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**Promoting the Economic Mobility of Clients Through Identifying Leverage Points in the
Atlanta Community Food Bank Partner Network**
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Introduction

Residents in the City of Atlanta, Georgia have experienced some of the lowest economic mobility in the country in recent years (Brookings, 2015), meaning that a residents' zip code has direct implications on their potential economic self-sufficiency. The Economic Opportunity Project explored the notion that the more exposure children have to certain neighborhood characteristics, the less economic opportunity those children will have in the future (Chetty et al., 2017). The challenge of Atlanta's consistent poor performance in economic mobility has major implications on the livelihood and health of those who live in certain disadvantaged neighborhoods as well as implications on the economic competitiveness of Atlanta. There are more nuanced inputs in the economic mobility equation than just considering household incomes; understanding how poverty operates as well as the existence of pathways out of poverty both play a role in changing the trajectory of Atlanta's economic mobility. One way that has yet to be explored is how we can reimagine current anti-poverty organization networks, particularly food banks and their role in poverty alleviation.

Our understanding of poverty in the United States is changing. Generational poverty still exists, but not all who experience poverty are affected by generational poverty. Additionally, while the poverty rate in Atlanta has fluctuated around 14.8% since 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010), people are frequently *cycling* in and out of the '14.8%' as they *cycle* in and out of poverty. People can momentarily overcome poverty through various circumstances, while others fall back into it based on past patterns, family ties, job instability, and other reasons, creating what is commonly referred to as the 'cycle of poverty' (World Atlas, 2017).

The Atlanta Community Food Bank (The Food Bank) is interested in the ways it needs to shift their organization to meet the needs of their clients based on our changing understanding of poverty. The Food Bank was established in 1979 as a response to the growing prevalence of hunger in the metropolitan Atlanta region and is now one of the food banks in Feeding America's national network of over 200 food banks (Feeding America, 2018). Persisting food insecurity has given The Food Bank the inclination that perhaps it's time they shift the way they service clients. Their most recent strategic plan explored ways to shift from a resource distribution-oriented model to a service model to help working families not only meet their hunger gap, but to escape the poverty cycle. The changing dynamics of poverty and the needs of those in poverty can be used to inform an alternative service delivery approach, particularly one

in which The Food Bank can use its current and potential network of partner agencies to more effectively meet the needs of their clients. A recent critical synthesis of literature on Food Banks noted that the literature today is broken into two main categories of action recommendations between improving Food Banks and eliminating and alleviating poverty (McIntyre et al., 2015). Through the research done here, I offer strategies for improving The Food Bank's role in the elimination of poverty.

My research is a thorough scoping of the various organizational models - from both current food bank partners as well as outside best practices in the space of poverty elimination - that exist to help people cope with and escape the poverty cycle. Through an analysis of the limited literature, a case study of four common current organizational types, informal interviews with individuals from those organizational types, and close consultation with Food Bank staff, I created a typology to explain the current Food Bank partner network and a rubric designed to direct a future partnership strategy. The first section of this paper is a literature review of the current emergency food system, the changing understanding of poverty, generating community capacity to escape poverty, and the historic role of Food Bank partners. The second section describes the results of The Food Bank organizational overview and the current food insecurity parameters in The Food Bank service area. In the third section, I discuss a review of current and potential partners and the development of a typology for assessing future partnerships. Lastly, the typology is embedded in a greater decision-making rubric to guide The Food Bank in strategically aligning partners with organizational goals.

Literature Review

Recently there has been an abundance of literature written on the limitations of the current food pantry and food bank models at meeting the needs of those experiencing food insecurity. This literature review provides an overview of the highlights and major gaps in literature.

Food Banks and the Emergency Food System

Over the past forty years, the United States has seen an increasing uptake in the response to food insecurity. The institutionalization of the emergency food system began in the 1970's with the national implementation of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) programs as a response to the growing awareness of food insecurity (McGovern, 2001). Not long after, in the 1980s, the United States saw a stark increase in the number of non-governmental emergency food providers, such as food pantries, which responded to the growing unemployment and the decreasing effectiveness of, and federal support for, assistance programs at meeting needs (Poppendieck, 1998). As the demand for services provided by food pantries expanded, regional hubs known as "food banks" began to mediate between the local charitable food pantry agencies and the donated surplus food and grocery products (Mabli et al., 2010). Today, the national hunger relief non-profit, Feeding America, partners with 200 Food Banks across the country, and each of those food banks partner with hundreds of direct-to-client service providers. However, Feeding America's 2011 assessment suggests that in recent years reliance on food assistance providers, such as food pantries, has shifted from emergency uses to more chronic uses (Feeding America, 2011). Two other food banks in the Feeding America network -- Second Harvest Food Bank of Metrolina (SHFBM) and North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) -- are having two distinct experiences with meeting the growing and changing need. SHFBM is expanding their partnerships with corporate groups, such as Walmart and CVS, to have more items and a diversity of items in stock that food stamps don't cover (Jones, 2018). In addition to expanding the scope of their partnerships, NTFB is expanding their operations into four regional distribution hubs (Dillon, 2018) to meet a larger geographic region. Despite these moves to provide more food to more people, these programs further institutionalize the food banks' responses to poverty and hunger.

An article from 1984, *Feeding hungry people: Rulemaking in the food stamp program*, suggested that while the establishment of food banks relied on humanitarianism and common sense, it largely took the pressure off the US government to provide effective anti-poverty and anti-hunger programs (Berry, 1984). By establishing food banks that provided for the populations most in need, there was a decline in political pressure to deal with food insecurity. As the response to food insecurity privatized, opposition to the various approaches increased. Books such as Mauricio Lim Miller's "The Alternative: Most of what you believe about poverty

is wrong”, Janet Poppendieck’s “Sweet charity? Emergency food and the end of entitlement”, and Robert Lupton’s “Toxic Charity: How the church hurts those they help and how to reverse it” brought to light ways in which the emergency food system isn’t meeting the needs of those it serves, and in some cases is doing more harm than good. The perceived ineffectiveness of the more privatized emergency food system brought up questions of whether the current emergency food system should be invested in or dismantled (Poppendieck, 1994). Critiques of the emergency food system include providing non-nutritious foods, being a shameful experience, reinforcing inequalities, and more, leading to two seemingly competing directions for the emergency food system: Improve food banks or eliminate poverty (McIntyre et al., 2015).

