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Building the capacity for community food work: The geographic distribution of USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program grantees

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Abstract

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program, or USDA CFPCGP, supports community efforts to address food system issues. Over the last 15 years the program has funded diverse community-based projects across the nation, including youth education programs on healthy eating, farm-to-table initiatives, and community food assessments. In this initial study, we endeavor to understand the contribution of the CFPCGP in building a community's capacity to address its own challenges for food security. To analyze funding patterns of the CFPCGP program between 1996 and 2012, we used the websites of the CFPCGP and the WhyHunger Network to identify 420 competitive grant applications successfully funded by this grant program. In this paper we present findings on the geographical distribution of successful applicants and the common objectives of these projects. All but three states had successful applicants. We found considerably uneven (disproportionate to population) distribution of successful grantees

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among 50 states and U.S. territories, as well as among the four USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) regions (Northeast, North Central, South, and West). Organizations and cities receiving multiple grants tended to be located in the metropolitan Northeast or West. Training, education, and gardening are common activities proposed in the funded projects. "Low-income" residents in the community are identified as the target group for nearly one third of the funded grants. We discuss key implications of our findings and offer suggestions for building the capacity of limited-resource communities and organizations to successfully compete for CFPCGP funding.

Keywords
community food work, food security, community development, federal funding, food localization movement, regional disparity

Introduction

Food brings people together. Few celebrations or ceremonies in our lives can proceed without food. Yet food also divides people into categories based on class, status, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, ideology, etc. Enormous inequalities persist in the United States among individuals and communities in terms of access to affordable, culturally, and nutritionally adequate food. The USDA Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP) is intended in part to ameliorate those inequalities. This paper considers how the funding of this program is distributed among organizations, cities, and regions in the United States.

In 2013, an estimated 14.3% of U.S. households were food insecure, or lacked "access to enough food for an active, healthy living" for all household members (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). One in five children was estimated to be food insecure and did not know where his or her next meal was coming from (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014). In 2012, 83% of 51 million eligible individuals participated in the Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Eslami, 2014). Feeding America estimates that in 2014, 46.5 million individuals were served by its network of food banks (Weinfield, Mills, Borger, Gearing, Macaluso, Montaquila, & Zedlewski, 2014). Even with assistance, 23.5 million Americans live in food deserts, experiencing difficulty accessing healthy food at a reasonable price (Ver Ploeg, Breneman, Dutko, Williams, Snyder, Dicken, & Kaufman, 2012).

Within the last decade, the number of community-based initiatives devoted to addressing food insecurity has grown dramatically (Winne, 2008). Such terms as food deserts, food miles, "know your farmer, know your food," and farm-to-table have become part of an everyday lexicon for many people. Food has become a critical arena in which we have come to reflect on ourselves, our community, and the economy by asking: What constitutes a good food system? How do we build such a food system in our own community?

Our research project focuses on community efforts to build good food systems. In particular, we examine the role of the USDA CFPCGP in facilitating concerned citizens, activists, and professionals to build capacity to define and address food-security challenges in their own communities, or what we call in this paper *community food work*. In this paper we address the questions: (1) Who are the successful grantees of the USDA CFPCGP? (2) Where are they located? (3) What kind of activities do they propose to implement through their projects? By asking these questions, we aim to explore the geographic distribution of successful grants and highlight the critical role that federal competitive grant programs may play in shaping community food work in the United States.

Below we will first briefly discuss the increased significance of community food work in recent years. Then we present our initial findings on the key trends and characteristics among the grant applicants who successfully competed for CFPCGP grants between 1996 and 2012. Finally we discuss some implications of these findings, provide suggestions for improving the CFPCGP, and conclude by laying out our plan for further analysis in this research project.

Community Food Work

The level of a nation's economic development or social progress is often tied to its capacity to feed its population (Braudel, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c;

Busch & Lacy, 1984; Sen, 1983; also by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation's Committee on World Food Security, available at http://www.fao.org/cfs/cfs-home/en/). The term *community food work* is often used to describe the work involving the improvement of food security through community-based strategies. Today this includes a wide range of activities by various types of organizations, such as food banks, soup kitchens, public programs supporting food access (e.g., SNAP, school feeding programs), and healthy-food advocacy groups.

Yet the history of public interventions in ensuring food security in the U.S. population is relatively short (Poppendieck, 1999). Some of the key public programs for feeding, e.g., the first pilot food stamp program, started in the 1930s in response to the Great Depression. The National School Lunch Program (Poppendieck, 2011) and victory gardens were promoted as a part of the nation's war effort during the two war periods to feed those who remained in the homeland. Many of the contemporary programs with which we are familiar today, e.g., the food stamp program (which became SNAP), grew out of community food work associated with the War on Poverty in the 1960s (Poppendieck, 1999; USDA-FNS, 2013).

