

Geary County Health Department Increases Food Access & Breastfeeding Support

Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers & Children



Live Well Geary County & Geary County Breastfeeding Coalition | Geary County WIC | Junction City, KS | Tracy Sabo, MS, RDN, LD & Kristen Noriega, MS, RDN

Introduction

Geary County (GC), Kansas is made up of a diverse population with unique characteristics, such as close proximity to a military post, rural areas, & a highly transient population. The county covers 404 mi² with a population of 37,000; the majority of residents live in one town.

Food Access: Nearly 1 in 4 children & 1 in 5 adults in GC suffer from food insecurity (Feeding America, 2015). Although almost 70% of GC residents are eligible to receive SNAP, only 10% participate. The majority of GC is designated as a “food desert”, despite three grocery stores serving the county. Results of a 2012 Community Health Assessment indicated that the community felt there was a lack of available & affordable healthy foods. GC responded to these issues with a multi-pronged approach founded upon coalitions & partnerships.

Maternal & Infant Health: In 2010, statistics revealed the infant mortality was 10.4 per 1000 live births (national rate=6.1/1000) & increased rates of SIDS, smoking, & obesity rates (KDHE, 2010). Additionally, about 75% of GC women initiated breastfeeding (BF) (KDHE, 2010). This met national standards, but sharply declined in the following weeks.

Project Overview

With a one-year, multi-pronged approach, GC aimed to increase access to healthy foods & prevent chronic disease through community linkages. It was initially estimated that almost 90% & 45% of the population would be reached by the food access & community linkage initiatives, respectively. There were two primary project goals:

1. Increase Access to Healthy Foods

- Initiate farmer’s market electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system
- Develop coalition & partnerships to improve access to healthy foods
- Create & distribute local food resource guides through multiple avenues
- Increase local food insecurity awareness

2. Improve Local BF Education & Support

- Promote & signup local businesses for state BF campaigns—*Business Case for BF & BF Welcome Here*
- 2016 BF Summit featured Drs. Jack Newman & Nils Bergman

Activities



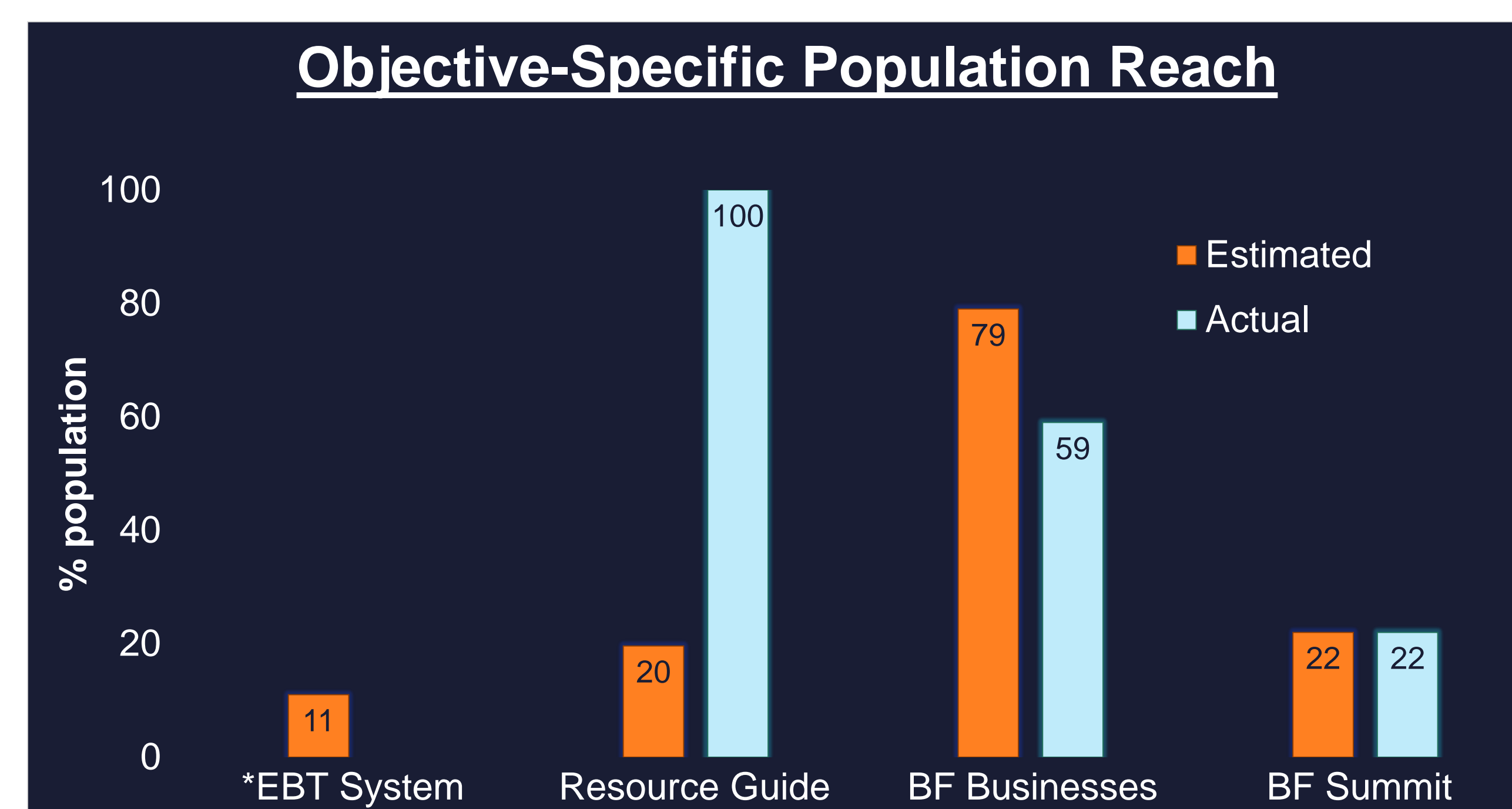
Dr. Newman & the BF Summit planning committee (left); Dr. Bergman applying a Kangaroo Wrap (right).



