

Winter YCAP Crew's YPAR Project

Introduction:

We are the Food Literacy Project's Youth Community Agriculture Program (YCAP) crew. We are a group of 8 young people, our ages ranging from 15 - 21, we're located at 522 Paradise Lane where we are cultivating land and growing food for the community.

The question we came up with for our Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project and to help inform the FoodVision 2030 is, "*How can we support and encourage community members to grow their own food?*". We landed on this particular question after discussing and identifying different concerns or issues we've noticed in our community. During our brainstorm we posed questions related to where our food comes from, education around growing and eating food, as well as some policy related questions. Ultimately, *we wanted to dig into this question because of how much we value food and education. We've seen how beneficial food and education has been for our crew and other youth we've worked with which helped us come up with a goal to identify the community's needs and meet the people in the community where they are, and that became our motivation.*

We thought this was important because while we were assessing the need for food, information, and resources in our communities we saw how much of an inconvenience it was to get access to these things if it even existed for us. So we did research, conducted surveys, and compiled data to get a better understanding so that we can meet the needs of our people. The research and data findings can be found below.

Research and Data Findings:

We got 51 responses from our interviews which we conducted in many different settings like ; schools, homes in the community, event spaces, family households, community centers, and the Dare to Care Community Kitchen. The information collected from the interviews helped us answer our research question which is "*How can we support and encourage community members to grow their own food?*". And our questions were made to figure out the people's needs, experiences, interest in growing food, and what they would do if we provided the resources they need to grow food; generally to build a demographic as evidence to create a solution and take action. *The first questions were general questions like age, race, gender , and zip code. The rest of the questions were more personal, asking about food allergies, personal interest in food, their priorities, if they have growing experience or interest in it and more like those to figure out if we can provide something to the community and our targeted audience we wanted to reach. We were hoping to reach residents of the West End, but also people who don't have growing experience or experience food insecurity and part of the food apartheid.*

Data Themes

Theme 1 : Education

- Most participants prefer learning hands on or visually.
- Most participants expressed a lack of knowledge has prevented them from growing food.

Evidence:

29.5% mentioned lack of resources

29.5% mentioned lack of knowledge

Theme 2 : Access

- Majority of participants said they would grow their own food if they were given resources to grow their own food.
- Most participants, all but two, gave insight on barriers or challenges to growing their own food

Evidence:

When asked, “ What would or has prevented you from growing your own food?”..

31.5% mentioned patience or time as a barrier

29.5% mentioned lack of resources

25% mentioned space or land

Theme 3 : Community

- Most participants have an interest in growing their own food, if resources were available

Evidence: 80% of participants said yes to the question, “If the resources were provided for you, would you grow your own food?”.

Recommendations:

Based on our data, knowledge, and personal experiences, we recommend the following:

1. Institutional Demands:

- Trade stations (free food options around town) - government funded and maintained, this should be a budget line priority for Metro Government
- Government officials should promote and participate in the sharing out of information or resources around healthy living and gardening
 - Metro Councilors - getting a commitment from them to share in their newsletters about where to access food and food growing opportunities

- Encouraging direct community member interactions and the sharing of information in a format that's accessible - not everyone checks their emails
- Door knocking, use of social media, mail-ads to residents about upcoming opportunities for gardening, infrastructure, input, etc,

Recommendations to JCPS:

- Commitment from JCPS to share out relevant information and opportunities around gardening and healthy living practices
- More schools to have opportunities and resources focusing on food systems and urban agriculture
 - Leah Penniman's, "Farming While Black" book in the curriculum
 - Having community meals or more opportunities like Field to Fork Club for young people to cook, garden, and learn together
 - Incorporating more extracurriculars like gardening or cooking to be available during the school day
 - Connecting food systems information into current biology and science classes for K-12 students

2. Individual and Organizational Recommendations:

- Encouraging local Community Centers to partner with other food or agricultural based organizations and share flyers and information to community members
- Have organizations like the Urban Agriculture Coalition assist in creating access for community members to grow their own food - providing raised bed materials, assisting in builds or demos, gathering and sharing resources like tools, seeds, starts, etc. Along with setting a goal number of people reached, with intention to expand involvement
- Getting commitments and encouraging collaboration from other organizations and individuals at FIN meetings in regards to what information and resources they are sharing and how
- Have fellow organizations cater to the diverse needs of people when formatting and sharing out resources
 - Podcasts - creating visual or auditory resources
 - Cater to shorter attention spans of the youth population - using short videos and incorporating social media trends when sharing information
 - Sharing canvassing cards with information on resources like the Louisville Tool Library or workshops related to food systems and urban agriculture
- Utilize and activate the Food in Neighborhoods Instagram page as a hub of resources - posting more frequently, highlighting and sharing partner organizations' posts, information, and resources, getting any and all opportunities out there, youth involved

Recommendations relevant to our involvement, at the Food Literacy Project (FLP):

- Creating a youth centered and operated social media platform for sharing resources, experiences, opportunities, etc.

- Crafting a social media schedule and an outline with recommendations for centering youth and sharing our information
- FLP and the YCAP crew serve as an entity that builds new raised beds for families and homes, sharing resources with community members - both physical and intellectual then bringing those folks into the local food community
- Making sure people are receiving resources that are relevant to them by engaging and surveying community members' needs and wants - considering learning style preferences, transportation needs, physical abilities, health and other dietary restrictions.

Conclusion:

While we've made some recommendations related to our findings and our initial research question, we also wanted to share our vision for the Louisville community as a whole from our perspectives and experiences as youth. Our vision for the Louisville community consists of walkable neighborhoods with more people growing food, grocery stores or food hubs, and better access to valuable education about food (cooking, growing, sciences).

Everything revolves around better access to food, specifically in the West-end of Louisville, where fresh food is scarce. Better access to fresh food that is beneficial for the people physically, and for their general lives is what we need. So why not take the steps to tackle the barriers hindering us from making the world a better place?