Poppendieck’s (1994) colorful analyses of the dilemma between improving food banks and eliminating poverty can best be summed up by her quote, “hunger is not exotic and hard to imagine; it stems from the failure to meet a basic and incontrovertible need that we all share”. Hunger evokes a feeling in people that is relatable, where other experiences of those in poverty may not be. Plugging the hole of hunger by fixing the inefficiencies and inadequacies of food banks is more tangible than taking a stab at alternative solutions to the elimination of poverty (Poppendieck, 1998).

Changing Understanding of Poverty

Another major challenge in addressing food insecurity through the lens of poverty alleviation is the highly variable way poverty presents itself. In Eric Jensen’s book (2009) “Teaching With Poverty In Mind”, he typifies poverty into six distinct categories: situational, generational, absolute, relative, urban, and rural. There is even variation within these sub-categories of poverty based on age, race, and geography (Pimpare, 2014). A U.S. Census Bureau report (2011) stated that while the number of individuals experiencing generational poverty stayed nearly the same between 2005-2011 in the U.S., the amount of situational poverty grew by 5%. The findings in this report provide a more detailed picture of poverty than the static numbers seen in the annual census estimates. Criteria such as household composition, economic conditions, unexpected medical events, and more have the ability to transition a family on the threshold of poverty into situational poverty (McKernan and Ratcliffe, 2005). As these events occur they can tip people in and out of the poverty cycle.

Not only are the ways we understand poverty changing, but the typification of poverty is having impacts on our ability to address poverty. In Janet Poppendiek's article *Hunger in America: Typification and Response* (1995) she notes that the typification and solution generation processes for problems exist in a loop of interactions that may not always allow individuals to consider typifications or responses that address unidentified areas of a problem. Furthermore, she articulates that hunger has undergone three distinct typification processes that have led to different solutions each time. The most recent one in the 1980's was the typification of the 'emergency food' epidemic in which we are still dealing with the solution infrastructure today. One major consideration of this work moving forward needs to be whether we will further institutionalize a response that is incomplete in ways that could have potentially negative consequences.

Community Capacity to Escape Poverty

Food security is built on four pillars that operate at multiple scales; the availability, access, utilization, and stability of food (Jambor and Babu, 2017). The availability of food has long been in the spotlight as populations grow faster than the food supply; However, while the majority of academic literature has focused on the "availability" pillar, the "access" pillar deserves just as much attention (Jambor and Babu, 2016). Access is a question of not just physical access to a food distributor, but also financial access to needed and diet-appropriate food. In 2013, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reported that food insecurity is a result of poverty and insufficient incomes (OECD, 2013), meaning that to address food insecurity the underlying issue of poverty and the systems that perpetuate it need to be addressed as well. Some strategies being researched and pursued are alternatives to the traditional deficit view of those in poverty, where solutions center on what clients don't have instead of approaches that recognize the value of community and pre-established social assets in a community (Lim Miller, 2017).

These alternative approaches suggest that investing directly in the people, providing the necessary ancillary support resources, and not focusing on deficits, will create a new approach to economic development. Instead of serving people based on the notion that compassion can only come in the form of a hand out, the aim is to move towards a system of human development to further economic development (Lupton, 2011). One example is being investigated in Uganda

where researchers looked into the principal components associated with social capital characteristics and lower food insecurity (Sseguya, 2017). Their research concluded that various community development initiatives in a community with 378 households boosted the food security of those households by creating stronger social ties. In an article on the solidarity economy and social business, Ikemoto and Matsui (2015) suggest that solidarity and focusing on human capabilities will play a role in circumventing the shortfalls of the market determinants of poverty. By focusing on human capacities and what people can do and be, the market will be more suited to help people get out of poverty in a way that is doable for them.

An Organization's Role and Capacity

To shift to an alternative approach which meets and alleviates the needs of food insecure individuals, policy makers and organizational leaders at a national and international scale are thinking about the roles of different organizations within food bank networks. Santini et al. (2014) showed that this isn't just a challenge in the United States by performing a case study on the adaptation of the Italian Food Bank. The authors concluded that while there was urgency to adjust the organization to better meet client needs, the pathways, the funding streams, and the national policies to support a change were not currently in place. In a similar vein, Webb (2013) discussed the future role of the emergency food system in regard to increasing the public health outcomes of clients. To make these shifts, the organizations researched in the article had to pursue more proactive strategic planning and partnerships.

In 2017, Feeding America, the overarching organization that supports the national network of food banks, produced a report titled *A Landscape of Feeding America's Agencies and Their Potential for Growth*. This report was the first major attempt by the organization to understand how their partner agencies were interested in and able to grow. While their conclusion was that their partners were willing to grow their services, there were nuances to their capacity and organizational backing for growth. To categorize their partners based on capacity and interest, they established personas, which were archetypes of observed behavior patterns that suggest how a growth strategy with a certain persona might look. Their personas are the following: independently operated, interdependent institution, anchor institution, and scarcity mindset. Knowing the common organizational traits within these specific personas, particularly the common goals and audiences, allowed them to target their recommendations to each

organizational type. Feeding America is clearly thinking about what it takes to manage the distinct partner types to help project what change within their food banks could look like.

Literature Gap

The literature comes to the consensus that the current emergency food system is falling short in meeting the needs of the people it serves and isn't changing the trajectory of the prevalence of poverty and food insecurity. As the way we understand poverty changes, adapting our organizations to meet the divergent needs of those in poverty will be a greater challenge. While there is research that addresses the need to restructure organizations that support individuals in poverty, they primarily focus on an individual organization level without consideration for a more systemized approach. This research aims to fill that gap by thinking about how the organizations that partner with the Atlanta Community Food Bank can be considered as part of a system of organizations addressing poverty and food insecurity in the metropolitan Atlanta region.

