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Evaluation Sponsor: Ramsey County CARES Evaluation

Health and Wellness Administrative Division: Evaluation Plan for Ramsey County Food Access

Program Description

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Ramsey County has made several investments towards improving the food access of its residents, including: the development of food resources website, allocation of CARES funding, and increased promotion of its social service programs. In April 2020, Ramsey County Health and Wellness Administrative Division's Research and Evaluation unit prepared a Food and Basic Needs Security and Distribution: Needs Assessment and Design Recommendations, which outlines the priorities for COVID-19 resource allocation¹.

The Pandemic has the potential to cause serious interruptions to food and basic needs for Ramsey County residents, as residents experience job losses and interruptions to their income. As of 30 July 2020, a total of 89,919 individuals have applied for unemployment insurance in Ramsey County since the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic in March, representing 30.8 percent of the 2019 labor force². Individuals at risk of food insecurity are similar to those whose lives are impacted by social determinants of health. Risk factors for food insecurity include: lower income households, African American or Hispanic-headed households, seniors, renters, never married or divorced, young people, and people with less education³. Programs such as the supplemental nutritional assistance program (SNAP) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) expand access to food and help alleviate food insecurity.

According to a Feeding America food insecurity study, 65,550 (12.3 percent) of Ramsey County residents experienced food insecurity in 2016, where 19,570 (15.8 percent) of children experienced food insecurity⁴. With the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Feeding America projects an overall food insecurity rate of 14.8 percent for Ramsey County in 2020⁵.

In response to the increased need for food access during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Ramsey County allocated \$10 million of federal CARES funding for food and basic needs, which includes funding for home-based meal delivery, food shelves and basic needs, and schools. Ramsey County is estimated to contract with up to 40 vendors for food-related work in the following areas:

1. **Home-based meal delivery:** Contracts with vendors will provide for meal delivery to families or individuals at home. Meals should be nutritionally sound and culturally appropriate to meet the recipient's needs.
2. **Food shelf and basic needs for food programs, food shelves, or food banks:** contracts with vendors will allow for the purchasing of supplies, food, or staffing needed to expand food programs.

¹ <https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Projects%20and%20Initiatives/Coronavirus/COVID-19/Food%20and%20Basic%20Needs%20-%20Priorities%20and%20Needs%20Assessment%20Report%20-%205.3.2020.pdf>

² <https://mn.gov/deed/data/current-econ-highlights/ui-statistics.jsp>

³ <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/pdf/10.1377/hlthaff.2015.0645>

⁴ <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2016/overall/minnesota/county/ramsey>

⁵ <https://www.feedingamericaaction.org/the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-food-insecurity/>

3. **Emergency food and meals for youth and students:** contracts with school districts will provide increased food and meals for youth in Ramsey County.

The goals of the CARES funding are to (1.) make strategic investments to expand and enhance the free food supply and distribution network, (2.) prioritize the communities, individuals, and families most at risk for COVID, (3.) Prioritize communities, individuals, and families who lack access and transportation due to COVID. Service delivery in these areas will ensure that individuals and families affected by COVID-19 have access to nutritious and culturally responsive groceries and basic needs supplies that can be picked up at designated areas or delivered to residents at home.

The three Food Access and Basic Needs-related RFQs were posted between June and July 2020. Proposals will be collected on a rolling basis through the end of the year and funding will be distributed between July and December 2020.

Evaluation Methods

The Food Access evaluation will answer the following questions:

1. Did Ramsey County address the Community Needs Assessment priority areas?
2. Did the CARES funding that was distributed expand and enhance the free food supply and distribution network?
3. Are Ramsey County residents better off as a result of food access expansion?
4. Are Ramsey County residents getting connected to social services?

