

## Meeting Summary

### National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR)

#### Member Meeting

Friday, September 14, 2018

8:30 a.m.–3:00 p.m. ET

FHI 360

Washington, DC

[Livestream Recordings](#)

#### **PARTICIPANTS**

**CDC:** W. Avila, B. Belay, H. Blanck, D. Brown, S. Carlson, D. Galuska, C. Hales, H. Hamilton, D. Harris, E. Hyde, L. Kettel Khan, K. McDow, N. Nugent, H. Olaisen, J. Omura, M. Sucusky, E. Ussery, K. Watson, G. Whitfield

**NIH:** R. Ballard, D. Berrigan, S. George, J. Reedy, M. Shams-White, S. Yanovski, D. Young-Hyman

**USDA:** M. Denbaly, T. Pannucci, P. Starke-Reed, J. Variyam

**FDA:** B. Brown

**The Georgetown University:** S. Fleischhacker

**Johns Hopkins University:** B. Lee, S. Siddiqi

**The Food Trust:** W. McKinney

**Tufts University:** P. Wilde

**Coordinating Center:** E. Arkin, M. Brna, L. Canady, S. McLaughlin, T. Phillips, E. Ryan-Castillo, A. Samuels, Y. Valdes, A. Yaroch, H. Zaganjor

#### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

E. Arkin opened by welcoming participants in Atlanta, in Washington, DC, and on the phone.

#### **PROJECT/WORKGROUP UPDATES**

***The JPB Foundation: Advancing Measurement of Diet and Physical Activity for Childhood Obesity Research and Evaluation*** – Contact A. Samuels ([asamuels@fhi360.org](mailto:asamuels@fhi360.org)) for more information about this project.

J. Reedy discussed current activities:

- (Task 1) Working with Brushfire Learning to develop the eLearning modules (teaching modules); modules will be completed by February 2019.
- Each author completed a script for four modules; NCCOR will review storyboards (visual content that reflects the scripts) at the end of September.
- Presenting at the American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting in November.
- Completed literature review to update the Measures Registry.
  - Abstracted over 100 articles; roughly 65 more to abstract.
  - 147 articles were added to the Measures Registry for a total of 1,350 measures.
- (Task 2) Identified consultant—Wendy Bennett, MD, Johns Hopkins University—to conduct a systematic review of measurement needs related to childhood obesity for high-risk populations. This review is expected to be completed in November 2018.

## Discussion

- R. Ballard noted that the group developed an NCCOR Measures Registry and User Guide evaluation survey to improve access to and the quality of NCCOR resources supporting childhood obesity research. 450 people have completed the survey.
- S. Yanovski recommended disseminating the survey through the Obesity Society and the American Board of Obesity Medicine (now certifying physicians in obesity treatment).

***Developing a New User Guide for Assessing Childhood Obesity*** – Contact H. Zaganjor ([hzaganjor@fhi360.org](mailto:hzaganjor@fhi360.org)) for more information about this project.

## B. Belay discussed current activities:

- Selected Dympna Gallagher, Columbia University, as the User Guide author.
- Finalizing panel (3-4 reviewers) to review the guide from a technical perspective.

## Next steps:

- Finalize measures for User Guide based on author's feedback.
- Launch User Guide development; develop first draft in Fall 2019.
- Convene expert panel to review User Guide and make recommendations.
- Coordinate User Guide development with 2019 release of the National Center for Health Statistics' (NCHS) severe obesity materials to ensure our efforts don't overlap.

***Youth Active School Transportation (AST) Surveillance Initiative*** – Contact M. Brna ([mbrna@fhi360.org](mailto:mbrna@fhi360.org)) for more information about this project.

