

Assessing Client Food Needs at Community Food Pantries

Mentors

- Amanda McQuade, PhD. Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief program at Western Colorado Research Center. College of Agricultural Sciences.
Amanda.mcquade@colostate.edu, 970-462-2113. communityalliance.extension.colostate.edu
- Ann Duncan, MS, RDN. Tri River Office, CSU Extension. Ann.duncan@colostate.edu.

Tri River Area Region (Mesa, Delta, Montrose and Ouray counties on the Western Slope)

Internship Goals, Scope and Objectives

The intern will generate new knowledge concerning the food needs of clients visiting food pantries in the Tri River Area. Community-identified questions under the scope of this research include: (1) what foods do clients need and are food pantries consistently meeting these needs? (2) Are there certain foods that are received in overabundance? (3) Are pantries meeting cultural preferences of clients? (4) Do clients prepare whole foods at home, and what type of access do clients have to tools for food preparation and storage? This research will identify gaps that are not being filled by the nonprofit food system and will inform food pantries and the Mesa County Hunger Alliance when making procurement and investment decisions. This research will also inform nutrition education and intervention programming provided by CSU Extension, the Western Colorado Research Center, and other community-based organizations.

Identification of Applied Research and Stakeholder Engagement

The Mesa County Hunger Alliance, a coalition of hunger relief organizations, Colorado State University, and medical, philanthropic, and governmental organizations, have identified the need to determine the nutritional and cultural gaps in food provided within nonprofit food system in the Tri River area. The intern will work closely with members of the Mesa County Hunger Alliance in developing and implementing the research project.

Learning Outcomes

Through mentorship and hands-on practical experience, the intern will learn: (1) Evidence-based methods of co-creating academic research with the community; (2) Practical experience working with a diverse coalition of organizations addressing food insecurity in the community; and (3) The role of faculty, staff, and Extension Agents in undertaking community-engaged research.

Mentor Style

CSU mentors Amanda and Ann believe in the value of service-based learning for students interested in developing careers in community food systems. In four years of the Community Alliance program, they have collectively mentored 14 post-secondary interns in practical learning experiences involving community-based nutrition education, community development, and small-scale vegetable production as a part of the farm-to-foodbank program. The mentorship philosophy is to provide direction so that interns develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Transportation and Housing Expenses

Internship related travel expenses will be covered through an additional stipend. Given the rural nature of the Western Slope, the intern would benefit from having a personal vehicle. Every effort will be made to assist the intern in finding affordable housing.