



GEORGIA
Rural Health
INNOVATION CENTER
AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**Addressing the Food Plight
in Rural Georgia:
Innovative Ways for
Community Involvement**

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Outline

- About the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center
- “Food Desert” Context
- Food Deserts in Rural Georgia
- 5A’s Framework
- Thomas County, Georgia
- Talbot County, Georgia
- Key Takeaways

Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

- Housed at Mercer University School of Medicine
 - Formed in 2018 with GA House Bill 769
 - Serves Georgia's 120 designated rural counties per the Rural Hospital Organization Assistance Act of 2017
 - A team of dedicated professionals fulfilling various roles as researchers, analysts, and rural county experts

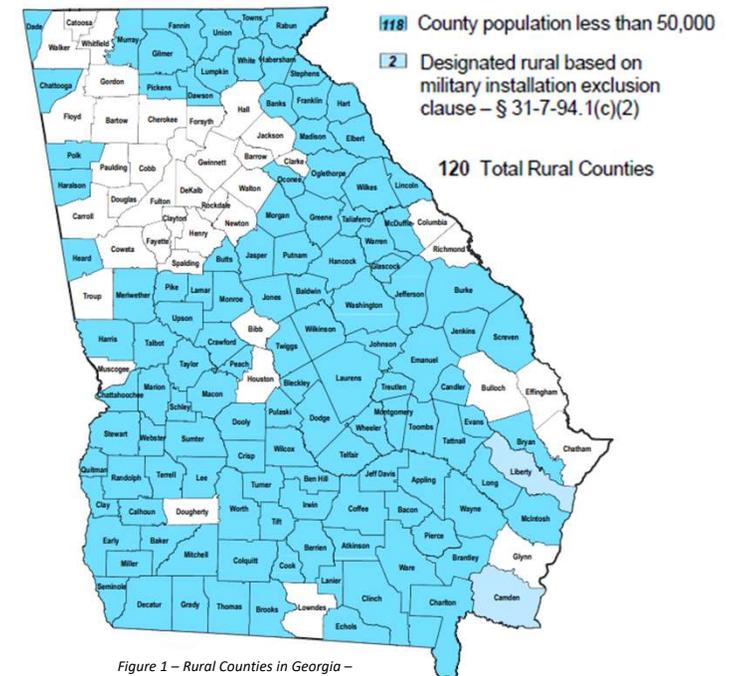


Figure 1 – Rural Counties in Georgia – Georgia Department of Community Health

“Partnering with rural Georgia to improve healthcare through reliable research, creative strategies, and sustainable solutions”

¹ Figure 1 (2021)

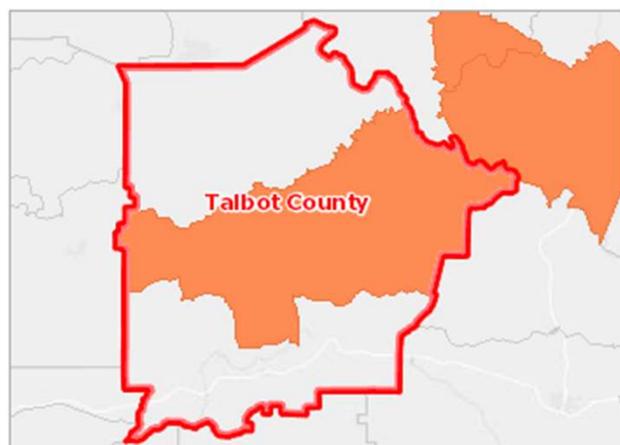
“Food Desert” Context

- United States Department of Agriculture food desert definition²:
 - “Low-income census tracts with a substantial number or share of residents with low levels of access to retail outlets selling healthy and affordable foods are defined as food deserts”.
 - “Supermarkets and large grocery stores--defined as food stores with at least \$2 million in annual sales and containing all the major food departments.”
- Must consider alternative perspectives to food itself:
 - Change language
 - Pragmatic
 - Asset-based
 - Alternative food pathways and resources