## K. Watson discussed current activities:

- Working with Dr. Noreen McDonald, director of the Carolina Transportation Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her research assistant to conduct a literature review to describe the current state of surveillance of youth AST.
  - A broad search of all potentially relevant articles from electronic databases (January 2004-February 2018) yielded 3,763 articles; 1,813 of those articles were not relevant or duplicates. 1,950 articles were identified as potentially relevant. Of those, 144 underwent a full text screening and 79 were identified for inclusion.
  - The team is looking at the 79 articles and identifying surveillance systems and safety surveillance systems related to AST. The most common behavioral constructs related to AST include mode to school, time spent traveling to school, and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity as it relates to school travel.

## Next steps

- Draft final report and convene expert panel to generate recommendations for improving surveillance of youth AST.
- Develop a white paper or manuscript and present findings at scientific meetings.

***Additional Physical Activity Project Updates*** – Contact M. Brna ([mbrna@fhi360.org](mailto:mbrna@fhi360.org)) for more information about these projects.

## **Additional Benefits of Walkability**

### K. Watson discussed current activities:

- Working with Dr. Keshia Pollack—professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health with expertise on safety, walking, and community issues—and FHI 360 research staff to conduct a literature review on the quantification of social cohesion and injury prevention benefits associated with increased walkability.
- Currently, 129 articles have been abstracted for the review and a search of the gray literature is in process. Next steps include reviewing the gray literature and analyzing results.

### **Increasing Opportunities for Trail Use to Promote Physical Activity and Health among Underserved Youth**

K. Watson discussed current activities. The group is working with Julian Reed EdD, MPH (Furman University) and Robert Garcia, JD (The City Project) to conduct a scientific review and program evaluation review, respectively.

#### Discussion

- D. Berrigan noted the downside of walkable environments, e.g., crime or injury. J. Omura said the team will keep this in mind when they write the report.
- R. Ballard noted that the CDC already did a project related to the economic benefits of increased walkability; therefore, this report will not address economic benefits.
- J. Reedy noted that the Youth AST group is identifying surveillance systems in Canada and said NCCOR could think about potentially including Canadian data systems in the Measures Registry. K. Watson said that the group included surveillance systems in Canada because there are similarities between Canada and the U.S.

**Health, Behavioral Design, and the Built Environment** – Contact M. Brna ([mbrna@fhi360.org](mailto:mbrna@fhi360.org)) for more information about this project.

R. Ballard discussed current activities:

- Recently published a chapter in *Food and Public Health* (Oxford University Press) in August 2018. The chapter, excerpted from the 2017 white paper, explains how theories of behavior and design, and relevant fields of application (e.g., nutrition, physical activity) intersect to form a more comprehensive understanding of how theory and practice connect. The chapter specifically focuses on enabling the development of behavioral design applications to the built and natural environments.

#### Next steps

- NCCOR Connect & Explore Webinar: Innovations in Behavioral Design to Enhance Active Living and Healthy Eating (October 23, 2018)
- CDC activities in behavioral design:
  - Small Business Innovation Research grants enabling healthy behaviors through behavioral design will be awarded this fall.
  - Fitwel continues to apply behavioral design strategies to building requirements and continues to expand.

#### Discussion

- D. Berrigan noted that behavioral design is being extended to other risk factors, such as crime and sun safety; a movement to add health to different sectors in new ways.
- R. Ballard noted efforts are underway to put more outpatient clinical units in areas where people gather and to ensure the amenities in those areas promote healthy behaviors, e.g., farmers markets and gyms.

## **PARTNER AND STRATEGIC ALLIANCE UPDATES**

### ***Agency and Other Updates Related to Food Systems***

#### ***USDA and the National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS)***

J. Variyam announced there is a proposal to realign the Economic Research Service (ERS), currently under USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission area, with the Office of the Chief Economist (OCE) under the Office of the Secretary. There is also a proposal to relocate approximately 700 ERS and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) employees.