Food Bank Organizational Overview and Partner Organization Cases

In the 2016 Atlanta Community Food Bank strategic plan, the Food Bank identified three strategic priorities: (1) grow access to nutritious foods, (2) increase the impact of programs and policies, and (3) invest in reducing the need and stabilizing lives. After meeting with two primary Food Bank staff who oversee the success of the third goal - investing in

reducing the need and stabilizing lives - I broke down the current distribution structure into the categories seen in Figure 1. The categories in the middle row represent the three major partner agency types that currently service working families in The Food Bank network: Food Pantries,



Figure 1: Current Atlanta Community Food Bank Model
(*Family Independence Initiative not included in current model*)

Wraparound Service Centers, and Food Cooperatives. The food pantry was the baseline client servicing model which was explored in the literature review, while the wraparound service center and food cooperative had certain characteristics that made them more adaptable and responsive to client needs. In addition to the three types of current partner agencies described below, I review an organization that was recommended by the staff at the Food Bank - The Family Independence Initiative (FII). This particular model does not work directly in the space of food distribution, but works on increasing a community's capacity to escape poverty through various intervention strategies explored below. If The Food Bank were to add the FII model to their operations, it would either be integrated into the model in Figure 1, or would become an external partner that food is not distributed to.

In examining these cases, I conducted eight interviews with two individuals from the food bank and six individuals from current partner sites that were representative sites for wraparound service centers, food cooperatives, and potential partner agencies. Additionally, I reviewed articles that outline the operations of food pantries, food cooperatives, food banks, and organizational theory relating to models that address poverty.

❶ *Food Pantry*

Within the Food Bank network there are over four hundred and fifty traditional food pantries that redistribute food from the Food Bank to clients. The traditional model takes in food that is donated from individuals, donated from businesses, or ordered from the food bank, pre-packages this food and then distributes the food to clients. Donated food can vary in quality, but has provided the greatest source of food for food pantries (Ross et al., 2013). After seeing a decline in donated food, more food pantries look to food banks to fill a larger gap (Ross et al., 2013). Major criticisms of this model include the limited control over the food being brought in limits the ability of a food pantry to meet the dietary and cultural needs of clients (Simmet et al., 2016). As a result of mismatch between food pantry options and client needs, clients are more likely to waste the pre-packaged food they couldn't eat (Kuhls et al., 2012).

Current critiques of the food pantry model focus on the outcome where clients are still unable to meet their needs. Critics like Bob Lupton (2011) suggest that we have created a culture in which consideration is not always given to the social, emotional and economic costs of

receiving the food as charity. When families experiencing poverty aren't able to meet their needs in a dignified and culturally appropriate way, it can have an impact of their social and emotional wellbeing (Lim Miller, 2017). For this reason and the reasons explored in the literature review, the food pantry was used as the baseline program type for improvement to better meet client's needs.

② *Wraparound Service Center*

The Wraparound Service Center is the closest partner type to the original food pantry, but it intentionally includes specific modifications to the food pantry to make the user experience better and the outcomes farther reaching. Each Wraparound Service Center offers services outside of food provisions to supplement other areas of need in their clients lives in the hopes of helping clients out of homelessness and poverty. The representatives from the two wraparound service centers spoke of their two creation stories that denote their departure from the original food pantry model.

For the first Wraparound Service Center, the growing need in the community brought together multiple churches to pool resources to create the Community Assistance Center (CAC) that is one of the partner agencies serving Sandy Springs and Dunwoody. On their own, the churches were outstripped of their capacity to meet the growing resource demands of those in poverty in their service area. By coming together, CAC was able to provide more services than the independent food pantries, ultimately meeting more of the community's needs. Since its inception, CAC has become a hub for servicing those facing poverty and has expanded from one building into four across their service area. Their services, as mentioned above, extend beyond just providing food services to providing financial assistance for housing, free clothing, finance education courses, and more.

The Community Assistance Center is also seeing the face of poverty in their service area changing. Families are leaving the city as the cost of living increases, but they continue to work in the city where their jobs are, ultimately making their commute more difficult. CAC has also noticed an uptick in younger families who need more help with financial planning. As the clients change, CAC is working to reconsider how they meet the changing needs of their clients. CAC is exploring options of partnering with local corporations to match corporate needs with skill

development opportunities for clients. They are also exploring the option of establishing a community garden to better meet the food needs of their clients and to provide health education opportunities.

The cost of living and the community fabric in Peoplestown, Atlanta is seeing a shift as well, where the second Wraparound Service Center -- Emmaus House -- is located. However, Peoplestown has been fraught with various disinvestment periods and redevelopment attempts based on its history of stadium development (Hurt, 2018). Emmaus House had already established services such as an after-school program, transportation services to the state prison, hot meals, and other rights advocacy functions in response to the economic conditions of the neighborhood prior to implementing a food pantry. Over the past sixty years Emmaus house has increased their portfolio of services to include a food pantry, and a financial planning course for community members. However, due to the limited capacity of their food pantry, they've historically restricted their food pantry to clients who live in the particular zip code associated with Peoplestown.

Both wraparound service centers built their food pantries on the traditional food pantry model, however, in recent years both pantries transitioned toward a clients' choice model. The client choice model centers on one of the critiques of the traditional model - clients not being able to meet their dietary needs when receiving a prepackaged box of food. In the client choice model, clients 'shop' around the food pantry similar to a grocery store (Martin et al, 2016). Based on family size, each client is allotted a certain number of vouchers which determines the amount of each type of food they can shop for. By allowing clients to choose their own food, the client choice pantry model reduces food waste and promotes clients choosing food that meets dietary needs.

③ *Food Cooperative*

Similar to the wraparound service center, the food cooperative model works to combat the nutritional and choice challenges with the traditional food pantry model. However, the cooperative model further challenges traditional food pantries' approaches to client interactions inside the pantry. Food cooperatives begin to address some of Janet Poppendieck's seven deadly "ins" of food pantries: (1) inaccessibility, (2) inadequacy, (3) inappropriateness, (4) indignity, (5)

inefficiency, (6) insufficiency, and (7) instability. The “ins” represent the major drawbacks of traditional food pantries, and have been well cited in literature around the need to reform food pantries. The cooperative model does just that and uses the seven deadly ‘ins’ as the reason for the shift to a cooperative model and uses asset based community development as the basis to the approach (Jeremy Lewis Interview, 2018).

In Bob Lupton’s book “Toxic Charity: How the Church Hurts Those They Help and How to Reverse It”, he suggests that the traditional emergency food system is one that recognizes people’s deficiencies without paying enough attention to their assets. Atlanta’s Urban Recipe food cooperative model grew out of the principles shared in *Toxic Charity*: Focus on assets, not deficits, and center community. Urban Recipe was founded when a church group hosted conversations about what the community wanted to see as a way to address food insecurity (Jeremy Lewis Interview, 2018). The goal was never to graduate people out of the model, where members would be secure enough on their own to meet their food needs. Rather the organization hoped to create community, stability, and continue growing and learning from the food cooperative model.