Within the agrifood studies literature, the current community food security movement is understood as a convergence of two interrelated yet distinct social-movement sectors calling for an alternative food system (Allen, 2004; Constance, Renard, & Rivera-Ferra, 2014; Goodman, DuPuis, & Goodman, 2014). One sector emphasizes the goal of transforming agriculture to use more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable *production* by fostering more ecologically sustainable *farming* practices, capturing high added value to maintain commercially vibrant farm enterprises, and enhancing the quality of life for farm families (National Research Council [NRC] Committee on Twenty-First Century Systems Agriculture, 2010). This group tends to be made up of organizations whose members are largely farmers and advocates for family farming. These organizations promote direct linkages between farmers and consumers through such marketing arrangements as community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, and institutional purchasing (e.g., farm-to-school, farm-to-hospital, consumer cooperatives) to establish a localized food system. In addition, some organizations advocate for production practices and institutional arrangements for socially just food systems, such as fair labor arrangements, socially responsible production practices, and ethical treatments of animals.

The priority of the other social movement sector focuses on food *consumption* by advocating for the need to improve consumers' *access* to healthy, nutritious, and culturally adequate food at affordable prices. This latter priority is highly fragmented in comparison to the sustainable agricultural production priority. Some of the organizations pursuing this priority were formed between the mid-1960s and early 1980s in anti-poverty and anti-hunger work, including provision of emergency food assistance (e.g., food banks, food pantries, soup kitchens). These organizations tend to focus their effort on food access among community members with limited resources. On the other hand, a newer subgroup under the food consumption priority that has proliferated in the last two decades tends to emphasize improving the adequacy of food that is available to all community members and their health behaviors (see Winne, 2008).

Although these two sets of priorities—sustainable agricultural production and improved food consumption—are not mutually exclusive, they can be considered as a "wicked problem" (Nelson & Stroink, 2014). While family farmers hope to capture premiums for their harvest, urban consumers want to be able to afford these products. On the one hand, the food consumption priority is oriented toward the needs of urban consumers, thus paying less attention to sustainable farming and food production activities. On the other hand, the sustainable agriculture/food localization priority tends to attract highly educated and/or economically privileged consumers. This group tends to understate the structurally generated social inequalities that often exclude certain groups of consumers (e.g., racial and ethnic minorities, the poor) from participating in the localized food system (see Alkon & Agyeman, 2011).

Institutional purchasing of fresh fruits and

vegetables through the farm-to-school/college/hospitals, gleaning for redistribution at food pantries and soup kitchens, and establishing food hubs are examples of *economic approaches* that link the needs of farmers and consumers. These approaches create a food system that consists of short chains between farmers and consumers while taking advantage of economies of scale. Examples of *political approaches* include establishing food policy councils at the local, county, or state level that may include creating a local-food coordinator position in the local government (see Winne, 2008). Both the economic and political approaches are intended to create a forum to bring together representatives from diverse types and sectors of the food system to collaborate in the community work through the political process (Burgan & Winne, 2012). Our analysis in another research project on the food policy council movement suggests that the agriculture sector is not well represented in many food policy councils at the local level. If represented, it tends to be limited to a rather narrow range of agricultural interests (Mooney, Tanaka, & Ciciurkaite, 2014).

As a grant program of the USDA, the CFPCGP explicitly encourages grant applicants to demonstrate how their project contributes to connecting farmers and consumers. The proposed projects need to lead to a sustainable institutional mechanism to address food security challenges in the community beyond the expiration of the grant. This program aims to address food insecurity issues in low-income communities by funding projects that will "unite the entire food system, assessing strengths, establishing linkages, and creating systems that improve self-reliance over food needs" (USDA NIFA, 2010, para. 4). Below we examine the programs that were successful in receiving grants under the USDA CFPCGP.

USDA Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program

The CFPCGP is established under legislative authority of the Food Stamp Act of 1977 (PL 108-269; see 7 U.S.C. 2034). In 1996, the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act (PL 104-127-APR. 4 1996) authorized the funding of this grant program to encourage self-reliance in building food security in low-income communities. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (PL 107-171) reauthorized the program. Then the legislative authority was amended by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 as well as Section 4402 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 (PL 110-246). According to the 2014 CFPCGP request for applications (USDA NIFA, 2014a):

> The primary goals of the CFPCGP are to:
>
> - Meet the food needs of low-income individuals through food distribution, community outreach to assist in participation in federally assisted nutrition programs, or improving access to food as part of a comprehensive service;
> - Increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for the food needs of communities;
> - Promote comprehensive responses to local food access, farm, and nutrition issues; and
> - Meet specific state, local or neighborhood food and agricultural needs including needs relating to:
>   - Equipment necessary for the efficient operation of a project;
>   - Planning for long-term solutions: or
>   - The creation of innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers. (p. 23)

The program offers three types of grants, including: (1) Community Food Projects (CFP), (2) Planning Projects (PP), and (3) Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Projects. Due to the lack of detailed information about each funded grant, we were unable to consider differences among these three grant types in the present analysis. Regardless of the type of grants, the CFPCGP aims to facilitate capacity building of low-income, limited-resource communities.

