Who:
The Australian Innovation Research Centre (AIRC); The Smith Family; Source Community Wholefoods Co-operative; Midlands Initiative for Local Enterprise (MILE)

Determinant of food security:
Food Supply and Access

Sub-determinant:
Location of food outlets; Availability; Price; Quality and variety; Knowledge, skills and preferences.

Location & year:
2011 – Greater Hobart, the Midlands and Bridgewater

Story teller:
Ben Wills
PhD Candidate – AIRC, Treasurer - Source

Summary/Description
This AIRC led feasibility study will examine if the not-for-profit local food co-operative Source Wholefoods, can partner with organisations like The Smith Family and MILE to deliver local food into socio-economically disadvantaged areas on a financially sustainable basis. The study will consider a small scale and large scale approach.

“Access to healthy food will not guarantee food security on its own, but without convenient affordable access, there can’t be a long term solution.”

Goals and aspirations
When successfully completed, this study will give a sounds basis for future investment decisions aimed at creating a self supporting social enterprise in this space.

The study will highlight the demand for, and impediments to offering healthy and sustainable produced food in disadvantaged areas. It will consider the option of a pilot program in specific food insecure areas, and a more capital intensive statewide delivery model capable of cross-subsidising its operations in poorer areas.

The study will highlight the specific opportunities and barriers associated with the use of the social enterprise model and internet commerce to address food access issues.
CHALLENGES

The most significant anticipated challenges are the affordability of local and/or organic products to consumers in socio-economically marginal areas; lack of knowledge about how to use many of the ‘wholefood’ products currently offered by the Source Co-op and the ability/desire to order online. One way this study will look to reduce the price of goods is through partnerships with third party organisations with relevant existing resources. For example MILE has access to a community vehicle which could be used for deliveries and The Smith Family has personal and existing networks in several relevant areas. However, any such partnerships will require formal negotiation and structuring of a suitable governance model among organisations with different goals and priorities.

The price competitiveness of food delivered through a financially self sustaining model – even an efficient not-for-profit, is hampered in markets with access to heavily subsidised, sometimes free food. While further community education into how to use and enjoy wholefoods is likely to be critical to the success of such a delivery model, devising a detailed education program is not part of this study. Rather we will seek to operate where such programs might already be delivered.

PROMOTION

Initial feedback from our current partners The Smith Family and MILE have been very positive. The Smith Family is particularly interested in how this development could become a practical and useful means of extending the health, financial and digital literacy programs they currently offer.

MILE sees potential to build on the recent success of the re-opened flour mill at Oatlands to spark people’s interest in local food.

FUNDING

Source Tasmania is a stage one funded initiative of the Tasmanian Food Security Fund with in-kind support being provided by the Tasmanian Food Security Council and the collaborative organisations: The Source Community Wholefoods Co-op, The Smith Family and The Midlands Initiative in Local Enterprise.

Contact: Ben Wills: PhD Candidate - Australian Innovation Research Centre, Treasurer - Source Co-op

Phone: 0427 502 432

Email: bwills@utas.edu.au

Website: www.sourcewholefoods.org.au

This factsheet is an initiative of the Tasmanian Food Security