Currently, Urban Recipe operates two Atlanta-based cooperatives of around 50 families. Each cooperative meets bi-weekly, where participants pay \$4 to cover overhead fees. The organizations use the international cooperative principles as a guide, but the members adapt the guidelines to their community. To run the cooperative, a team of six members run the management team with the help of 4-9 steering committee members. All meetings and food purchasing are facilitated by the leadership team, while the Urban Recipe staff are there to support and provide training when necessary. Over the course of a year, families will on average receive \$3,500-\$5,500 worth of food depending on family size.

Urban Recipe is invested in developing and growing this model both within the Atlanta and nationally. While they only operate two local cooperatives, they have trained 23 cooperatives in the Atlanta Metropolitan area. To further that growth of the cooperative model, the organization facilitates training workshops with other organizations interested in embarking on the food cooperative journey. Out of their interest in improving and evolving the program to better meet the needs of their clients, Urban Recipe hosts meetings with the steering committees from the various 50-family Atlanta-based cooperatives to share feedback and best practices. To continue learning and adapting the model, Urban Recipe just began an engagement process to

design an evaluation process with the cooperative members to allow members to own their own stories, how their stories are told, and how the organization moves forward based on member needs. While not all food cooperatives operate under the same conditions as Urban Recipe, the central principle of success mediated through the community persists.

④ *Family Independence Initiative*

The final organization type to be potentially added to The Food Bank is the Family Independence Initiative. FII is an anti-poverty organization that combats the notion that poor families need to be showered with assistance and support for social work (Bornstein, 2017) by providing an alternative poverty alleviation strategy. While FII does not deal in the space of food directly, it does deal with providing data driven pathways out of poverty. Families who participate in FII commit to spending two years in the program with five other families. Through the program, families use a non-prescriptive platform and structure to strengthen family assets and connections with the goal of boosting one another out of poverty. Their approach includes five core tenets: family owned solutions, monthly feedback, analyzing and sharing trends, data driven resources, and shared lessons (FII Website, 2018). The method is distinctly working against the paternalistic notion that caseworkers know what poor families need to escape poverty (Bornstein, 2017). Instead, the model financially invests a maximum of \$3,200 over the two years directly into families and uses the core tenets to collect information and passively guide participants through the program with no direct human intervention.

UpTogether, FII's resource hub, provides a digital community for clients to engage with one another and to share strategies for problem solving in similar situations. With the thousands of families participating in the model nationally, FII tracks nearly 200 data points to get a greater sense of the work clients are doing and the impact it is having on clients. FII's goal in using this resource is to hold families accountable to the monthly check-ins and to allow families to track and visualize their progress. As families are tracking information such as income, savings, health, and more financial information, they are also tracking various leadership and social capital indicators. In FII's report on the macroeconomic impacts of participants after two years of participation in the program, they state that the amount of social capital exchanged by familial cohorts increases from \$71 per month when families start, to \$136 on average. FII uses the

measures of social capital, financial indicators, health indicators, and more to establish an ‘initiative score’ for families to do what the private sector doesn’t do. They provide access to parts of the \$3,200 based on the amount of social and financial initiative families are taking. After investing in the social and financial wellbeing of the families and cohorts, FII reported that on average families are increasing their annual income by twice what they started with and decreasing their reliance on federal subsidies by over half (Family Independence Initiative, 2018). With the noted success of the model, they have expanded their operation from just being in Oakland, California, to establishing location in ten major cities across the country (Bornstein, 2017).

Organizational Typology

Using the reviewed articles and interviews I created a typology that characterizes the partner organizations by how they approach client services. The typology, seen in Table 1, was created to help clarify and refine groupings of partner types and associations between different client-based approaches and economic stability and mobility outcomes. While the organization types reflect the four main types chosen for this research, there are partner organizations that do not fall neatly within any single category. Some organizations also may not be well aligned with one of these four types, such as senior centers since they do not serve The Food Bank’s target population for this research, so they are not represented in this typology. Instead, these four are used to demonstrate the main categories along the spectrum of approaches to client self-determination in food and other related areas of a client’s life, particularly as they work with The Food Bank’s target population of working families within the poverty cycle between 100%-185% of the poverty line.

Table 1: Partner Organization Client Engagement

	Organizational Feature						
		Tangibles			Ethos		
		Category 1: Participant Food Choice - <i>Does the participant have a choice in the food they receive</i>	Category 2: Democratic Participant Control - <i>Does the participant have a say in how the money is spent?</i>	Category 3: Additional Services - <i>Are there additional services beyond food distribution available at this site? How well connected are services?</i>	Category 4: Economic Stability Orientation- <i>Is a participant's economic stability a defined desired outcome?</i>	Category 5: Approach to Participant Success - <i>How do the staff approach overseeing participation?</i>	Category 6: Institutional Logics - <i>Does an organization prioritize advocating on behalf of the organization or the people it serves?</i>
Organization Type	① <i>Food Pantry</i>	Restricted Choice	No Control	Limited to Pantry	Food Emergency Focused	Limited Intervention	Limited Advocacy Capacity
	② <i>Wraparound Service Center</i>	Client Choice Pantry Model	No Control	Case Manager Connected Additional Services	Course Based Economic Stability Intervention	Case Management With Varied Tracking	Develops Community Advocates
	③ <i>Food Cooperative</i>	Member Driven Food Options	Member Determined Spending	Community Identified Additional Services	Community Economic Stability Safety Net	Community Navigation	Limited Advocacy Capacity
	④ <i>Family Independence Initiative</i>	---	Member Determined Spending	Technology Connected Additional Services	Asset Development and Tracking	Family Cohort Navigation and Tracking	Dedicated Policy Staff

--- The Family Independence Initiative does not provide food as a service to clients, making their food related typological categories null.

●Dots indicate the number corresponding to the written section above.

Each cell is defined by the organization type found in the first column, and the approach to a particular aspect of the organization seen in the column heading. The six categories of

organizational features include: participant food choice, democratic participant control, additional services, economic stability focus, approach to participant success, and institutional logics. I further categorized the features into two groups, tangibles and ethos, to better parse out whether a strategy manifests itself as a tangible engagement feature or if a feature is an embedded part of an organization's ethos. Being a part of an organization's ethos implies that a feature is a guiding force behind how the organization operates.