Any private, nonprofit organizations as well as public food service providers and tribal organizations are eligible to apply for a grant under this program. However, the proposal must demonstrate that the lead organization has experience with

"community food work, particularly concerning small and medium-size farms, including the provision of food to people in low-income communities and the development of new markets in low-income communities for agricultural producers," competence in successfully implementing a project, and willingness to share the findings and lessons from the project with other practitioners and researchers in community food work (USDA NIFA, 2014a, p. 9).

The program specifically encourages diverse types of organizations (e.g., academic, non-academic, public, private, business, nonprofit) from multiple sectors in the food system to build partnerships and share resources and expertise. Through strong collaborations among stakeholders in the community, each project is expected to generate sustainable solutions to what they collectively consider to be challenges to food security in their own community while also developing knowledge, skills, and institutional frameworks necessary for building a community-based, local food system according to the vision of the project team (USDA NIFA, 2014a).

Because of the emphasis on integrative approaches to addressing food, farm, and nutrition issues, the CFPCGP becomes a space for facilitating "a national incubator in which comprehensive, but relatively small-scale, food system innovation is taking place community by community" (Maretzki & Tuckermanty, 2007, p. 335). Pothukuchi found that CFPCGP projects between 1999 and 2003 contributed to making "healthy food more available in low-income communities; enabled youth and adults alike to gain skills in food production and marketing; supported the development of local jobs and food-related businesses; and developed a host of innovative approaches to problems linking food, agriculture, and nutrition" (2007, p. 5). Our aim in this paper is not to evaluate the validity of these claims or efficacy of the grant program. Instead, we ask who are successful grantees of the CFPCGP, where are they located, and what activities do they propose to implement? Answering these questions will help us understand how a federal competitive grant program such as the CFPCGP shapes community food work in this country.

Methods

To collect the information on the successful grantee applicants, we carried out an exhaustive search of publicly available data and identified two critical websites. The USDA CFPCGP website provides key information about funded projects between 1996 and 2012. The WhyHunger Network website (2014) also includes a database of the projects funded between 1996 and 2012. We identified 420 CFPCGP projects. The amount of information readily available from these sources varies tremendously depending on the grant year. For example, a list of the funded projects for the year of 2004 was published in the form of a press release (USDA Office of Communications, 2004). We also used the decennial report on the CFPCGP, *Healthy Food, Healthy Community,* for information on the funded grants between 1996 and 2006 (Community Food Project 10th Anniversary Production Team, 2007). Although several successful grant applicants may be missing from the USDA and WhyHunger Network data sets, we assume that no systematic bias exists in the missing data.

For each CFPCGP project we recorded the following variables: the grant year, the location of the lead organization, the grant amount (which ranged from US$6,560 to US$300,000), the objective or mission statement of the project, the contact name for the grantee, the email of the contact person, and the web address of the project. We created a spreadsheet to identify any patterns in the historical trend of grant funding, including: the number of grants per state, the number of institutions that received multiple grants, and common themes and activities.

For most projects funded between 1996 and 1999, we were unable to locate anything beyond the title and lead organization of each project, and therefore excluded those from the analysis of funding amounts and common themes and activities. We also were unable to find any mission or objective statements for some projects funded in the years of 2000 and 2006. Thus 359 projects out of the original 420 projects were used for analysis of thematic patterns.

