Community Connect: Resource Fair Effectiveness

The Service Providers
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INTRODUCTION

Project Purpose & Description
The Service Providers hosted two resource fairs to determine the best time of day to replicate the event so community members could more effectively be connected to resources. To assess the resource fair's effectiveness as an intervention, data was gathered through participant interviews and/or post-event surveys.

Social Problem & Focus Population
This project aimed to address poverty and homelessness, with a focus on individuals and communities experiencing housing insecurity, chronic poverty, and limited access to basic resources, prioritizing capacity building by evaluating the effectiveness of resource fairs and fostering community partnerships to strengthen long-term support networks and improve service delivery.

Scope of Social Problem
• Gentrification efforts prioritized visual beautification over substantive solutions to poverty and homelessness, displacing vulnerable residents rather than supporting them.
• Intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, immigration status, and low socioeconomic standing contribute to systemic inequities in access to resources.
  ▪ 25.4% of the population lives below the poverty line, and the median income is $48,535, approximately $50,000 less than the California state median (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).
  ▪ Long Beach is home to 3,376 unhoused people (LBDHHS, 2024). Community stakeholder reports indicate a significant portion of the unhoused community resides in the 90813-zip code.
• Several community interviewees noted that while resources exist, they are often difficult to access due to limited operating hours, poor outreach, and insufficient capacity.

Alignment to Specialization
• Older adults are the fastest growing portion of the unhoused population. (Ibarra, 2023)
• Unhoused Californians ages 50 and over comprised 40% of adult-only households who connected with the homeless services in 2022-23. (Davalos, 2024)
• Largest portion of unhoused population in Long Beach are ages 45-54 (LBDHHS, 2024)
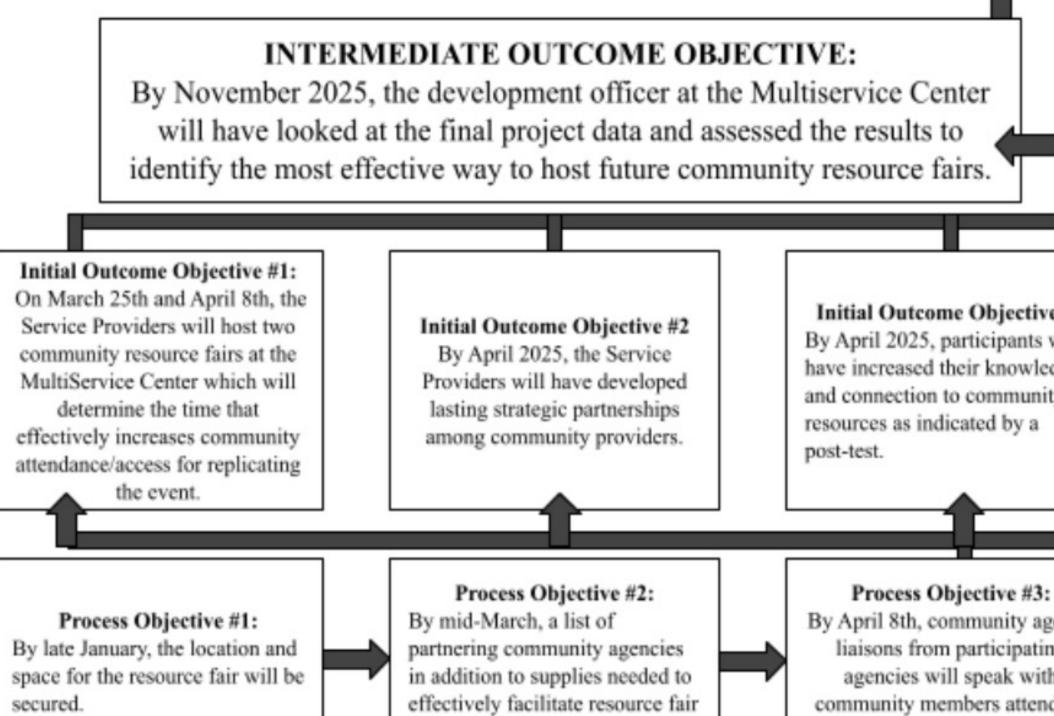• Majority of participants were either in middle or late adulthood being over the age of 36 years old.