J. Variyam provided the following updates on FoodAPS:

- USDA contracted to do a second round of FoodAPS however, this round is on hold.
- On September 27, USDA is releasing *America's Eating Habits: Food Away From Home* (FAFH), a report that examines the role of FAFH in American diets and explores the nutritional composition of FAFH and key Federal programs that influence FAFH.
  - NCCOR Connect & Explore webinar: America's Eating Habits: Food Away From Home (November 6, 2018) will share findings and insights on the report.

#### ***Food Incentives and Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Program***

L. Kettel Khan (on behalf of Jane Clary Loveless) provided the following updates on FINI:

- FINI goal is to support projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among low-income consumers participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at point of purchase (incentives can be financial or non-financial, e.g., nutrition education and fruits and vegetables).
- Priority projects in the funding stream include maximizing share of funds used for direct incentives to participants (sometimes 90% of the proposed budget is used on the incentives themselves); using direct-to-consumer sales marketing; and developing innovative or improved benefit redemption systems that could be replicated or scaled.
- Awarded 24 grants totaling \$21 million in fiscal year 2018 (includes pilot, community based, and large-scale projects). Westat independently evaluates FINI projects; the evaluation currently includes project years 2015-2017 awarded to 47 grantees.

FINI contacts: J. Loveless, [jlclary@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:jlclary@nifa.usda.gov) and P. Jean, Pascale. [Jean@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:Jean@nifa.usda.gov)

Discussion:

- A. Yaroch announced that the Gretchen Swanson Center on Nutrition was commissioned by Healthy Eating Research (HER) to do a rapid response evaluation that is going to augment the Westat evaluation. This should be live on the HER website in September; NCCOR will distribute.

#### ***Food Service Guidelines (FSG)***

J. Kimmons provided the following updates on FSG:

- The FSG define standards for foods and beverages sold or offered in public and private settings. The goal is to create an environment where healthier options are more readily available for consumers. Currently CDC is awarding 62 grantees across state health agencies, land grant universities, and communities to work on FSG strategies.
- The Food Service Guidelines Collaborative (FSGC) partners are committed to normalizing the availability of healthy and sustainable foods through numerous efforts such as developing an FSG measure and evaluation guide and policy bottom lines.

- Next steps include creating best business practices and industry standards that prioritize chronic disease prevention and tracking food environment changes as FSG become normalized in more settings.

#### Discussion

- H. Blanck mentioned that of the 62 grantees, 15 are land-grant universities and many of those support rural communities. There will be opportunities to work on rigorous evaluation with the land-grant universities. Also, the FSGC research and operations group will be part of the Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN) enabling more rigorous research in this area.
- J. Kimmons added that they are beginning to think about how distribution guidelines would work. If someone is interested in this work, contact J. Kimmons at jkimmons@cdc.gov.

#### **NIH Retail Food Environment Research**

S. Fleischhacker provided the following updates on the NIH Retail Food Environment Research:

- This is an active area of policy research. Actions are happening at national, tribe, state and local levels (e.g., the Illinois Healthy Local Food Incentives Program). These actions are informed by ecological frameworks or conceptual models.
- To NIH's knowledge, no one has investigated the state of funding for this work; therefore, NIH conducted a portfolio analysis describing the retail food environment research supported by the NIH.
- From 1987-2017 NIH has been funding work relevant to retail food environment; however, in the last 15 years, there has been an uptick in the grants funded in this area and retail-relevant research. This uptick may have been influenced by NCCOR's efforts, the 2007 NIH and RWJF workshop (focused on improving the use of measures in this field), and the 2012 NIH new funding opportunity announcement.

#### Discussion

- A. Yaroch asked about the food pantry setting and what NIH has found. S. Fleischhacker said they don't have many grants specially addressing food pantries. However, it is identified as a research need in publications.

