

**CONFERENCE CALL NOTES**  
**NOPREN Rural Food Access Working Group**  
**November 17, 2015 11:30PST/2:30EST**

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**CALL SUMMARY:**

- 1. Welcome and introductions**
- 2. Presentation:** Josh Blair, Feeding American program capacity associate, described rural food insecurity, Feeding America programs, and FA's Rural Child Hunger Capacity Institute (RCHCI). He said today was the first time he's presented this to an external organization. He has collaborated with Michelle Berger, a member of the NOPREN Hunger Work Group; either of them can provide more information. Josh described food insecurity disparities in rural America, including: 52% of counties with highest child food insecurity are rural; rural areas have higher levels of poverty; 17% of rural households (3.3 million) are food insecure; single-parent households are more likely to be in poverty than in urban or suburban areas; rural areas have more barriers to food security such as employment concentrated in retail, low education levels, higher unemployment, low access to childcare and transportation services, less access to communication networks; 1 of 5 rural children are food insecure; 5.4 million rural seniors. Intergenerational poverty is seen more often in rural food pantries than in urban. Food pantries are becoming permanent coping strategies for impoverished families, rather than temporary. Gardening is becoming more popular for food-insecure households in rural areas, and 23% of all FA clients reported gardening. FA has 200 food banks in the U.S., which serve 60,000 food pantries and other sites. FA has services or partners in every county in the U.S.

The Rural Child Hunger Capacity Institute (RCHCI) is one of several Capacity Institutes that FA has sponsored in recent years. The Capacity Institute model is a peer-to-peer learning opportunity among food banks facing similar challenges, to share and brainstorm on strategies, assets, and knowledge. Each Capacity Institute goes for 1 year. After a topic is selected by FA, food banks can apply and 20 are selected. A 1.5 day orientation meeting is held on-site at one of the participating food banks, to plan goals. Then monthly calls use a Think Tank approach to sharing food bank models, barriers, and strategies. Other structures in the CI program include case studies, webinars, press releases, blog posts, and a separate program to facilitate communication among food banks that applied but were not selected for the CI (in the RCHCI, 60 applied for 20 spots). Nine monthly topics were selected at the kick-off meeting, to be covered at monthly calls. In addition, implementation grants were awarded to 4 RCHCI food banks, for innovations such as equipment for new school pantry programs, capacity building costs for local school pantry and backpack programs, resource analysis of rural communities and production of a rural child hunger tool kit, and expansion of summer feeding programs. Other deliverables from the RCHCI include a capstone webinar series (Josh will send out invite to attend in January), and creation of a new toolkit based on RCHCI findings (due out in January or February 2016). All 20 participating food banks are contributing to the toolkit, and it's a very grassroots effort with high involvement by stakeholders and an approach that seems highly respectful and preserving of dignity. They

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will present final recommendations to the National office and FA network. One early recommendation is to shift the focus from individual children to children plus their families, such as backpack programs that include food for child plus family. They found that in rural areas, children participated at high levels in feeding programs, but their families had to sit on the sidelines and not receive food, even though they also faced food insecurity. School food pantries have “foods to encourage” nutrition standards. FA is already planning to do another CI on other rural topics, with special focus on rural supply chain logistics. Rural areas also may benefit greatly from partnerships between food programs and other community organizations like hospitals, schools, libraries, clinics. FA is working with pediatricians and hospitals to promote health care providers screening and referring patients for food security programs. FA has other grant programs for participating food banks/sites (he will send out a list of grants). One of Josh’s key takeaways from the RCHCI is that collective action is a key to making impacts in rural communities. Josh also offered to share reports from the RCHCI grantees and other materials with NOPREN members. *The Rural Food Access Working Group will follow up with Josh in the next few months, and will send materials as they become available. Please feel free to follow up with Josh about specific questions at email: [jblair@feedingamerica.org](mailto:jblair@feedingamerica.org)*

**3. Discussion: How to spend the \$1,000 stipend from NOPREN**

- Idea 1: Publishing fee for a RFAWG-authored paper – previously published or future submission?
- Idea 2: Support for in-person meeting to support a major group project (similar to concept mapping project)
- Idea 3: Support multi-site data collection
- Idea 4: Fees for specialized training consultant and/or use of proprietary data collection methods (such as the Community Coalition Network Analysis we wrote into the Bright Spots grant)

**Discussion:** No further ideas were suggested. Melissa said that the other NOPREN work groups have similar ideas and that no work group has come up yet with a definitive process for deciding how to use the funds. The NOPREN coordinating center simply wants to see how the work groups will use the funds to start something new, build momentum for an ongoing project, or complete something.

**Action Plan:** RFAWG will send out a Survey Monkey to members, to ask about preferences among these ideas, and for additional details to flesh out these ideas. We will discuss the results in the December call.

**4. RWJF Building a Culture of Health proposal update (Marilyn)**

Marilyn unable to be on call; no updates reported

**5. Other announcements and updates (All) [standing agenda item]**

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Margaret Kaniewski (CDC DNPAO) announced an upcoming conference call on Healthier Food Retail Peer Networking. All interested individuals are welcome to join the call. It will be held **Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from 1:30-2:30pm EDT**. Call- in: **877-915-2761, participant code 54261519**. See forwarded email (accompanying today's notes) for additional information about the call and presenters.

Next RFAWG call: Tuesday December 15, 2:30pm EDT/11:30am PT. The presenter will be David Procter from University of Kansas, on rural grocery distribution systems. Call in: Phone 866-541-4407, passcode 1855494.