²USDA, 2021



Food Deserts in Rural Georgia



Food Desert Census Tracts, 1 Mi. / 10 Mi. by Tract, USDA - FARA 2019

- Food Desert
- Not a Food Desert
- No Data
- Talbot County, GA

Figure 2. Rural Georgia Food Desert Map

- 523,050 (22.4%) of rural Georgians live in food deserts^{4,5}
- Total of 119 census tracts classified as food deserts by the USDA⁴

5A's Framework

- Accessibility (Can they get it?)
- Availability (Is it there?)
- Acceptability (Do they want it?)
- Accountability (Who is responsible for the “it”?)
- Affordability (How much will it cost?)

Implication of 5A's Framework

Helps to build community...

- Resiliency (We can withstand shock.)
- Empowerment (We can do it.)
- Sustainability (We are going to make it last.)



Thomas County, Georgia: Food Environment Snapshot

Thomas County:

- Total Population: 44,720
- Food desert population: 9,520 (21.29%)
- Grocery Stores & Supermarkets rate per 100k (2019): 13.42
- Population with low food access: 12,631 (28.24%)
- Low income population: 18,771 (41.97%)
 - Low income population with low food access: 5,555 (29.59%)

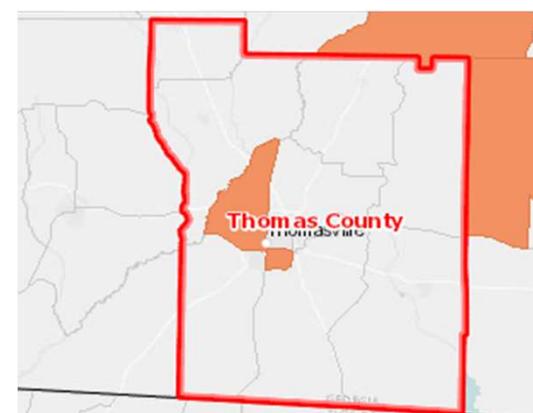


Figure 3- Thomas County Food Desert Map – GRHIC

State of Georgia:

- Total Population: 9,687,653
- Food desert population: 2,158,463 (22.28%)
- Grocery Stores & Supermarkets rate per 100k (2019): 17.46
- Population with low food access: 2,992,914 (30.80%)
- Low income population: 3,420,617 (35.31%)
 - Low income population with low food access: 971,069 (28.39%)



Thomas County, Georgia: Community Engagement

Community Member Narrative

- Church member contacted the Center
- Initially, seeking fresh fruits and vegetables for their community and congregants
- Multiple stakeholders convened

Outcome

- Food pathway was created to that community was able to receive food drop,
- A local church became a recognized agency
- Fed 100 families

Talbot County, Georgia: Food Environment Snapshot

Talbot County:

- Total Population: 6,865
- Food desert population: 2,311 (33.66%)
- Grocery Stores & Supermarkets rate per 100k (2016): 14.57
- Population with low food access: 1,960 (28.55%)
- Low income population: 3,102 (45.19%)
 - Low income population with low food access: 1,103 (35.56%)

State of Georgia:

- Total Population: 9,687,653
- Food desert population: 2,158,463 (22.28%)
- Grocery Stores & Supermarkets rate per 100k (2019): 17.46
- Population with low food access: 2,992,914 (30.80%)
- Low income population: 3,420,617 (35.31%)
 - Low income population with low food access: 971,069 (28.39%)

