly \$5 for 60 dozen (from \$10 to \$15) ... On disability, can't get food stamps</i> • <i>Appreciate Roadrunner for all their help</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What keeps this from being a reality?

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
South Valley	John Adams Middle School (JAMS)	<p>Physical access to food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of food stores nearby <p>Economic security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crime and lack of safety Poverty and homelessness <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Lack of available stores –not many options within walking distance</i> <i>Family Dollar nearby closed because it was too dangerous (robbed a lot) and there was not enough staff</i> <i>The hardest thing is having your bags stolen while you're walking home</i> <i>The prices of things are too expensive</i> <i>A lot of homelessness in the area</i> <i>Food distribution is often during the day during work hours –hard to get to if they overlap with working hours</i>
	Rio Grande Food Project (RGFP)	<p>Economic security - cost of living and quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty and homelessness Crime and lack of safety <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Lack of funds, there's no work and no money for food</i> <i>Better income to afford food</i> <i>Too much crime, you don't feel safe in the streets</i> <i>You can't go a lot of places without people bothering for money...You don't feel safe, you want to help others, but you're scared</i> <i>Good if there were more options...Before COVID, used to set up in the church and you can pick out what you need. The box with items you might not use, can give the stuff to neighbors to use</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What keeps this from being a reality? (continued)

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
South Valley	SVDP Holy Family (SVDP)	<p>Physical access to food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to water, time, and resources for family gardens <p>Economic security - cost of living and quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of farmer's markets for affordable food Poverty and homelessness <p>Economic security - government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of political representation for neighborhood needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Not being able to water - would like to grow own food</i> <i>Wish the government would pay for growing food, need more people to grow food</i> <i>Should have more markets - no more farmers markets in the area...Markets are cheaper than stores</i> <i>Homelessness...People not working, not going out into the community</i> <i>South Valley is county rather than a part of the city - can't vote for mayor of Albuquerque, but those decisions affect the community...Political jurisdictions - paying the same taxes but not having the same resources and access as the city</i>
International District	Transgender Resource Center (TGRC)	<p>Economic security - cost of living and quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drug addiction Crime and lack of safety <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Drug addiction is a big issue – people don't know where to go for the help</i> <i>Safety is a big issue for the community – how can community relationships improve to protect all the members of the community?</i> <i>Food that people don't know how to use can get thrown away</i> <i>Importance of offering pet food alongside other food</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What keeps this from being a reality? (continued)

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
International District	Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)	<p>Physical access to food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of access to water, time, and resources for family gardens <p>Economic security - cost of living and quality of life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty and homelessness Crime and lack of safety <p>Economic security - government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of political representation for neighborhood needs <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Gardening is a lot of work - people are working full time jobs, don't have the time to garden</i> <i>A lot of homelessness in the area...Violence and safety issues...Don't feel comfortable going out</i> <i>This area is hard, safety is a big concern</i> <i>International District is having a hard time - people aren't safe</i> <i>Politicians - the governor should see what's going on in the neighborhoods...Where is the tax money going?</i> <i>Clients who also serve as volunteers</i> <i>Staffing limits how many days the bank can be open –La Mesa went from 5 days a week to 3 days because of staffing</i> <i>The number of clients almost doubled since the pandemic started</i> <i>Serving a high-risk population –still practicing COVID safety</i> <i>Not sure if other places have reopened after the pandemic</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

Who are the people and resources that could help make it a reality together?

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
South Valley	Rio Grande Food Project (RGFP)	<p>Economic security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community centers • Volunteers • Politicians / government <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community centers should help out more, more spaces available for people to come to</i> • <i>More volunteers, more people talking about the help</i> • <i>The city working more with communities City Council and the mayor coming together</i> • <i>Politicians should concentrate on helping</i> • <i>Have applied for stamps but haven't gotten, so more food banks would be helpful</i>
	SVDP Holy Family (SVDP)	<p>Physical access to food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses <p>Economic security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers • Places of faith • Politicians / government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>More businesses - instead of throwing away food, call to have it picked up. This could create jobs and stop food waste</i> • <i>The good people that help out – volunteers</i> • <i>Churches...People that get together and work as a team - the people here are a really good team for helping</i> • <i>The government would be able to help, they're supposed to support us...It's not good to help others somewhere else and not help their country</i>
International District	Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)	<p>Physical access to food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members / groups <p>Economic security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community organizations • Places of faith • Politicians / government <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The community to help each other learn how to grow things</i> • <i>Churches may be helpful...Local groups, people who live here...</i> • <i>Need more things for the kids - not a lot of community spaces to interact in, to become familiar with the neighborhood</i> • <i>Maybe some organizations to help with homelessness</i> • <i>More security/police in the neighborhoods</i> • <i>Roadrunner helps a lot in this area</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What additional help from others could make it a reality?