PROJECT OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

PROJECT GOAL:
Empower the 90813 community by increasing the knowledge about and access to services for the members.

LONG-TERM OUTCOME OBJECTIVE:
The resource fair becomes an annual event for the MSC to connect 40 community members at each fair and 10 relationships between service providers and the MSC.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME OBJECTIVE:
By November 2025, the development officer at the Multiservice Center will have looked at the final project data and assessed the results to identify the most effective way to host future community resource fairs.

Initial Outcome Objective #1:
On March 25th and April 8th, the Service Providers will host two community resource fairs at the MultiService Center which will determine the time that effectively increases community attendance/access for replicating the event.

Initial Outcome Objective #2
By April 2025, the Service Providers will have developed lasting strategic partnerships among community providers.

Initial Outcome Objective #3
By April 2025, participants will have increased their knowledge and connection to community resources as indicated by a post-test.

Process Objective #1:
By late January, the location and space for the resource fair will be secured.

Process Objective #2:
By mid-March, a list of partnering community agencies in addition to supplies needed to effectively facilitate resource fair will be confirmed and secured.

Process Objective #3:
By April 8th, community agency liaisons from participating agencies will speak with community members attending the resource fairs.

METHODS
• Mixed methods post-assessment only, experimental design.
• Sampling frame through convenience sampling of individuals who attended the resource fairs.
• Self-administered brief surveys gathering information on participant demographics, services accessed, and event satisfaction.
• Quantitative data was analyzed with inferential statistics including independent-t tests and chi-squared tests using SPSS V29.0.2.0.
• Semi-structured interviews inquiring about participant experience, perceived value of the fair, and suggestions for future implementation.
• Qualitative data was thematically analyzed using NVivo V14.24.2.

RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

age

	N	%
18-24	1	2.3%
25-35	6	14.0%
36-45	20	46.5%
46-55	8	18.6%
56-62	2	4.7%
62+	5	11.6%
Missing System	1	2.3%

What best describes your current residential status/Where you have been staying?

	N	%
house	1	2.3%
shelter	7	16.3%
motel/hotel	1	2.3%
street	22	51.2%
staying in car	8	18.6%
Missing System	4	9.3%

If currently homeless, have you been homeless for 1 year or longer?

	N	%
Yes	35	81.4%
No	7	16.3%
Missing System	1	2.3%

Descriptive, Inferential, and Qualitative Results
Example 1.
Bar chart depicting responses to survey question: Would you attend another event like this? On the x-axis, the bars differ between responding yes or no on each day. On the y-axis, the number of responses for each day is shown. Although results were not found to be statistically significant, the bar chart illustrates an overwhelming yes response among attendants at each fair.

Example 2.
Semi structured interviews were conducted with 23 attendees to determine themes among attitudes, knowledge, experience, and outreach. Supported by the quantitative findings, participant's responses were primarily positive towards the resource fair on both days, though the fair that took place on 4/8 had a larger number of negative responses in relation to number of interviewees. Among the positive views, participants expressed gratitude and increased know...

Attitudes (n=21)	Knowledge (n=20)	Experience (n=21)	Outreach (n=23)
"Well, I'm grateful. I'm very blessed and grateful that they have this type of stuff…" - Positive (3/25 n = 15 /4/8 n =6)	"I learned that there's a lot of resources that I didn't know about, you know? like they have a food bank and a clothing bank. Yeah, I didn't know about that…" - Positive (3/25 n = 13 /4/8 n = 4)	"I accomplished a lot … I mean, I got the information, so if you don't get information, you accomplish nothing."- Positive (3/25 n =12 /4/8 n = 4)	"One of the staff while I was sitting there applying for services, came in and said there's a resource event coming out [at] about like ten o'clock…" - MSC Promotion (3/25 n =12 /4/8 n =4)
"I wish, you know, like uh instead of giving out, like [raffle prizes], you guys were giving out, like homes." -Negative (3/25 n =0 / 4/8 n =1)	"I'm not sure. Not really [any new information]." -Negative (3/25 n = 2/ 4/8 n = 1)	"No, Not Really. [The resources weren't helpful for me]."-Negative (3/25 n =2 / 4/8 n = 3)	"I had like [a] twin sister [who] used to come here (MSC) all the time, she told me about it."–Other Promotion (3/25 n =3 / 4/8 n =3)