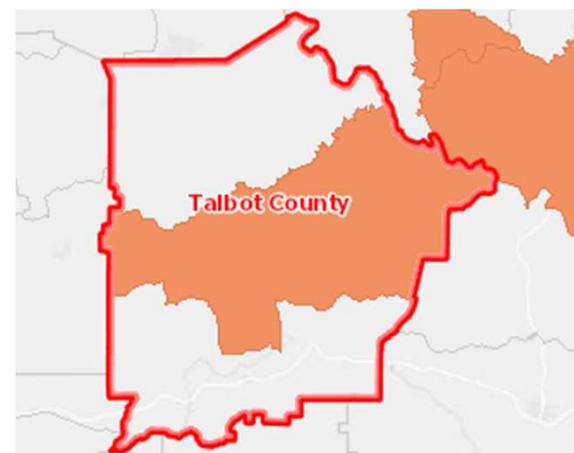


Figure 4 - Talbot County Food Desert Map - GRHC

Talbot County, Georgia: Community Engagement

Community Member Narrative

- Initial request was for food desert data
- Discussed the food environment
- Brainstormed ideas on bringing food to the area, in addition to, other opportunities
- Multiple stakeholders convened

Outcome

- Discussion of forming a non-profit, grocery store, or Co-Op grocery store
- Capacity-building among community members
- Seek funding
- Applying for Sow A Seed Grant Program, Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (Deadline: October 1, 2021)

presents the *Sow A Seed Grant Program*

PROGRAM GOALS:

- 1) Provide funding for innovative projects addressing the health needs of rural communities in Georgia.
- 2) Provide support to new/less experienced grantees to build their skillset to identify, secure, & manage grants.
- 3) Develop a library of projects, best practices, and strategies that can be applied and adapted to new communities.

AWARDING OF FUNDS:

Tier 1 Awards (\$0--\$5,000) for projects lasting less than 3 months

Tier 2 Awards (\$5,001--\$10,000) for short-term projects typically 3-9 months

Tier 3 Awards (\$10,001+) for long-term projects lasting 1 year or more

ELIGIBILITY: Applicants must be organizations located in and/or actively working in rural areas of Georgia. Awards will not be given to individuals. Types of organizations include: Nonprofits with and without 501 (c)(3) IRS status; Small Businesses; For-Profit Organizations; Governments; School Districts; Public Housing Authorities; Faith-Based or Community-Based Organizations; Regional Organizations

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINE & REQUIREMENTS: October 1, 2021; Submission of Proposal with Executive Summary, Organization Overview, Project Goals & Purpose, Outputs, Activities, Team Composition, Budget, Letters of Support

GRANT RECIPIENT BENEFITS & EXPECTATIONS: Program Assistance through Project Advisor, Grantee Development Seminars, Program Implementation Reports, Final Report & Presentation

To apply, go to: <https://www.georgiaruralhealth.org/grant-program/>



Key Takeaways

- Focus on the assets of the community, first
- Re-think how “food deserts” are defined
- Consider alternative food pathways (e.g., community-based food ways)
- Build capacity among and between community members in the same and neighboring counties
- Resiliency, empowerment and sustainability are key

References

- ¹ Figure 1. Georgia Department of Community Health, State Office of Rural Health. (2021). SORH Maps of Georgia. Retrieved from <https://dch.georgia.gov/divisionsoffices/state-office-rural-health/sorh-maps-georgia>
- ² United States Department of Agriculture. (2011). Mapping Food Deserts in the United States. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2011/december/data-feature-mapping-food-deserts-in-the-us/>
- ³ Figure 2. Rural Georgia Food Desert Map. (2021a). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report; Original image source: USDA Economic Research Atlas, Food Access Research Atlas Research
- ⁴ Georgia Health Data Hub. (2021b). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report, Rural Counties.
- ⁵ Georgia Health Data Hub. (2021c). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report, Rural, Urban Counties
- ⁶ Figure 3. Thomas County Food Desert Map. (2021d). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report; Original image source: USDA Economic Research Atlas, Food Access Research Atlas Research
- ⁷ Figure 4. Talbot County Food Desert Map. (2021e). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report; Original image source: USDA Economic Research Atlas, Food Access Research Atlas Research
- ⁸ Georgia Health Data Hub. (2021f). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report, Thomas County.
- ⁹ Georgia Health Data Hub. (2021g). Georgia Rural Health Indicator Report, Talbot County



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