Local farmer’s market, site for EBT system.

Outcomes

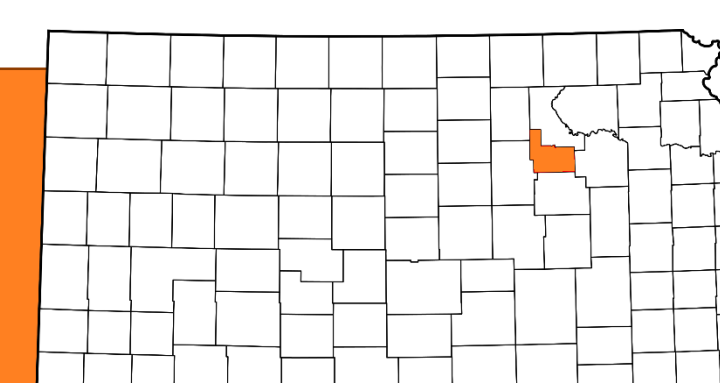
As a result of the Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers & Children project, healthy foods in GC have become more accessible & available via the farmer’s market EBT system for SNAP recipients. Additionally, GC has improved BF support through environmental changes & educational opportunities. This project reached 100% of GC residents, surpassing the reach estimates of 90% & 45% for food access & community linkages; this was accomplished by obtaining support from the county & city commission for Live Well Geary County & its initiatives.



The % population reached by each objective was estimated in June 2015. Actual reach calculations were computed at the end of the project period in March 2016.

*The actual reach for the EBT system will be calculated in the post-project period.

- Live Well Geary County, Inc., a non-profit
- Farmer’s market EBT system for SNAP recipients
- Food Access Resource Guide available online



- Business Case for BF, 6 businesses enrolled
- BF Welcome Here, 11 businesses enrolled
- BF Summit, 170 participants, 2 international speakers

Next Steps

Access to Healthy Foods

- Develop system to process EBT cards, distribute coins, & pay vendors.
- Train farmer’s market vendors on the EBT system.
- Promote EBT system county-wide through various outlets including radio, print, & social media.
- Implement EBT system at one farmer’s market during 2016 season.
- Pilot *Summer Picnic Parties* child feeding program at six sites.
- Partner with community garden group to align efforts.

BF Education & Support

- Continue to promote the *Business Case for BF & BF Welcome Here* campaigns to business owners in collaboration with the GC Breastfeeding Coalition.
- Pursue funding & collaboration opportunities to ensure the breastfeeding summit becomes an annual event.