#### **Healthy Eating Index (HEI)-2015 Release**

J. Reedy and T. Pannucci provided the following updates on the HEI-2015 release:

- The HEI-2015 has been released (the HEI is a collaboration between USDA and the National Cancer Institute). Three manuscripts have been published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.
- T. Pannucci announced:
  - The call for nominations for the 2020 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee is open; nominations need to be submitted by October 6, 2018.
  - The pregnancy and birth to 24-months systematic reviews are completed and should be published by the end of 2018.

#### Discussion

- R. Ballard noted that one of NCCOR's first actions was to provide the support to maintain the currency of the Food Patterns Equivalents Database. This is exciting evidence of how early action by NCCOR partners enabled NCCOR to move forward.

#### **The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

C. Kavanaugh provided the following FDA updates:

- Menu labeling rule was implemented on May 7, 2018. FDA is working with industry to ensure they're meeting requirements and using education to help them be compliant.
- The compliance date for the nutrition facts label has been extended. Large manufacturers have until January 1, 2020 and all other manufacturers have until January 1, 2021. FDA is working on a guidance to help industry update the labels.
- The goal for FDA's nutrition innovation strategy is to reduce chronic disease through improved nutrition. This can be done by empowering consumers with information and facilitating industry innovation toward healthier goods that consumers want.

#### Discussion

- C. Hales asked C. Kavanaugh to comment on evaluation plans for the change of nutrition labels and menu labeling. C. Kavanaugh said that the FDA has added questions to the next round NHANES and they hope outside investigators will also evaluate.
- D. Berrigan offered to share a list of resources related to the NIH funding opportunities that may be relevant to this evaluation.

#### **NCCOR Coordinating Center (CC)**

T. Phillips provided an update on NCCOR's Senior Leadership Briefing (SLB) taking place on March 7, 2019 (this meeting corresponds with NCCOR's 10-year anniversary). The SLB's goal is to brief senior leaders on NCCOR's accomplishments, activities, and the value NCCOR brings to each partner organization. NCCOR seeks to understand the interests, needs, and priorities of the senior leaders. The SLB will be held in the morning of March 7. In the afternoon, NCCOR members will debrief and discuss plans to address what the senior leaders identified.

#### ***Economic Policies for a Healthy Food System***

P. Wilde discussed economic policies for a healthy food system. He discussed advocacy coalitions and prices and quantities as they apply to three areas of debate in U.S. food policy: farm policy, competition policy and advertising, and beverage policies.

#### Logic models and advocacy coalitions

- P. Wilde discussed logic models and how these models demonstrate influencing factors to policy making and recognize diverse policy actors. Different organizations or sectors have different amounts of political power over U.S. food systems.

#### Farm policy

- There is not one kind of farm subsidy program. All farmers want higher commodity prices. Seven categories of farm policy interventions, including price supports (the government buys commodity which creates a higher price for farmers and buyers and produces more quantity) and supply control (the government limits production which creates a higher price for farmers and buyers and produces less quantity).

#### Competition policy and advertising

- Monopolies and oligopolies are often seen as the villain in the food system for causing harm in the marketing environment. However, if the concern is overconsumption, it may be competition that is the leading candidate to what makes our economy produce so much unhealthy food.

- Because of the lack of incentives to advertise commodities, the federal government supports check off programs that have annual revenue collected and mandatory assessments from the producers. The leading commodity check offs are dairy, fluid milk, pork, and beef.

#### Beverage prices

- There is an enormous interest in sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) taxes. This is partly due to actions taking place at the municipal level and national level (there are frequent proposals at the national level, but none have been pursued).

#### Discussion

- S. George asked P. Wilde what kind of modeling he is doing when putting together the logic models, e.g., system science or multi-level modeling. P. Wilde explained that each logic model plays a different role in the discussion for different disciplines.

### **PANEL DISCUSSION: THE INTERPLAY OF THE FOOD SYSTEM**

Following lunch, L. Kettel Khan introduced NCCOR's Food System Workgroup and provided context about why this panel was presenting on facets of the food system external to NCCOR.