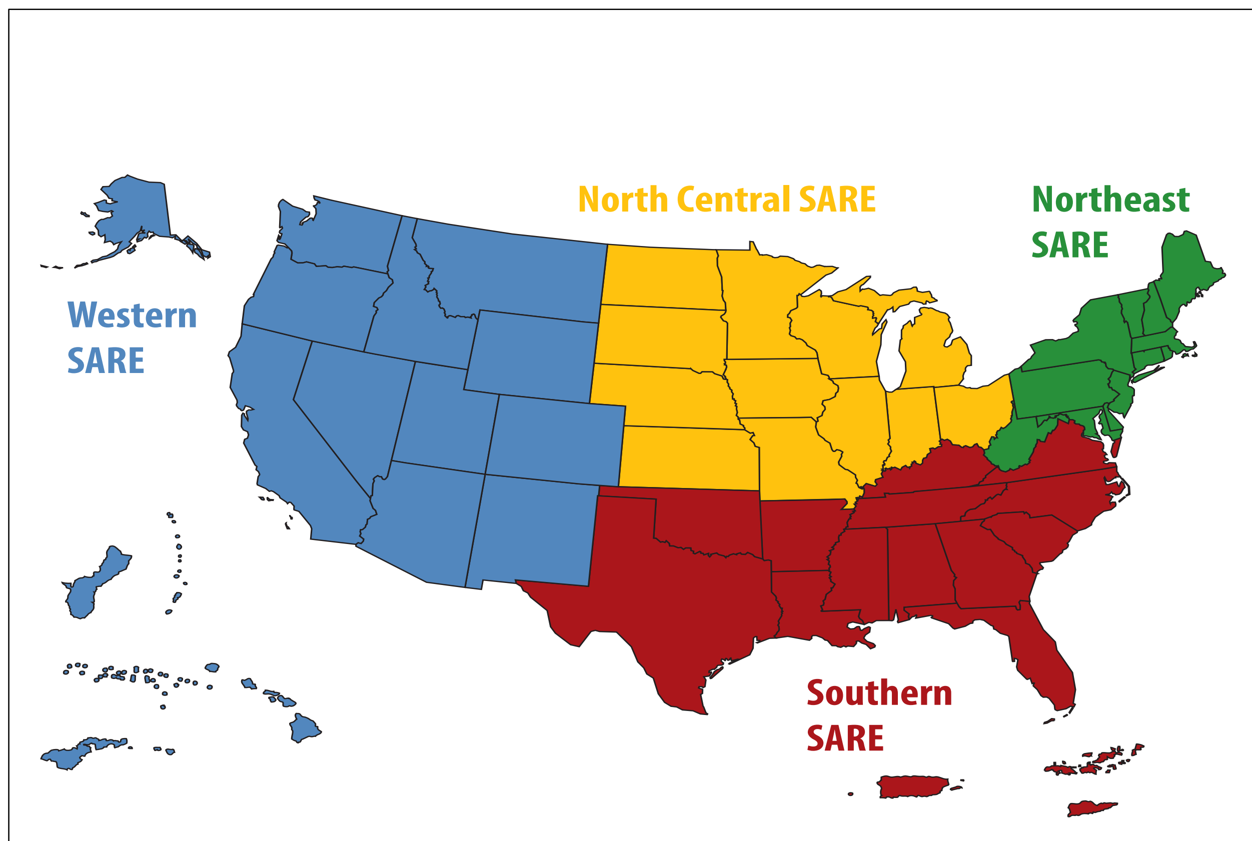
To examine the geographical distribution of grants, we used the four Sustainable Agriculture

Research and Education (SARE) regions of the United States, a modified version of the federal regions designated by the U.S. Census Bureau and commonly used by the USDA (see Map 1). These are defined as (USDA SARE, n.d.):

- North Central Region: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin;
- Northeast Region: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia;
- Southern Region: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Virginia; and
- Western Region: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

To examine the patterns in what the successful grantees proposed to do, we used NVivo, a software program for qualitative data analysis, to identify common words and phrases used in the statement of the project objectives and approaches in 359 projects funded between 1996 and 2012. We then categorized these words and phrases by project to examine the geographical place of the proposed community food work, the type of activities, and the target groups. Because we used project

Map 1. Regions of the United States as Defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program and Used in this Study



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summaries, which are publicly available, we did not analyze in depth how words (e.g., business, gardening) and phrases (e.g., access to the market) that appeared frequently were intended by these different organizations in diverse projects.

There are several limitations to our analysis. First, we used the address of the performing institution as the location of the project. This was problematic because many of them are located in urban areas even though their activities serve the needs of rural communities and residents. Another problem with the use of the organization's address was differentiating between those nonprofit organizations that have a national or regional scope (such as the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) and Janus Youth Program) and those with a scope of work within a single state. We do not know the precise number of the grant recipients that work beyond the state level. We reviewed the websites of multiple grant recipients to understand the geographical scale of their organizational activities.

Second, the project summaries preclude assessment of the extent to which the proposed activities were completed and generated the expected outputs and outcomes. Although they were extremely useful, the evaluative reports on the CFPCGP published by the CFSC (e.g., Community Food Project 10th Anniversary Production Team, 2007; Pothukuchi, 2007; Tauber & Fisher, 2002) provided detailed information about only those projects that were considered to be successful and exemplary. Moreover, these project summaries and descriptions did not include a list of collaborating organizations and individuals. We therefore do not know how many performing organizations are involved in multiple CFPCGP projects in their state or region. As discussed below, our future analysis will include the annual reports and final project reports from several projects selected for case study.

Third, this analysis did not taken into account historical transformations of the grant program. The amount appropriated for the CFPCGCP as well as the priority areas and eligible activities have changed over the 15-year period. Our future analysis will investigate the transformations of the grant program in relation to changes in the community food security movement in the U.S.