Food Choice was the first tangible indicator chosen as a measure of client self-determination. Based on the literature, it is evident that the nutritional adequacy of the traditional food pantry model is limited, preventing clients from meeting their own dietary needs. By increasing the availability and choices for diet-appropriate foods, clients have the option to manage food related diseases more effectively and reduce health care costs (Robaina et al. 2013; Duffy et al. 2009). The choice to center democratic participant control stemmed from Poppendeick's (1994) articulation of what she considers the two responses to poverty and hunger: the charity model and the justice model. Democratic participant control suggests that, as mentioned in the literature review, the charity model is not working for meeting the emergency food need and that a model that centers justice, common interests, and self-determination will better meet the needs of those served. The last tangible feature assessed was whether an organization had services beyond a food pantry, and how well-connected clients were to those services. This grew from The Food Bank's concern that while some organizations have additional services, clients might have barriers to accessing them through their case worker or that clients will never be made aware of those services.

Understanding an organization's alignment with features in the ethos category will help The Food Bank determine if the organization's managerial direction and work plan is geared towards improving the living conditions of clients through the way the organization functions. An organization's economic stability orientation assesses the degree to which an organization has the capacity and tries to improve the economic standing of their clients. The choice to include the next feature, how an organization approaches participant success, was informed by Mauricio Lim Miller's (2017) idea that professional staff and the government aren't always able to assist clients getting out of poverty. Rather communities know what they need best, and the system of organizations need to support community self-actualization. Lastly, the institutional logics feature is best described by Garrow and Hasenfeld (2012). Their article outlines the ways

in which organizations adopt moral framings based on how an organization identifies the landscape they work in as an individual, service, or structural problem and based on where an organization chooses to locate its offices. Based on those three factors The Food Bank can determine whether an organization has aligned itself with addressing the structural problem of poverty and food insecurity, as opposed to addressing poverty as a personal deficit.

To get a better sense for how these six categories apply to the organizational types, the following section compares how each organizational type is assessed in the categories.

Category 1: *Participant Food Choice*

The base level assessment of whether an organization is able to serve their clients in a way that prioritizes client needs is to understand whether the client has a choice in the food they receive. Potential consequences that arise from receiving predetermined food include the inability to meet dietary needs, exposure to nutrient deficient foods, and foods that don't align with cultural traditions (Poppendieck, 1994). As seen in Table 1, the two traditional food pantries that I looked into did not employ client choice models and instead abided by the traditional model of provided pre-determined food to each client.

Comparatively, I took tours of the Emmaus House and Community Assistance Center food pantries and was walked through the client choice model. At Emmaus House clients participate in a 'modified client choice model' where clients choose off a list what food they want, and their orders are filled by volunteers. This is primarily the case due to the limited size of their pantry. At CAC, clients receive a certain number of vouchers based on family size to choose different food items. Both of their pantries include dry goods in addition to frozen and fresh goods, however CAC has about five times the inventory and provides vouchers for families to 'shop' at the thrift store as well. Urban Recipe had the next most flexible form of client food choice where members of the food cooperative determined what food was purchased from The Food Bank. Leaders from the 50-family cooperative were responsible for assessing the group's needs and purchasing food that would fit the needs of those clients. Lastly, the Family Independence Initiative doesn't provide food to participants.

Category 2: *Democratic Participant Control*

A principal concern of The Food Bank was whether clients have a say over how organizational dollars are spent. In discussing how distance between clients and organizational staff affects the outcomes for clients, Mauricio Lim Miller states “it was clear that professionalization of interactions perpetuates the social class divide” (Lim Miller, 2016). The Food Bank’s concern about client control of the organization is related to Lim Miller sentiment in that the further removed organizational staff are from the clients, the less aware staff are of client needs. Rather those needs are projections of what staff perceive the need to be.

To assess whether an organization had client control, I looked into two main criteria: whether there was a current or past client on an organization’s board of directors and if clients had control over how organizational dollars were spent. Neither the Food Pantries nor the Wrap Around Service Centers had client board members or client control over organizational dollars. Alternatively, the Food Cooperative, in its member food purchasing practices, requires the cooperative leaders to oversee the budgeting process for the food acquisition. Finally, the Family Independence Initiative, as mentioned previously, provides a total of around \$3,200 per family over a two-year period. This money is directly invested in the families with the intent of families determining what the money would best support. The FII resource hub allows the organization to track a family’s withdraws and spending, but does not control what the families are spending the money on.

Category 3: *Additional Services*

An organization’s approach to their additional services have implications on the outcomes for clients. Wraparound Service Centers provide great context to consider the additional services within. In the 1980’s, around the same time as the emergency food system became institutionalized, the Wraparound Services model was established to provide comprehensive services for at risk youth (Walter and Petr, 2011). While researching in the field of childhood mental illness, a recent value-critical analysis of Wraparound Service Centers concluded that “a broader ecological frame for wraparound highlights the need to include more natural supports on teams, to ensure backing from higher level administrators, and to emphasize client self-determination (Walter and Petr, 2011). The Food Bank was interested in whether

additional services were being provided, the extent and nature of those services, and how clients were connected to those services.

This category of assessment had great variability amongst the organization types. The Food Pantries I looked into did not offer additional services due to limited organizational capacity. Inherent in the Wraparound Service Center name, both CAC and Emmaus House had various programs clients could partake in. CAC employed client-caseworker check-ins at one, three, and six months with no follow up after that due to the administrative burden. Three primary services that caseworkers connect clients to at CAC in addition to their food pantry are financial management courses, education programs such as English as a Second Language, and monetary support in times of crisis. Emmaus House has a similar group of services to CAC, including a clothing program, an education department, a program for mothers, and the Peoplestown Family Initiative, which is their financial education program.

The more hands-off approaches of the Food Cooperative and the Family Independence Initiative vary in their reasoning for being hands off. Both reasonings are rooted in an anti-case management approach where it is believed that a case worker shouldn't be the one telling a client what they need. However, the Food Cooperative abided by a community approach to services where clients would identify a subject matter expert to bring in and speak at meetings. This meant that additional services were not targeted at individual needs, but rather what the community needed. On the other hand, the connections between clients and services in the FII model occurred through the resource hub. When families needed support, they would use the resource hub to connect with other families in their cohort or within the national network to achieve their goals.