RESOURCES
2024 Homeless Count. City of Long Beach. Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services. https://longbeach.gov/globalassets/city-news/media-library/documents/2024_homeless-count_final (2024).
Davalos, M. (2024, May). The rise of homelessness among California's older adults.
California Budget and Policy Center. https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/the-rise-of-homelessness-among-californias-older-adults/#:~:text=Older%20Californians%20Are%20a%20Large,of%20the%20state's%20entire%20population.
Ibarra, A. B. (2023, February 10). The fastest-growing homeless population? seniors.
CalMatters. https://calmatters.org/health/2023/02/california-homeless-seniors/
U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). Explore Census data. https://data.census.gov/profile/Long_Beach_city,_California?g=160XX00US0643000#families-and-living-arrangements
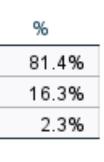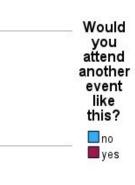
CONCLUSION

Analysis of Findings
• Resource fairs can be an effective method of linkage to resources within the community, improve knowledge of resources, and elicit feelings of hope, encouragement, and gratitude from participants.
• Majority of participants reported an increase in knowledge of resources, positive experiences at the fair, increased positive attitudes regarding resources, and many reported they were able to enroll in services through the resource fair.
• Results comparing attendance found that mornings allowed for more participants to attend the resource fair. In qualitative interviews, findings suggested this may be context specific and most effective timing should be determined based on the context of the location that the fair is held in.
• Quantitative results did not present any statistical significance, however demonstrated a trend of the resource fair event taking place in the morning to be more positively received. This trend was reported to be context specific in qualitative interviews which suggest these findings may not be transferable.

Limitations & Improvements
Some limitations that were present were the use of post-assessment only, limiting the ability to measure changes over time and how the absence of longitudinal data made it unclear how many participants remained connected to services after the resource fairs. We were also unable to conduct interviews with service providers, which limited our ability to incorporate their perspectives into our findings. Some considerations can include pre and post assessments with follow up tracking and having larger sample sizes to understand the long-term impact of resource fairs.

Recommendations & Implications
Practice
Recommendation: Resource fairs should continue to be used as a strategy for service linkage, as participants consistently reported increased awareness of available services.
Implication: To make the resource fair as a recurring event as a part of strategic planning with collaborating agencies.
Policy
Recommendation: Formalize community resource fairs as a recurring strategy within the city of Long Beach's Homeless Services Bureau to increase the access to services.
Implication: The City of Long Beach implements resources fairs to be held quarterly, at agencies like the multi-service area and other high-need areas. An allocation of dedicated funding with be need to plan and host events accordingly.
Research
Recommendation: Exploring different follow up strategies – how many of those linked or enrolled move forward with receiving services.
Implication: Evaluate and compare different follow-up methods to determine which are the most effective in supporting individuals who were linked and enrolled into receiving services.

COMMUNITY PARTNER(S)

Name of Collaborator	Contributions
Community Partner Long Beach MultiService Center	• Assisted with outreach for both fairs by utilizing their homeless outreach team to spread awareness about the event • Provided chairs, tables, and a space to host the event
Additional Collaborators Mental Health America of Los Angeles Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Christian Outreach in Action Beacon Light Mission The Family Guidance Center The Long Beach Rescue Mission US Vets Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Help Me Help You The Goodwill California Benefits Support Network Lutheran Social Services Meals on Wheels Anthem City of Long Beach Foundations of Fatherhood Program Veterans Affairs The City of Long Beach Homeless Services Veteran Outreach Team	• Provided community members with information, enrollment assistance, and services • Contributed by tabling at one or both resource fairs hosted by the Service Providers