Results

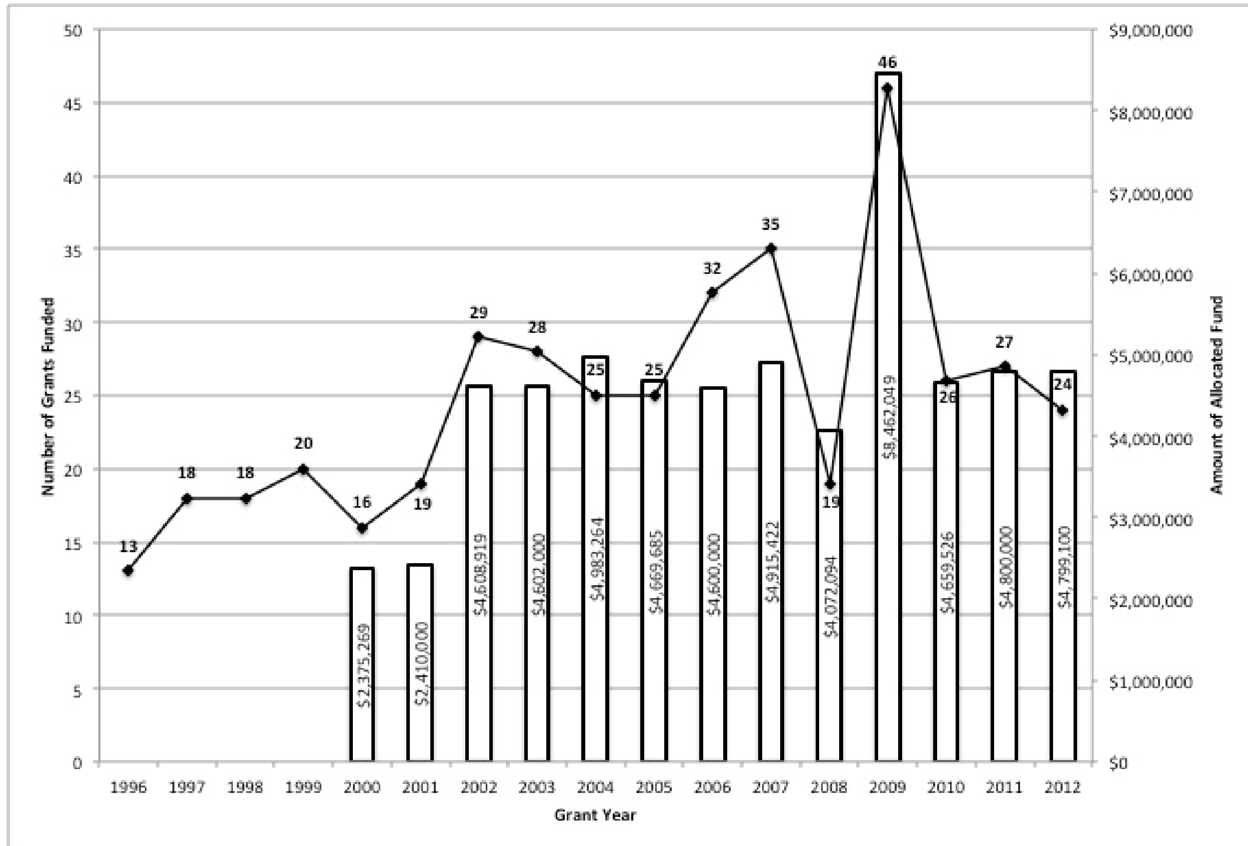
Between 1996 and 2012, the USDA CFPCGP funded 420 projects. As shown in Figure 1, in the first three years of the program the number of grants funded was very small (n=13); the total federal funding allocated to the program appears to be very small. Since 2002, the federal appropriation to the program seems to be more or less stable at around US$4.7 million, except for the funding year of 2009. During the 10-year period of 2002 to 2012 (excluding the anomalous year of 2009), 27 projects on average were funded annually. We were unable to explain why the funding allocation for the year of 2009 doubled. This section presents the geographical patterns and common themes of these projects.

Geographical Distribution of Grant Funding

Forty-seven states received at least one CFPCGP grant. Kentucky, New Hampshire, and Utah have never received a grant. American Samoa also received one grant and Washington, D.C., received three. Although Washington, D.C., is technically not part of any of the SARE regions, we included those grants in our analysis of the geographical distribution as part of the Northeast SARE region. Table 1 shows the 10 states with the most grants funded by the program over the 15-year period. All these states hold reputations as trend-setters in the sustainable agriculture and community food security movement. They are all located in either the Northeast or Western regions of the United States.

There are enormous differences among the "food environments" of these 47 states (see the USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas, http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas.aspx) as well as among their agroecological conditions for farming, sociocultural history of community-based activism, and the these factors. To better grasp the regional distribution of CFPCGP grants, the data are grouped into the four SARE regions. Between 1996 and 2012, the Western region received the most grants, with 160 out of 420 grants (39%), followed by the Northeastern region, with 112 grants (27%), the North Central region with 76 grants (18%), and the Southern region with 69 grants (16%). Considering that both the North-

Figure 1. Number and Amount (in US$) of CFPCGP Grants per Year, 1996–2012



eastern and Western regions include states known for their vibrant sustainable agriculture and community food security movements, this regional discrepancy may not be surprising. Table 2 compares the distribution of grants by region over four time periods. As indicated in the table, the Southern region has a substantially greater population than the other regions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), but received the least number of grants in each period. Compared with other regions, the Southern region has much higher rates of obesity and household food insecurity (Tanaka, Mooney, & Wolff, 2014). This distribution of CFPCGP grants among the four regions did not change substantially over time.