#### ***A Consumer Food & Nutrition Data System***

Mark Denbaly, PhD, Deputy Director for Data at Food Economics, ERS, USDA

M. Denbaly introduced the Consumer Food & Nutrition System; it came out of request to put together a data system that would support analysis of food and nutrition systems of current and anticipated policy issues. With that charge USDA went to the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) and asked them for a roadmap. CNSTAT indicated they needed to do the following:

- Invest in proprietary data
- Supplement existing government surveys; do not reinvent them
- Integrate and link disparate data sources

This past year, ERS shared what they had done with CNSTAT to review. Over the past decade, ERS has executed several interagency agreements to include supplements on various surveys that include assessing food security, consumer behavior data, the impact of menu labeling, and time use.

M. Denbaly noted that ERS hopes to invest more money to link data to the "farm." Working with Agricultural Research Service (ARS), they have broken down NHANES into 65 farm commodities. ERS knows the composition of commodities up to 2008, but they no longer have funds to move forward and update this information. ERS also wants to break down peoples' purchases into these 65 farm commodities. By linking at both agricultural composition and consumption you will be able to measure food loss.

#### **Q&A**

L. Kettel Khan indicated that NCCOR members can talk to their respective agencies about supporting efforts and wanted to know how much money ERS needs. M. Denbaly noted ERS has an agreement with ARS to look into this. They have the estimate with NHANES. M. Denbaly believes for three rounds it was \$250K. For FoodAPS it is more challenging because it requires breaking up the purchases into the compositions. ARS will share a roadmap of how they can do this and the costs associated. Once provided, M. Denbaly will share.

R. Ballard noted that NIH has talked with the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR). FFAR may have a mechanism to support these efforts. M. Denbaly indicated ERS has talked with FFAR but believes that FFAR cannot support USDA agencies.

### **Food Systems Modeling**

Bruce Lee, MD; MBA Associate Professor, Department of International Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Carey Business School

B. Lee highlighted that obesity is an interaction of several complex systems. To address these complex systems, a systems approach is needed. Computational models and mathematical models are used to represent different systems. B. Lee emphasized that modeling is not a replacement for other types of study approaches.

B. Lee highlighted an example of food systems modeling where his team created virtual representations of people and key locations (e.g., households, schools, food sources) and had those people move around. B. Lee showed the audience a video representation of a Baltimore model which identified households, physical activity locations, and food sources. Essentially, representations of the population and the food system around these people are built to see what the impact of the food system might be and the impact of different types of changes.

In an article published in *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, B. Lee and his colleagues looked at the impact of introducing sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) warning labels in different cities. They built models for Baltimore, Philadelphia, and San Francisco and simulated what would happen when these warning labels are placed in different types of food stores under different conditions such as literacy levels, type of labels, and store owner compliance with these labels. In their study, they found differences in the change of obesity prevalence over time among the cities because factors such as the population and type of store will affect the results. This kind of heterogeneity indicates that these types of factors matter.

B. Lee and his colleagues have also been conducting another initiative, HERMES, which runs models from the food source to the point of service. They have built simulation models of the supply chain for different types of food products. This allows the team to look for bottlenecks, vulnerabilities, stronger areas, and test for different types of policies and interventions. B. Lee indicated whenever they run these simulation experiments there are always dynamics that they did not expect because a change in part of the system can have many effects.

B. Lee concluded that obesity cannot be addressed looking at a single factor. Food systems are complex that human beings we cannot picture all these things together without the help of something else. Computational modeling approaches have transformed other fields and similarly can be used in the areas of food, nutrition, obesity, etc.

### **Q&A**

H. Olaisen wondered how to overcome the shortages and need for creativity that is required to input quality data to feed models because a model is only as good as the data. B. Lee responded that although better data may yield a more accurate model or allow the model to be more validated, waiting until you get good data to build a model would be a mistake. B. Lee encouraged others to start by building a basic model, running it to determine what is missing to inform data collection, which then gives you more data to update the model. This iterative process allows the model to grow in complexity and accuracy.