Category 4: *Economic Stability Orientation*

The first category within the overarching ethos category was whether or not an organization had an economic stability orientation. I assessed an organization's economic stability orientation based on the programs in place to support economic independence in clients and whether board of director members represented financial institutions. As seen in previous categories, additional services, including financial management courses, were not available in the traditional Food Pantry. Additionally, as the traditional Food Pantries researched were embedded in churches with limited staff capacity, the two Food Pantries did not have board of directors.

Similarly, the Food Cooperative did not have codified economic stability services nor a board of directors. However, in speaking with Jeremy Lewis, the Director of Urban Recipe, he mentioned that the organization aims to create a community of interdependence where members can rely on one another.

As mentioned in the category on additional services, the Wraparound Service Centers, CAC and Emmaus House, both had financial education programs. CAC held financial management courses in which participation in the short courses was monetarily incentivized. One of their major constraints in overseeing clients after participation in the course was the administrative burden. Emmaus House employed a longer term and more intensive program called the Peoplestown Family Initiative (PFI). This program was a 12-month financial planning program for residents of Peoplestown who qualified for food pantry use. Clients are assessed along a self-sufficiency matrix and are coached through the program after identifying their own goals. The program director indicated that PFI was a comprehensive long-term approach instead of a crisis emergency management approach. While both CAC and Emmaus House were large enough organizations to have a board of directors, neither had representatives from financial institutions.

The model with the greatest focus on economic stability is the Family Independence Initiative. Seven out of eleven total board members work for either major philanthropic organizations or large banking institutions such as JP Morgan & Chase indicating that the organization is concerned about the financial literacy of their clients. Furthermore, FII employs a data driven approach to tracking client progress and allowing clients to track their own progress. FII primarily invests in the notion that clients will set their own goals, and through shared values with their cohort, they will build their own path out of poverty. On average over a two-year period ending in October 2017, 277 families that participated in FII increased their incomes by \$12,860 (FII Report, 2017). The data tracking allows clients to see their own progress and use that as a motivator to continue working towards their goals.

Category 5: *Approach to Participant Success*

This category is the most representative of the spectrum of approaches to participant success. Limited by the organizational capacity, the traditional Food Pantry primarily operates to serve emergency needs and is not equipped with additional staff to engage clients over a long

period of time. Wraparound Service Centers employ more staff and volunteers to have a heavy hand in interacting with clients. In fact, CAC boasts having a steady 350 volunteers helping run the operation on an annual basis. The Food Cooperative, in its anti-case management approach espouses community navigation through the cooperative model. Finally, the Family Independence Initiative attributes their successes to flipping the dominant approach to poverty alleviation on its head. They employ a staunchly anti-case management approach that puts the money in the hands of the clients so that the clients are in empowered to design their own fate.

Category 6: *Institutional Logics*

Although the most abstract and difficult concept to assess in the typology, understanding the institutional logic of an organization or some of the inertial forces motivating an organization will be important. Particularly, the institutional logic is important for determining whether an organization is advocating for the clients it serves or if its advocating primarily for the purpose of maintaining the organization. The traditional Food Pantry, limited by its staff capacity, didn't have the organizational skeleton to support any advocacy efforts. This is the case similar to the experience of the Food Cooperative. One difference between the Food Pantry and the Food Cooperative in this category is that the Food Cooperative does instill community advocacy principles in its members, which the Food Pantries do not have the opportunity to do.

The Wraparound Service Centers varied in their approaches to advocacy along the lines of the Institutional Logics Theory. Garrow and Hasenfeld (2014) note two theoretical concepts that contribute to an organization's moral framing: an organization's emphasis on societal problems being the main culprit in the challenges individuals face, and whether an organization locates in a high-poverty area. The authors suggest that by focusing on societal problems and locating in a high-poverty area, an organization is more inclined to advocate to change society rather than to advocate for organizational expansion. CAC, for example, is located in Sandy Springs, Georgia where the median income is \$68,629 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). This can be compared to Emmaus House located in Peoplestown, Atlanta where the median income is \$23,665. Furthermore, neither in my interview nor on their website did CAC mention anything about advocacy efforts. Comparatively, through Emmaus House's various programs, they prioritize the goal of grassroots leadership and social justice (Emmaushouse.org 2018).

Similar to Emmaus House, the Family Independence Initiative was initially located in Oakland, California where the current poverty level is 20% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Since their founding fifteen years ago, they have expanded to be in eight major cities and have hired policy analysts. Their clear inclination to locate in high-poverty areas and to hire dedicated staff to consider policy tools for escaping poverty indicate FII's willingness and interest in advocating for social change, not just organizational benefit.

Partnership Assessment Tool

As The Food Bank looks to expand their offerings of economic stabilization programs with partners they have to first determine which organizations to work with. To do so, they must understand if a current or potential partner organization has the alignment, capacity, and willingness to tackle poverty in a more networked approach. The typology explained above is one of the steps for assessing that potential. The Partnership Assessment Tool (Table 2) is the next step to provide The Food Bank with a tool to assess alignment. It builds on the typology, agreed upon Food Bank objectives, and Feeding America reports on partnership profiles. In the next phase of The Food Bank's partnership program assessment, The Food Bank will be implementing the tool by first assigning their own scoring mechanism based on organizational priorities. These scores will translate into final