Even after the sustainable agriculture and community food security movement began to spread across the U.S. from the two coasts, the Western region received more than twice the amount of funding from the CFPCGP than the North Central or Southern regions.

Distribution of Multiple-Grant Recipient Organizations and Cities

Among the 420 grants, 260 grants (62%) were given to first-time recipients. The remaining 140 grants were distributed among 58 organizations,

Table 1. Top 10 States by Number of USDA CFPCGP Grants, 1997–2012

State	Number
California	59
New York	28
Massachusetts	26
Oregon	22
Maine	17
New Mexico	16
Arizona	16
Pennsylvania	14
Wisconsin	14
Washington and Minnesota (tied)	13

Table 2. Distributions of USDA CFPCGP Grants and Population by Region, 1997–2012

		Population (1,000s)			Grants				
		1990	2000	2010	1997–2000	2001–2004	2005–2008	2009–2012	Total
Northeast	N	58,658	62,055	64,443	23	30	24	36	113
	%	24%	22%	21%	27%	30%	22%	29%	27%
North Central	N	59,669	64,393	66,927	16	21	22	16	75
	%	24%	23%	22%	19%	21%	20%	13%	18%
West	N	52,784	63,198	71,946	30	35	45	53	163
	%	21%	22%	23%	35%	35%	41%	43%	39%
South	N	77,607	91,776	105,430	16	15	20	18	69
	%	31%	33%	34%	17%	14%	18%	15%	16%
Total	N	248,718	219,367	244,302	85	101	111	123	420

Sources: Mackun & Wilson, 2011; Perry & Mackun, 2001.

including 35 organizations with 2 grants, 12 organizations with 3 grants, 8 organizations with 4 grants, Southside Community Land Trust (Providence, Rhode Island) with 5 grants, Janus Youth Program (Portland, Oregon) with 6 grants, and Community Food Security Coalition (Portland, Oregon, and Venice, California) with 17 grants. Some of the multiple-grant recipient organizations work beyond the state level. Table 3 lists the organizations that received four or more grants.

As mentioned above, the CFSC was a national organization composed of over 300 member organizations who focus on various types of community food work, including sustainable agriculture, hunger and food security, food sovereignty, and farm-to-institution, until it dissolved in 2012. World Hunger Year (currently known as WhyHunger Network) and First Nations Development Institute are also national organizations. Although Farm to Table emphasizes building the capacity for community food work in New Mexico, it "works at the local, regional and national levels through innovative, community-driven programs and strong partnerships" (Farm to Table, n.d., para. 1). Janus Youth Program, founded in 1972, provides community-based residential care for homeless youth and substance abusers in Oregon and Washington. Although not listed in Table 3, Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (Southern SAWG; $n=3$) is a regional organization that operates in 13 Southern SARE states.

These national and regional organizations often become a hub for nonprofit organizations to collect resources—e.g., data, potential partners, best management practices in community food work—necessary for designing projects and writing grant proposals. For example, through its annual meetings and regional workshops, the CFSC and the Southern SAWG offer training for their member organizations or individuals to design community-based food projects and assist them in developing fundable proposals. The CFSC conducted evaluation studies to identify the best practices among CFPCGP-funded projects and disseminated a guidebook for designing and implementing successful community food projects (e.g., Community Food Projects 10th Anniversary Production Team 2007; Pothukuchi, 2007; Pothukuchi, Joseph, Burton, & Fisher, 2002; Tauber & Fisher, 2002).

Next, we examined how many cities and townships in the United States received multiple grants from the CFPCGP to tackle their food challenges. Between 1996 and 2012, 237 cities received at least one CFPCGP grant; 73 of these cities received multiple grants. Top recipient cities

Table 3. Lead Organizations with Multiple USDA CFPCGP Grants, 1997–2012

Organization Name	Organization Location	Number of Grants Received
Community Food Security Coalition	Portland, Oregon, & Venice, California	17
Janus Youth Program	Portland, Oregon	6
Southside Community Land Trust	Providence, Rhode Island	5
Community Teamwork	Lowell, Massachusetts	4
Cultivating Community	Portland, Maine	4
Farm to Table	Santa Fe, New Mexico	4
First Nations Development Institute	Fredericksburg, Virginia, & Longmont, Colorado	4
Florida Certified Organic Growers and Consumers	Gainesville, Florida	4
Growing Power, Inc.	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	4
Nuestras Raices	Holyoke, Massachusetts	4
Youth and Farm Market Project	Minneapolis, Minnesota	4

are Portland, Oregon, with 17 grants; New York City, with 13 grants; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with 11 grants; Los Angeles, California, with 8 grants; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, with 7 grants each; and Lowell, Massachusetts, San Francisco, and Seattle, with 6 grants each. Because 58 organizations received more than one grant as noted above, we ranked the cities with multiple grants based on the number of distinct organizations being funded by the CFPCGP. While Portland, Oregon, received the largest number of grants with a total of 17, the largest number of organizations funded by the CFPCGP was in Philadelphia (*n*=10), followed by New York with 8 organizations; Los Angeles with 7 organizations; and New Orleans, Portland, Oregon, San Francisco, and Seattle with 5 organizations. Although Lowell, Minneapolis, Providence, Rhode Island, and Venice, California, received 5 or more grants, these grants went to one or two organizations.

