



OBSTACLES SERVING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

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OBSTACLES

Small populations = low participation in programs/low volunteer base

Transportation/Walkability

Awareness of programs

Stigma--especially in small, tight-knit communities

Lack of outreach: Rural communities are overlooked, forgotten, and left-out of engagement opportunities

Skepticism among local communities when “outsiders” want to get involved

OBSTACLE #1

Small populations → “low” participation and a small volunteer base

SOLUTIONS: SMALL POPULATIONS → “LOW” PARTICIPATION AND A SMALL VOLUNTEER BASE

Activities at sites keep youth engaged and coming back

Divide service weeks among community orgs: A church volunteers week 1, Rotary volunteers week 2, etc.

Outreach: Start early and promote often through multiple streams

Don't compare your program to other programs in different communities—measure success by your own standards

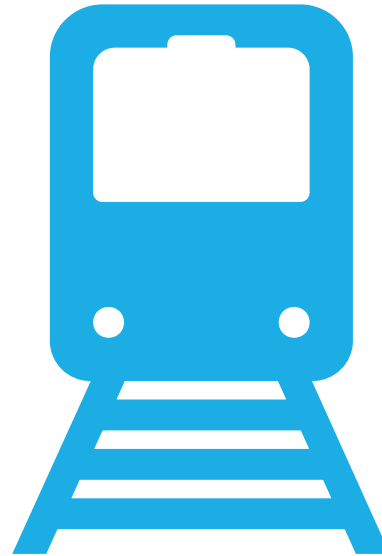
(Though less kids could make it harder to break even. That's where other strategies to increase awareness/participation come into play!)

OBSTACLE #2

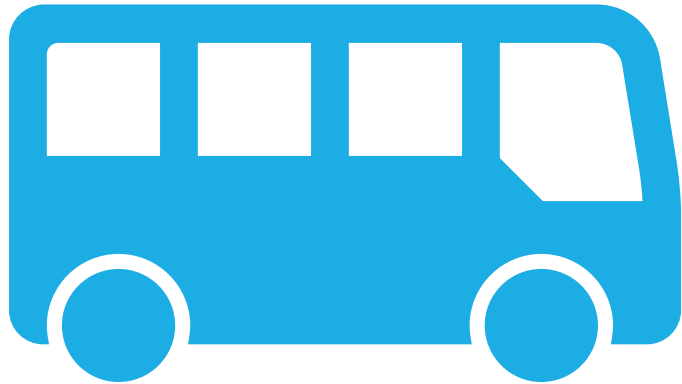
Transportation / Walkability

Long distances + lack of public transportation make it hard for youth to get to sites

Qualifying sites are not always the most accessible



SOLUTIONS: TRANSPORTATION / WALKABILITY



Mobile meals: From busses to pick-ups, reach more kids by taking meals to multiple sites in and around your community

Have sites in places where kids already congregate like pools and libraries •

Develop a volunteer transportation system (requires community trust)

Walking “school bus”: Volunteers develop a walking route in which they’ll pick up kids along the way so they have a supervised means of getting to a meal site

OBSTACLE #3

Stigma (especially in small, tight-knit communities)

SOLUTIONS: STIGMA



Always communicate the program is open to all

Engage the community through presentations explaining how summer meal programs can combat summer nutritional and educational slide, regardless of a family's income

Use innovative names for your program to disassociate it from government programming

Offer activities! Families and youth will see the program as more than a free meal

KEYS TO RURAL ORGANIZING FOR THOSE WORKING REGIONALLY

Do your research: know the community you're working with

- Culturally appropriate

Make yourself available!

Develop relationships -- important when working in small, tight-knit communities

Identify community champion(s)

Go narrow and deep with these individuals

They'll help build community coalitions