R. Ballard noted that she has heard modelers indicate that we have assumptions about the most important things in need of an intervention. Using models, you can understand what segment of a system needs data and



you can estimate that by changing those parameters based on your conjectures and see what works. B. Lee agreed and noted understanding the complexity of a system makes it simpler. Whenever you model the system things get simpler because things start dropping out and you can determine where to intervene to see changes.

D. Berrigan indicated that many grantees are excited about integrating GIS, accelerometry data, ecological momentary assessment, and GPS data, but this research community has not yet determined how to extract informative parameters from those data to inform virtual simulations. He wanted to know if this was happening. B. Lee explained that the challenge with big data is the large volumes of data that must be sifted through for useful information. It is still early to have integration between data and management with modeling, policies, interventions, and natural experiments. It would help to discuss how to bring different people together this integration.

### ***Applying a Broader Food Systems Lens: An Analysis of Government Plans to Address Wasted Food***

Sameer Siddiqi, PhD Candidate, CLF-Lerner Fellow, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future

Food waste is any food that is grown and produced for human consumption but not eaten. He noted that the food waste problem is best understood using a food systems lens because the type and magnitude varies by where in the supply chain it occurs. He highlighted that food waste intersects with public health, obesity, and nutrition.

S. Siddiqi indicated over the last few years there has been increased research on food waste; however, few studies have focused on policy solutions to prevent and mitigate food waste. To address this gap, S. Siddiqi and colleagues sought to identify and synthesize government plans and targets at the national, state, and municipal-level. Their primary objective was to strengthen future wasted food targets and planning efforts. They reviewed strategic plans because they're an underutilized, yet unique, policy change strategy as they have the potential to influence program design, resource allocations, stakeholder engagement, and implementation.

S. Siddiqi noted they found an uptick in plans related to wasted food in the past several years; at least half the plans were published between 2013 and 2016. Regarding the plan type, approximately half were framed in terms of waste management, which is critical to understanding how these issues are framed. More than half of the plans included proponents related to residential and commercial composting, consumer and commercial education related to waste prevention and diversion, and research and surveillance. Few plans included components related to more aggressive approaches such as landfill fees and bans, operational and supply chain improvements, and institutional purchasing requirements. More can be learned about the findings using the following [report](#) or [mapping tool](#) developed.

S. Siddiqi shared several conclusions that included: food waste presents an opening for researchers and practitioners working in obesity to engage with many organizations working on waste prevention, sustainability, and climate change; strategic plans may be an important vehicle for achieving meaningful long-term policy change and capacity building; and there is a need for greater guidance on how government staff at the municipal and state level can better develop and implement these plans.

### **Q&A**

L. Kettel Khan indicated that food waste comes up a lot when talking about access to healthier food. She also asked S. Siddiqi to clarify the potential tension between recycling and food waste. S. Siddiqi indicated that the study team heard from several interviewees that the emphasis on achieving gains in recycling would sometimes lead to instances where waste prevention can be a detraction from recycling targets because you're not sending materials to be recycled. He noted it's important to have a system view when trying to maximize set targets.

They found freshness was the primary motivator for food waste among households. Other data suggest consumers may purchase processed goods out of fear that fresh food may spoil sooner or because it's cheaper. If fresh fruit and vegetable consumption is promoted, it needs to be considered in relation to food waste.

D. Berrigan wanted to know more about literature related to individual behavioral responses to food waste messages. S Siddiqi noted there is a need for more research. The survey they conducted on food waste found the principle motivator for partaking in waste reduction behaviors was focused on being thrifty. He noted there is a need for more evaluation of messaging campaigns and some of this is being done such as with ads on food date labels.