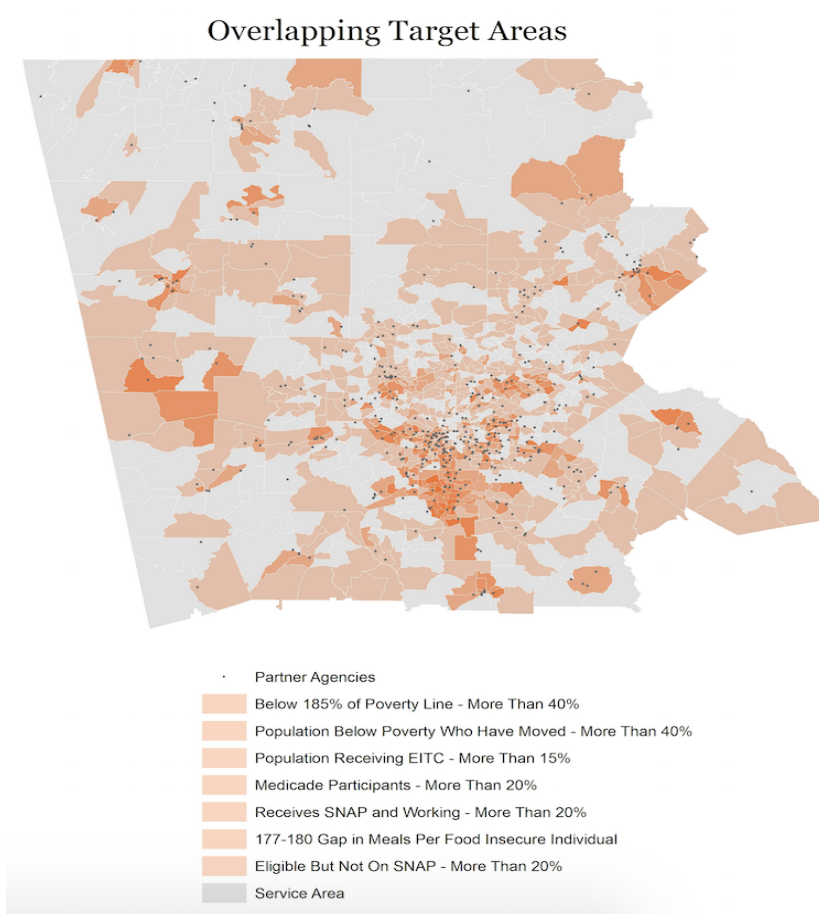


Figure 2: Partnership Target Areas
Source: Mirit Friedman, 2016 ACS Estimates

priority list for where to intervene with partners

Each section of the tool represents either an organizational characteristic or feature of the target population that needs to be considered as part of the prioritization process. The first piece in the assessment for determining where The Food Bank should intervene is considering where their target populations are located. Since The Food Bank was prioritizing intervening in areas where there were many working families experiencing the poverty cycle, the following target community identifiers were chosen: families between 100% and 185% of the poverty line, working families on SNAP, areas with a high meal gap and food insecurity, individuals eligible for and receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit, highest population in poverty moving, and individuals receiving Medicaid. While there is likely to be endogeneity in the target community categories, The Food Bank is primarily interested in communities where multiple categories of their target populations overlap. Figure 2 demonstrates where the highest concentration of those populations overlap. The individual maps can be seen in Appendix A.

Second in the application of the tool are the non-negotiables. One of the ways The Food Bank is trying to change the economic positioning of its clients is through the reduction of trade-offs. By reducing the times clients decide to buy food instead of paying for other services, a client can repurpose those funds for things such as transportation or medical visits. The Emergency Food Assistance Program allows Food Bank partner organizations to provide a greater quantity of food to clients. Organizations that distribute food to clients for home consumption are eligible, but must register with the United States Department of Agriculture for the service (USDA TEFAP



Figure 3: Feeding America Capacity Framework
Source: Feeding America, 2017

Fact Sheet, 2017). The Georgia Nutrition Assistance Program (GNAP) is the Georgia equivalent to TEFAP, again allowing The Food Bank to have a farther reach with product quantity.

After considering whether an organization abides by the non-negotiable traits identified by The Food Bank, the next step I considered was whether an organization has the willingness and capacity for change. Feeding America's 2017 Report, *A Landscape of Feeding America's Agencies and Their Potential Growth*, asked questions about an organization's willingness and capacity to grow, potential models for growth, and more. I used their categories seen in Figure 3 as a start, but divided them into the two groupings of organizational considerations and the typological characteristics. Similar to within the typology where I broke the categories down into tangibles and ethos, the distinction between the organizational considerations and the typological characteristics is that organizational considerations deal directly with discreet operations of the organization apart from their work with clients. By first understanding the non-negotiables and the organizational considerations, The Food Bank can determine the willingness and capacity for change.

The last step in assessing an organization's willingness and capacity for change is the typology, which should be applied to assess an organization's alignment with prioritizing the economic stability and mobility of clients.

Table 2: Partnership Assessment Tool

Partnership Assessment Tool As the Atlanta Community Food Bank embarks on a shift in who they partner with and how they partner with their network to more effectively change the economic trajectory of clients, determining who the proper partners will be is a critical task. The partner characteristics listed below should be taken into consideration when determining who to partner with in the future. Gauging the non-negotiables, organizational considerations, an organization’s typological characteristics, and the target community’s characteristics should help the Food Bank make strategic partnership decisions.			
Target Communities <i>Communities with the highest instances of the following populations are to be prioritized for intervention given their alignment with the goals of the Food Bank. By prioritizing these populations, the greatest economic impact will theoretically be achieved.</i>			
Working Families Who Use SNAP		Families Between 100%-185% of the Poverty Line	
Highest Meal Gap and Food Insecurity		Population Below Poverty Line - Moved in the Past Year	
Individuals Eligible For And Receive EITC		Individuals Receiving Medicaid	
Non-Negotiables <i>The following organizational characteristics are fundamental to a partnership with the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Without the following characteristics, the Food Bank is unable to successfully meet its mission through its partner organizations.</i>			
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Partners must have TEFAP in order to ensure the smooth transfer of necessary food provisions.		Georgia Nutrition Assistance Program (GNAP) Partners must have GNAP in order to ensure the smooth transfer of necessary food provisions.	
Organizational Considerations <i>The following considerations are categories to help assess an organization's willingness and capacity for change.</i>			
Bandwidth For Change - Human Resources	Dedicated Data Collection on Clients	Food Bank Services Utilized	Funding of Services - Finance and Fundraising
Champion of Change	Board of Directors - Strategic Leadership	Adjacent Food Bank Partner Organizations	Potential External Leverage Partners
Typological Characteristics <i>The typological characteristics are a way to assess an organization's current alignment with prioritizing the economic stability and mobility of their clients. By identifying where an organization aligns with the following characteristics, the Food Bank can determine whether an investment in a partnership will result in greater economic success of the clients being served.</i>			
Tangibles		Ethos	
Participant Food Choice		Approach to Participant Success	
Participant Democratic Control		Economic Stability Focus	
Additional Services		Institutional Logics	

The Partnership Assessment Tool is meant to be a place for The Food Bank to start determining the best geographic locations to support transitions in the partnership network towards economic mobility supporting practices. To apply a scoring mechanism to the assessment tool, a few approaches should be taken. A score of 0-6 should be given for target population existence where a partner is located. Zero representing no target populations are present; six representing that all six target populations exist in high density. Identifying the areas with the highest prevalence of their target population will weed out the first set of partner organizations. Next, the non-negotiables will either exist or not in an organizing and should be the second criteria for cutting the partnership list down. Scoring organizational and typological characteristics next will take greater discussion with Food Bank staff to determine whether each criteria should be weighted equally. After the scores have been determined, The Food Bank should have in-depth conversations with the highest scoring organizations to codify their scoring results. Identifying the non-negotiables, the organizational inner workings, the organization's bent towards client economic stability, and the target populations present in an organization's neighborhood will result in a more holistic prioritization of intervention locations for improving the economic mobility of clients.