livewellgearycounty.org

Lessons Learned

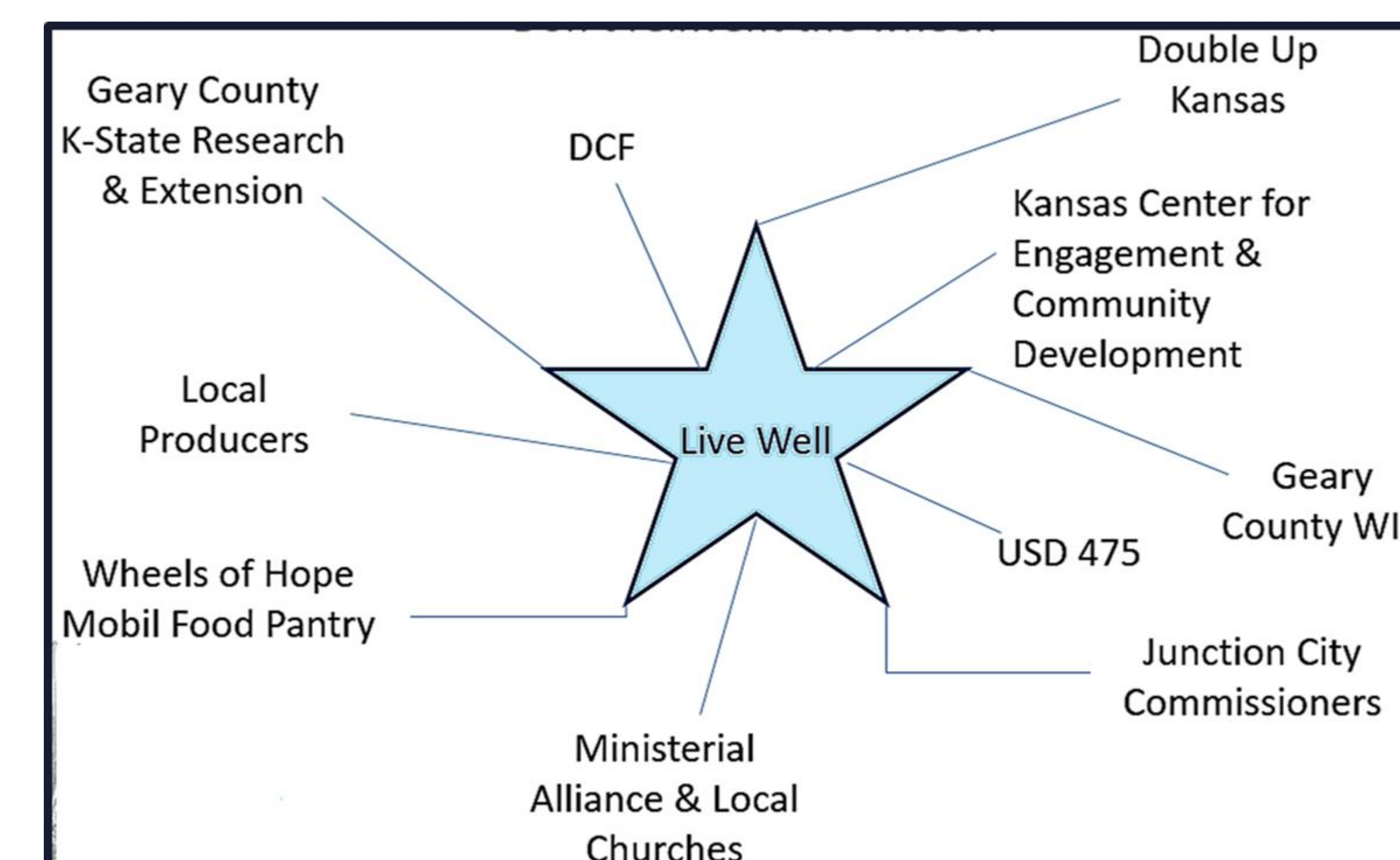
This project has served as a platform for policy, systems, & environmental (PSE) changes in GC. Live Well Geary County, the paramount PSE result, was organized for the purpose of inspiring & advancing PSE changes that make it easier for GC residents to lead healthy lives. Live Well Geary County is developing dynamic, community-based strategies to sustain this project’s food access efforts & improve the health of GC residents.

In addition to increasing access to healthy foods for low-income individuals, the EBT system at the farmer’s market has opened up additional opportunities. Live Well Geary County & its partners will be able to provide nutrition education, cooking demonstrations, & promote locally grown fresh produce for all.

Through a collaborative effort with Kansas Food Bank, Live Well Geary County has been presented with an unexpected opportunity to organize a child summer feeding program. Free to children up to age 18, *Summer Picnic Parties* will be held in six parks throughout the community.

GC relied heavily on collaboration to successfully accomplish its objectives. The Breastfeeding Summit was executed with assistance & support from *Delivering Change: Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies* & Geary County BF Coalition.

Live Well Geary County collaboration is illustrated below.



Best Practices

Step outside of your comfort zone.

You may find an untapped talent or passion.

Find a community champion.

Someone has the wherewithal & connections.

Cultivate community relations.

Existing groups are pivotal for support & knowledge.

Small steps to achieve big goals.

Do not be intimidated by big dreams & high aspirations.

Made possible with funding from the National WIC Association and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) & does not necessarily represent the views of CDC.