J. Reedy wanted to know how sustainability can be woven into the current conversation. S. Siddiqi noted in the context of the study, the team was surprised to see the growth of food waste in sustainability plans in last few years. This may be due to arguments made and available data related to greenhouse gas emissions associated with food waste and the wasted resources gone into producing food not consumed. Now would be a good time to connect NCCOR with the broader sustainability space. NCCOR has done this with schools in the past and there may be opportunities to do similar types of engagement.

***A Regional Comprehensive Approach to Food Access: Featuring the FARE Project, A Cleveland Case Study***

Bill McKinney, PhD, Executive Vice President and Director of Research and Evaluation, The Food Trust

B. McKinney highlighted the mission of the Food Trust to ensure that everyone has access to nutritious, affordable food and the information to make healthy decisions. The Food Trust is based in Philadelphia but works at the national level. When talking about food systems, it is important for the Food Trust to prioritize and work through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion because of their community-level work.

B. McKinney shared that the Food Access Raises Everyone (FARE) Project is a project they have conducted in Cleveland/Cuyahoga County for the past three years. The project was created to help Cleveland/Cuyahoga County stakeholders strengthen their current efforts to increase food access and improve health. The Food Trust's role has been to share successful and innovative strategies for food access, education, and advocacy to position local leaders to achieve their obesity reduction goals. With this effort they worked with many different stakeholders from the food systems environment for over a year to identify where to focus energy. Eight areas of focus were identified, and their model was to activate all areas at once. B. McKinney noted the importance of a formative research component to identify the changes that are necessary to achieve goals, which can be used to make a case with funders.

The Project worked through many different stages:

- 1) Ensuring everyone in the same area was working together,
- 2) Getting related areas to work together, such as retailers working with urban growers,
- 3) Ensuring everyone across all eight areas worked together and operated as a "food movement." Partners feeling like they were part of a movement was critical for success.

As the Project evolved they have centered it more on being a regional food systems approach.

The latest stage is working in program areas in more depth. Currently, they are focused on healthy retail, farm-to-everywhere, and nutrition education. As a part of this project there was a strong mini-grant process with RWJF which was great for engaging partners that normally were not at the table.

In closing, B. McKinney noted that sometimes working through a project like this makes him think of all the progress that has been made, especially partners who were originally resistant to an outside organization

coming in. He reminded participants that when looking at systems, remember the people in the communities that are being served. It is the people that are being served that should be leading this work.

### **Q&A**

A. Yaroch asked how food pantries fit within the healthy retail setting. B. McKinney noted that in some cities the Food Trust works in, it is a space of opposition. Looking at emergency food versus purchased food, they try to bring the two groups together to help them understand they're trying to reach the same goals. A. Yaroch added she is also thinking of choice pantries and how to encourage food pantries to promote healthier foods. B. McKinney used the FARE Project as an example by noting that staff is housed in the Cleveland Food Bank. He indicated it's about forging those partnerships and having regular conversations.

J. Reedy wondered about lessons learned from the community approach that can be infused into a national approach to change the food system. B. McKinney noted that although this is hard, it's possible and can lead to more sustainable results. He indicated one of the main things to encourage a national approach is to support partners with research and evaluation. But then there must be a vision to understand how all the research and evaluation work together.

From the livestream feed it was asked, "To what extent have certain efforts, i.e. land acquisitions for gardens, setting up food pantries, been too big to be addressed by a single group? And are there connections between your efforts and promoting physical activity?" B. McKinney indicated partnerships and working with everyone who is engaged helps overcome the challenges of working on large issues. Regarding physical activity, B. McKinney noted there are connections, especially with their work in schools and youth councils.

### **BRAINSTORM: WHAT ROLE CAN NCCOR PLAY IN SUPPORTING THE FOOD SYSTEM?**

J. Reedy opened the brainstorm session as an opportunity to receive feedback from the panel about what role NCCOR can play in supporting the food system.