Discussion

Improving the economic mobility of Atlanta residents is a mighty task entrenched in social, economic, and physical systems. To overcome the challenge of low economic mobility, the Atlanta region needs to take a new approach to protecting families cycling in and out of poverty. Although regional organizations like the Atlanta Regional Commission focus on formal ways to improve lives with grant programs, transportation planning, an economic competitiveness strategy and more, the Atlanta region has few organizations that have the reach families living in poverty like the Atlanta Community Food Bank. Partners of The Food Bank serve hundreds of thousands of people in difficult economic situations every year, giving The Food Bank the unique opportunity to reimagine how they activate those partnerships. Providing alternative programming and services that pay specific attention to improving the economic stability of working families could help the Atlanta region address its major economic mobility challenge.

The first step for The Food Bank as it thinks critically about their partners is to identify the leverage points in the system. While the analysis above would suggest that partners move more towards a Family Independence Initiative model based on FII's economic stability inclination and success, The Food Bank needs to consider which partner organizations have the willingness and capacity to make a dramatic shift. In looking to make a large shift in the organization, The Food Bank should look to organizational theory for more insight into the realities of organizational change. Organizational ecology in organizational theory looks to populations of organizations -- the relations between organizations, their environments, and how organizations change. In *The Population Ecology of Organizations* (1977), Michael Hannan and John Freeman discuss the internal and external sources of inertia that prevent organizations from changing. Internal sources that impede organizations from changing can include things like organizations not looking for the information they need to change or have equipment that doesn't suit their future needs. In the case of Food Bank partners, limited capacity (ie. low staffing, volunteer turnover, insufficient work space, etc.) create challenges in knowing what they need to know to change. In organizations like food pantries, the staff only have the capacity to seek help in areas that are mission critical. Regarding external sources of inertia, lacking the proper network and not being able to find the information they need when looking for it are external forces preventing organizations from changing. The recommendations made in this paper are to help both The Food Bank and their partner organizations combat the two types of organizational inertia experienced.

Applying the Partnership Assessment Tool will give The Food Bank a good sense of both the geographic areas with the aligning target populations, a sense of which partners have the capacity and willingness to overcome their inertial barriers, and lastly the gaps in their partnership network. Current Food Bank partners may not be best equipped to support the changing needs of families experiencing poverty and may want to look to other potential partner organizations that could help address poverty from a different, yet complementary angle. Workforce development organizations, such as the Goodwill Workforce Development Centers, could help address what the Aspen Institute (2017) referred to as the "episodic poverty ties to within-job instability". By merging the agendas of organizations that work to address poverty, like Food Bank partners, and organizations like Goodwill that seek to increase stability in the job

market, The Food Bank will provide its clients with a multi-pronged approach to creating stability and mobility.

Outside of employment and income stability, and food security, addressing poverty will also require The Food Bank to consider how the poverty cycle impacts working families generationally. Since the target population for their future partner work is primarily working families between 135% and 185% of the poverty line, their target clients are likely experiencing situational instead of generational poverty. However, to ensure the poverty doesn't become generational, The Food Bank should partner with organizations that take a two-generation approach to childhood development. By partnering with organizations looking after both the parents and the children's successes, The Food Bank will help set up future generations to avoid relying on The Food Bank's services. For example, Sheltering Arms is an early childhood daycare center that takes a two-generation approach to their students. In an informal interview, Sheltering Arms' Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships mentioned that they use a two-generation coaching approach to support the parents support their kids. Centering the needs of the parents allows the parents to take better care of the kids when they're at home so the kids can focus on school when they come in. To succeed in their two-generation approach, Sheltering Arms partners with different organizations local to the sixteen centers. These partners support Sheltering Arms as a whole or can be called upon to help families with specific needs. Partnering with organizations like Sheltering Arms would help The Food Bank achieve the goals around the economic stability of their clients by taking a proactive approach to economic stability.

The Atlanta Community Food Bank has built a strong network of partner organizations since its creation in 1979. Over the years, alongside the trajectory of the emergency food system in the United States, The Food Bank has institutionalized the response to hunger in the metropolitan Atlanta region. As the organization revisits its mission through its most recent strategic plan, the organization faces a tall order of not just ending hunger, but now improving the economic stability of the clients they serve. In Janet Poppendieck's article, *Want Amid Plenty* (1998), she states "It is time to find ways to shift the discourse from undernutrition to unfairness, from hunger to inequality". This study aims to provide The Food Bank with some food for thought on which partners are best equipped to join them in their organizational shift.

Limitations

Researching The Food Bank's partnership structure posed a few challenges. Firstly, the scope of this research relied on access to a great deal of information. The limited capacity organizations have to collect data makes it difficult to learn about the emergency food network. Secondly, limiting my research to informal interviews without the IRB process my questions were confined to organizational operations and not the opinions of the employees. Understanding the opinions of employees could have been helpful for a more nuanced analysis of the true capacity of the organizational types. Third, since the majority of the research was performed this summer, I limited my interview scope to a small number of partners. Analyzing a larger sample population of organizations would allow for more direct interventions to be considered. Lastly, given that this research was performed in close consultation with The Food Bank, many of the research directions were informed by The Food Bank. While this allows for a more targeted toolkit, it perhaps created blind spots to considerations outside of Food Bank priorities. Despite these limitations, this research is an important starting point for analyzing The Food Bank's partnership network.

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Appendix A: Individual Target Population Maps

