Expanding Support for CSAs in Low-Income Communities within King County from the CSAs’ Perspective

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BACKGROUND

• Community supported agriculture (CSA) is effective in increasing access to local fruits and vegetables but is currently unaffordable or unavailable in many low-income communities.

• King County farmers are also financially struggling, spending $2,700 more than they are earning each year.

• Making CSAs more accessible to low-income communities would improve the diets of priority populations and increase support for local farmers.

OBJECTIVES

1) Inventory King County CSAs and characteristics (e.g. EBT acceptance, pick-up/delivery sites)
2) Interview CSAs on their successes and challenges in attracting and connecting with low-income members
3) Summarize results; provide recommendations

METHODS

Inventory compiled based on information available online. Semi-structured in-person and phone interviews were recorded and organized to highlight common themes.

FINDINGS

• 46 CSAs: $17/week to $49.95/week
• Methods of financial help:
  o EBT acceptance (9/46 CSAs)
  o Workshares (6/46 CSAs)
  o Payment installations (12/46 CSAs)
• Current CSAs attract those who have time and money
• Accepting EBT is a challenging process
• Subsidies are needed to lower the cost of CSAs for low-income people
• Workshares can be helpful but burdensome
• Having an efficient delivery route along cooperative pick-ups sites is vital
• CSAs want support in marketing

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reframe the Message
• Example: Healthcare organizations, schools, and large employers can build relationships with CSAs and promote the benefits of employee participation.

Lower Costs
• Example: The government can allocate more funding toward CSAs, such as awarding grants to cover pre-season costs so low-income members can pay weekly.

Increase Efficiency
• Example: Non-profits, community businesses, employers, etc. can offer their facilities and delivery services.

Fill in the Gaps
• Example: Public Health and food justice organizations can initiate a project similar to this one to better understand these issues from the perspective of low-income communities.

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King County CSA Pick-Up Locations

Magenta stars = CSA HQ/farm
Blue pin = pick-up location
Gray pin = employees or members only pick-up location

Photo from Tilth Alliance