L. Kettel Khan referred to M. Denbaly's presentation and financial constraints in terms of calculating food waste for NCCOR to consider. H. Blanck noted having further dialogue about ERS's rich data sources would be helpful. She asked if there are measures USDA is purchasing that can be driven down to state and local levels. M. Denbaly indicated that regional estimates are costly. Alternatively, they can take national data and develop model driven estimates for smaller areas. He added the best data source ERS has for regional food purchases is proprietary data. The household side of IRI has 50 market areas, so the estimate is good for those areas. For the retail side, ERS has data for about 60,000 stores, but they do not have ways to calibrate representativeness yet. All IRI is data is limited to food-at-home.

E. Arkin asked if the panelists had any thoughts on what the other panelists said. B. McKinney noted it would be great to have more interaction and utilize some of the tools and approaches described to integrate into the Food Trust's work. S. Siddiqi commented that potential interventions can be designed that place a greater emphasis on equity issues when it comes to food waste. This is something that NCCOR can foster more conversation around. Additionally, he felt that modeling has potential for food waste and adding questions to national surveys about food waste behaviors and knowledge can supplement existing data. B. Lee added that the purpose of building systems models is to see how things fit together. When you do that you can see the potential synergies. Looking at combinations of interventions is key because things may not work in isolation. He also noted that modeling can be used to inform the value of data. M. Denbaly agreed and added don't collect data unless you have a question to answer. And if you have a question to answer, have a model behind it.

One thing NCCOR might want to consider is how much wasted food can be redirected and toward what uses. And what are thoughts on the best/highest use? S. Siddiq indicated there is thinking on preferred strategies to address food waste. USDA and EPA have a food recovery hierarchy that is useful for prioritizing preferred strategies. Based on their study, most jurisdictions are not adhering to the most preferred strategies and are focusing on composting which is the least preferred strategy. The hierarchy should be considered when designing strategies. B. Lee added that thinking of things as systems helps people see how issues like food waste can lead to other problems in the system and affect every sector.

R. Ballard wondered if in the food systems space we have come to a point where data gaps and opportunities have been identified. She asked that if this does not exist is there any utility in NCCOR having a discussion on where some of the needs are. B. Lee said there has been some discussion, but some of it has diffused and many areas have not been addressed. More discussion will be helpful, but with the understanding things will get more advanced. D. Berrigan added NCCOR can think about convening a group to define emerging data needs for complex systems models in obesity. D. Berrigan asked about sequencing; is it clear what is needed, or would it help to convene a group to prioritize what the data needs are and what a test dataset might look like? B. Lee indicated that many of these questions have come up about a decade ago in infectious disease modeling because necessity called for modeling to be adopted sooner. B. Lee can share his experiences of attending a similar convening to apply to a potential NCCOR convening. Regarding the idea of common datasets, B. Lee is an investigator in the Models of Infectious Disease Agent Study (MIDAS). One of their ongoing conversations is about establishing gold standard datasets. Model comparison has been an issue. You cannot use one dataset instead you need to use a set of datasets because some models have different granularity.

E. Arkin asked if there are some new ways to put the needs for having good national data and the needs for local data together? M. Denbaly indicated small area estimation is well developed. H. Blanck noted small area estimation is used at CDC, but it does not have the rigor for evaluation or surveillance. R. Ballard noted that as local- and state-level data is built, it can be useful to think about the ripest areas for focused investment. H. Blanck agreed on investing in a few sentinel places to learn and see what they're capturing. R. Ballard added learning more from modeling about promising areas may help inform what other data to capture. B. Lee added you can't blanket the entire country, but by doing a landscape analysis to segment out the different communities and pick exemplars from each for deep dives, then you can then use modeling to see what happens if something applies across the entire country.

## **CLOSING**

A. Samuels closed the meeting by highlighting NCCOR webinars in September, October, and November. She noted NCCOR will be at APHA, holding a session on November 13 and exhibiting. The next NCCOR Member Call is on November 7.