Common Activities and Target Groups, 1996–2012

Of 420 projects funded between 1996 and 2012, we were successful in obtaining objective statements for 359 projects (see the Methods section above). Project objectives were used to identify common activities as well as target groups among these grants. As shown in Table 4, gardening is the most common *activity* proposed by successful applicants to this grant program, mentioned in 70 out of 359 projects. As expected, training and education are also common activities proposed by CFPCGP grantees, while planning, networking, and policy work are other commonly proposed activities. Improved access to market (*n*=89), business (*n*=33), and distribution (*n*=22) frequently appeared as *goals* through these activities. Besides gardening, nutrition (*n*=43) is often included as an area for *skill development*.

In accordance with the objective of this grant program, which is to address food insecurity issues, 122 of 359 funded grantees explicitly claim "low-income" populations in their community as their target group for their proposed activities. Yet other groups such as farmers, youth, and schools were included as important components in addressing food insecurity in the community (see Table 4).

Table 4. Common Activities and Target Groups, 1996–2012 (*N*=359)

Activity	*n*	%	Target Group	*n*	%
Gardening	70	19.5	Low income	122	34.0
Training	62	17.3	Farmers	59	16.4
Education	54	15.0	Youth	46	12.8
Planning	46	12.8	Schools	38	10.6
Networking	27	7.5			
Policy work	23	6.5			

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Discussion

Receiving federal funding for a project can have significant effects on a community. Since its inception, the CFPCGP has become a critical source of funding for many nonprofit, community-based organizations to develop and pursue projects to transform both the community's infrastructure and residents' capacity for food access in the community. The above findings show clear patterns in the distribution of CFPCGP grants. Metropolises in the Western and Northeastern regions are more likely to be funded by this program than those in the Southern and North Central regions. As pointed out below, these regional discrepancies require more comprehensive analysis to identify key organizational and human resource factors that lead to success in this highly competitive grant program.

On the one hand, our findings suggest that federal funding indeed plays an important role in developing and shaping leadership in the community food security movement. As pointed out above, the social movement surrounding community food security grew in the last three decades as two distinct, though overlapping, sets of social movements: one for sustainable agriculture and food localization, and the other for anti-poverty and anti-hunger (Allen, 2004). Among recipients of multiple grants, WhyHunger Network and Janus Youth Program were established in the 1970s as anti-hunger organizations, while organizations such as CFSC, Farm to Table, and the Southern SAWG began in and after the 1990s as the sustainable agriculture and food localization movement grew. Over the last 25 years, these organizations have played a leading role in the community food security movement.

On the other hand, our current data cannot answer the question: "Are those multigrant recipient organizations receiving funding because they are organized, or are they organized because they are funded by these federal grants?" Until its closure in 2012, the CFSC acted as a nongovernmental partner of the CFPCGP by disseminating information about the program, training grant-seeking organizations to design fundable projects for the program, and carrying out evaluation of the grant program (Pothukuchi, 2007). WhyHunger Network maintains a database of the funded projects of the CFPCGP to help community-based organizations building partnerships with other organizations in community food work.

This "chicken-and-egg" question of resource mobilization requires further analysis for three reasons. First, the CFPCGP seeks to address public issues such as hunger, food insecurity, and obesity that have causes rooted in the historically and spatially embedded inequality of resource access among various groups of the American population. This small grant program creates a *market* in which community-based organizations must compete for grants, each of which is less than US$300,000 over three years, and assume responsibility for addressing food insecurity in their communities. In this market, experienced and well-resourced organizations tend to be more competitive. The quandary is that this *may* exclude some of the very communities that need to build capacity and gain experience in community food work.

Grant requirements for cost-matching and detailed accounting advantage certain types of organizations while constraining others, and therefore potentially contribute to furthering the discrepancy in the capacity for community building among these organizations. As the federal funding for nondefense programs continues to shrink, it is critical to identify successes and failures in resource sharing among diverse organizations within the community to address their food challenges.