The following methods will be used to answer the evaluation questions:

1. **Contract management documentation review.** Contract management documentation will be reviewed to determine the number of first time contracts with vendors and the number of contracts with BIPOC-led organizations, as these measures shed insight into where the county made strategic investments. This information will be summarized in the final Food evaluation report.
2. **Monthly contracted vendor report review.** The evaluation team will work closely with contract managers to draft, review, and collect information from contracted vendors providing home-delivered meals to residents. These monthly reports will be reviewed monthly by contract managers and evaluation team members to ensure vendors are meeting their contract obligations and to collect data regarding. The report templates vary slightly across the three contracting areas, but include questions about: accomplishments, challenges, Ramsey County assistance, community outreach efforts, number of individuals served (if applicable), race of individuals served (if applicable), and zip code of residents served. This information will be summarized in the final Food evaluation report.
3. **Monthly surveys of residents who received home-based meal deliveries.** The evaluation team will administer up to 2400 home-based meal satisfaction surveys between September and December 2020 to recipient households in conjunction with the five vendors contracted to provide home-delivered meals across Ramsey County. The primary goal of the satisfaction survey is to determine: (1.) Overall satisfaction with the home-based meal delivery experience; (2.) Feedback on the nutritional balance of delivered meals; (3.) Feedback on the cultural appropriateness of delivered meals; (4.) Understanding of Ramsey County services available to residents.

The evaluation team will work with contract management staff and contracted vendors to administer the survey. Vendors will be provided with Ramsey County permit-stamped envelopes and satisfaction surveys in English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and Karen to include with meals

delivered to households. The survey includes instructions for completion and mailing the completed survey back to Ramsey County. Surveys completion is voluntary. Returned surveys will be reviewed monthly and information from them will be summarized in the final food evaluation report.

- 4. County social service data review.** Though it is not going to be easily possible to determine if residents are getting connected to Ramsey County Social Services through CARES-related initiatives, the Food evaluation will include MFIP, SNAP, and WIC enrollment data, broken down by race, for 2020 in comparison to last year’s enrollment numbers. As mentioned in the introduction, food insecurity is related to income. The SNAP and WIC programs have a long history of use in the United States and are known to be effective at helping families improve their access to food. This data will be summarized in the final food evaluation report

Race equity and community engagement were instrumental to the development of the Food Access and Basic Needs assessment on which the County’s COVID food access response is based. Ramsey County’s CARES funding allocated for expanding food access aims to provide services to vulnerable communities most impacted by COVID. Contracted vendors are asked to address how their work will address racial inequity in their submitted proposals and how they will provide culturally relevant and appropriate services to Ramsey County residents.

Community engagement and race equity components of the evaluation will be reviewed with RECERT members and Ramsey County’s community food access group for their feedback to improve efforts to address racial inequities throughout our process.

Budget

The budget is for the home-based meal delivery satisfaction surveys. It includes line items for survey translation, mailing, and the translation of any open-ended survey responses received to English. Survey responses that need to be translated to English will be compiled through December and submitted once for translation at the conclusion of the data collection period.

Item	Number	\$ amount	Total
Survey translation to Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and Karen	One-time translation	\$200	\$200
Envelopes	2400	\$240	\$240
Mailing (permit only charges Ramsey County for returned surveys)	Up to 2400. Calculation estimates a 30% return rate of 720.	\$ 0.55/ mailing	\$396
Translation of open-ended responses to English, if necessary	Spanish: \$0.17 / word Hmong: \$0.18 / word Karen: \$0.26 / word (\$40 minimum) Somali: \$0.26 / word (\$40 minimum)	\$600	\$600
Total			\$1436

Timeline and Deliverables

Month	Activity
July 2020	Finalize evaluation plan Draft home-based meal delivery survey CARES funding begins to be distributed to contracted vendors
August 2020	Draft Monthly Contracted Vendor Report Templates for three contracts Finalize survey questions for home-delivered meals Translate survey to Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Karen Provide surveys and envelopes to contracted vendors to include with delivered meals
September 2020	Administer home-based meal delivery satisfaction surveys Review monthly contracted vendor reports Review social service enrollment data Review contract management documentation
October 2020	Administer home-based meal delivery satisfaction surveys Review monthly contracted vendor reports Review social service enrollment data Review contract management documentation
November 2020	Administer home-based meal delivery satisfaction surveys Review monthly contracted vendor reports Review social service enrollment data Review contract management documentation
December 2020	Administer home-based meal delivery satisfaction surveys Review monthly contracted vendor reports Review social service enrollment data Review contract management documentation
January 2021	Administer home-based meal delivery satisfaction surveys Review monthly contracted vendor reports Review social service enrollment data Review contract management documentation Compare 2019 and 2020 social service enrollment data Draft evaluation report
February 2021	Final evaluation report due to County Manager's office