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
South Valley	John Adams Middle School (JAMS)	Bonus feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Would like a list of dates/times/locations to know where they can go for food</i> • <i>Would like recipe cards on some of the things in the box</i>
	Rio Grande Food Project (RGFP)	Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for other costs of living • Support from healthcare providers • Support from government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Help with shoes, clothes, and toys for children would be really helpful</i> • <i>Working together as a community to find help for everyone</i> • <i>More hospitals and doctors close by</i> • <i>Getting together with police to discuss issues, interactions with police to make things safer</i>
	SVDP Holy Family (SVDP)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from community • Support from businesses Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Group of people coming together, taking time to donate and volunteer</i> • <i>Stores or businesses could donate</i> • <i>Finances from the government to produce dairy, vegetables, etc.</i>
International District	Transgender Resource Center (TGRC)	Bonus feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recipe cards or having someone at the distribution site who can walk through what the foods are</i> • <i>Having a list of what's included in the box each week</i> • <i>Mobile food deliveries for people who can't make it to locations</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What additional help from others could make it a reality? (continued)

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
International District	Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)	<p>Physical access to food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from community <p>Economic security:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from healthcare providers <p>Bonus feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Roadrunner is giving a lot of help already with the food...Maybe could give seeds so each family can grow things</i> • <i>Community gardens would be in the ideal neighborhood to help with food access and affordability</i> • <i>Open to community members, but targeted towards families that go to the school</i> • <i>Giving out medicine for the elderly</i> • <i>Would like more distribution in more spaces</i> • <i>More food</i> • <i>Some tips on how children can eat healthier</i> • <i>Apart from food, I don't know what else Roadrunner can give away</i> • <i>Roadrunner has been a great help, huge help for us...They and the school (Van Buren MS) let us know what's happening</i> • <i>Would like to have Roadrunner provide reusable shopping bags –helpful for transporting food, especially for those who don't have a car</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What activities are already in process to address these needs?

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
South Valley	John Adams Middle School (JAMS)	Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ana Margarita (JAMS Community Coordinator) has been helpful in sharing resources</i>
	Rio Grande Food Project (RGFP)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadrunner • Food pantries Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior center • Neighborhood resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No others, Roadrunner and RGFP are what people mainly know</i> • <i>There's a lot of places that help</i> • <i>Food Bank project, Casa de Salud, Casa Esperanza</i> • <i>Schools do a lot too - Atrisco Heritage does a food bank</i> • <i>Don't know of any...Help people more with food, other places stopped giving out food</i> • <i>Goes to senior center for help</i> • <i>Sometimes there are resources set up outside the building - couple weeks ago gave out free phones...Serves a good purpose</i>
	SVDP Holy Family (SVDP)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadrunner • Other food distributions Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places of faith • Clinics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>. We have Roadrunner and no one else</i> • <i>Picking up for older neighbors who can't make it to distributions...One distribution site at the State Fairgrounds</i> • <i>School on Alamosa used to have a food bank, but not anymore...SVDP is only one I know of now</i> • <i>Catholic Services help out</i> • <i>First Choice clinic</i> • <i>Don't know about many other places - goes to South Valley Clinic and they are great at telling people about what's going on</i>

APPENDIX 2 – FINDINGS BY NEIGHBORHOOD

What activities are already in process to address these needs? (continued)

Neighborhood	Location	Themes	Quotes
International District	Transgender Resource Center (TGRC)	Economic security: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonprofits • Places of faith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Storehouse is a really good resource for a lot of support</i> • <i>The freestore/ReStore is helpful for household items</i> • <i>Goodwill/The Salvation Army is helpful</i> • <i>Churches are good for gas, utility, food, etc. help</i>
	Van Buren Middle School (VBMS)	Physical access to food: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadrunner • Other food distributions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Just know of Roadrunner, don't think there's anything else out there</i> • <i>Just the food distribution at the State Fair</i> • <i>Highlands, Manzano Mesa schools have help</i> • <i>Only know of Roadrunner, they really help out and are convenient</i> • <i>Will have to figure out where the closest site is once the VBMS student leaves the school - not sure where to go</i>