Second, the CFPCGP reflects a tension within the community food security movement between the two social movement sectors, namely those who prioritize the goals of building sustainable agriculture and localizing the food economy versus those who prioritize the goal of addressing poverty and hunger in the community. As we have emphasized, these two sets of priorities can be conflicting. Farmers and other actors involved in food production wish to receive fair prices for their food products and a return for their labor as protection of their own economic security. Urban consumers, particularly those with limited resources, wish to access fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthy food products at affordable prices. Answering the chicken-and-egg question regarding resource mobilization helps us understand the role of a

USDA agency in managing the complex and interdependent relationships between producers and consumers and creating opportunities for linking these interests to improve the quality of the food system in the community.

Finally, the CFPCGP raises a concern regarding its responsibility to address the geographical disparity in food security. As Tanaka, Mooney, & Wolff (2014) point out, high rates of food insecurity are more prevalent among rural (or nonmetro) households than urban and suburban (or metro) households as well as households in the Southern and Western regions than those in the North Central and Northeast. Our analysis suggests that thus far the CFPCGP has not been able to address the unequal spatial distribution of economic, political, social, and cultural capital that is associated with high food insecurity and obesity rates. Understanding the lower rates of CFPCGP funding in Southern states will help us identify key factors that enable and constrain certain communities in building their capacity to address their community food security issues.

Nevertheless, the contribution of the CFPCGP to building community capacity for food localization is undeniably valuable; we hope the program will receive increased funding. Through 420 grants, 318 organizations with diverse goals and memberships were funded to examine the state of food security and to design and implement a project to reduce food gaps and food deserts in their community. By encouraging grant applications to explicitly show the contribution to building connections between farmers and consumers, this grant program creates a space for collaborations and coalitions among various groups and individuals working in community food work. We therefore emphasize the CFPCGP's potential in building a robust bridge between the sustainable agriculture and food localization camps within the community food security movement.

Based on the results of our analysis, we make the following three recommendations.

First, with the loss of the CFSC as the nation's leading coalition organization representing over 300 community food work organizations, the CFPCGP needs to consider strategies for disseminating information and resources about the grant program, training smaller community-based organizations to design a fundable project, and evaluating the efficacy of the community food work among these organizations. Under the category of Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Projects, the CFPCGP began providing larger, multiyear grants to well-established organizations for these purposes, as well as evaluating and improving the effectiveness of this grant program. The impact of creating this new funding category demands further analysis. However, we recommend that the T&TA grants be distributed strategically to address regional discrepancies in the capacity for community food work.

Second, we suggest that the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) consider the SARE program as a potential model for decentralizing the CFPCGP. Based on our analysis, the CFPCGP seems to fall short in its ability to address regionally specific needs in community food work. Unfortunately, the funding level of the CFPCGP is considerably smaller than SARE. In the 2014 fiscal year, SARE's budget is about US$23 million while the CFPCGP is around US$5 million (USDA NIFA, 2014b). It is therefore unrealistic for the CFPCGP to be run by regional offices as SARE is. To maintain the emphasis on farmer-consumer connections, the CFPCGP should remain independent and autonomous from SARE. We recommend the creation of an advisory board with regional representatives who work with the review panel in recommending funding allocations.

Finally, while advocating regional decentralization of funding, we also suggest the coordination of funding between federal agencies for community food work. Under the USDA NIFA, a few grant programs support projects to localize the food economy and facilitate healthy eating. The National Institute of Health (NIH) also funds community-based projects to promote healthy eating behaviors. In a given year, many community-based organizations with limited human resources and technical expertise end up spending an enormous amount of time and effort applying for these grants. This fragmentation of federal funding for community food work may contribute to widening a gap among organizations, communities, and regions in addressing their community

food security challenges. A possible solution may be to create a joint grant program, a collaboration of the NIFA, NIH, and other federal agencies, that provide larger, multiyear grants for statewide coalitions in community food work.

These three sets of recommendations are tentative because further, more nuanced analysis of the CFPCGP is required. In conclusion, we will lay out our plan for future analysis.

Conclusion

Food should bring individuals in the community together, rather than dividing them. This is the underlying assumption used in the CFPCGP for funding community-based, multisectoral projects that foster self-sufficiency in community food work. In doing so, what role do these and other related federal funding programs play in building the community food security movement across the nation? By focusing on community capacity building for self-sufficiency, how effectively and efficiently is the limited federal funding distributed to enable communities and organizations to address their food security challenges? Under the current political climate of fiscal austerity, answering these questions is critical to identify shortcomings of these federal grant programs and generate recommendations for improving their transformative potential.

This paper is our first step in understanding the role of the CFPCGP in creating better food systems in the United States. Our next two steps include: (1) an historical analysis of transformations in the grant program through the document analysis of project reports and requests for proposals, and interviews with representatives of USDA NIFA, the CFSC, and other major recipient organizations; and (2) case studies of some systematically selected projects to represent critical variables such as spatial scope, urban versus rural focus, and types of activities.

Food is fundamental to our survival as well as to our essence as individuals and members of households, families, communities, and the nation. To improve a federal program that enables us to do community food work is therefore a critical public policy goal.

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