Communication Plan

The evaluation plan will be communicated to the following audiences:

Audience	Communication	Frequency
Internal Evaluation team	The evaluation plan will be developed and implemented over time with an internal evaluation team made up of Ramsey County staff from the CARES team, Contract Management, Public Health, Planning, and Research and Evaluation.	Weekly meetings
Contracted Vendors	The Monthly Progress Report vendors will provide to Ramsey County will be reviewed during their orientation, alongside its importance as part of the overall evaluation.	Ramsey County Vendor Orientation: Monthly progress reports
Ramsey County Community Food Group	Progress made in Ramsey County's food work and evaluation will be reviewed with the Community Food Group.	August/September 2020 Online presentation February 2021 Online Presentation
Ramsey County Website	Evaluation plan and report will be made available for internal and external audiences on the Ramsey County COVID-19 evaluation page	Evaluation plan: August 2020 Evaluation Report: February 2021
Ramsey County leadership	The evaluation plan and report will be reviewed with Ramsey County leadership	Ongoing

Logic Model

Objective	Goals	Measure(s): How will you determine progress towards outcome?	Data Collection Methods
Coordinate home-delivered meals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. make strategic investments to expand and enhance the food supply and distribution network 2. Prioritize most vulnerable communities and those individuals who lack access and transportation 3. Provide a nutritiously appropriate and balanced meal, prepared by a licensed organization, delivered to residents at home 4. Obtain voluntary home-based meal delivery recipient feedback 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of first-time contracts with vendors 2. Number of contracts with BIPOC-led organizations 3. Number of individuals served 4. Number of meals delivered, by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Race b. Zip Code 5. Recipient Feedback: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Overall satisfaction with service b. Nutritional quality of meal c. Cultural appropriateness of meal d. Interest in Ramsey County Social Services 	<p>Contract documentation</p> <p>Monthly contract management vendor report</p> <p>Home-based meal Satisfaction Survey</p>
Fund traditional and non-traditional food programs, food shelves, or food banks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make strategic investments to expand capacity regarding coordinating, collecting, purchasing, and storing groceries and basic needs supplies and preparing items for distribution 2. Prioritize the most vulnerable communities, individuals, and families at risk or symptomatic 3. Prioritize communities, individuals, and families who lack access and transportation due to COVID 19 4. Ensure individuals and families affected by COVID-19 have access to nutritious and culturally responsive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of first-time contracts with vendors 2. Number of contracts with BIPOC-led organizations 3. Number/type of equipment purchases <i>If applicable:</i> 4. Number of deliveries made, by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Race b. Zip Code 	<p>Contract documentation</p> <p>Monthly contract management vendor report</p>

	groceries and basic needs supplies that can be picked-up at designated locations or delivered to homes		
Expand existing efforts or create a new innovative system to provide emergency food and meals to youths and students	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. make strategic investments to expand and enhance the food supply and distribution network 2. prioritize the most vulnerable communities and individuals who lack access and transportation to ensure children have access to nutritious meals and snacks when school is not in session, or when attending school is not possible. 3. The service is comprised of coordination of the delivery of one or both parts: meals and/or groceries and basic needs supplies or improving existing efforts to help alleviate food insecurity. 4. Services are to ensure that individuals affected by COVID-19 have access to culturally, nutritious, appropriate meals that are delivered to the Recipient's homes or a centralized location for pick up in a 5. The Recipient can receive up to three pick up or home-delivered meals per day, up to twenty-one meals per week. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of contracts with school districts 2. Number of meals distributed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Race b. Zip code 	<p>Contract documentation</p> <p>Monthly report via contract management</p>
Increased promotion of social service programs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased participation in SNAP and WIC 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Monthly MFIP, SNAP, and WIC application and enrollment data <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Race and ethnicity b. Age c. Number of household individuals 	