GIS Day at CSU

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Title: Perspectives of Food Assistance Program Personnel on Utilizing GIS as a Community Food Security Tool

Description of Research and GIS Applications

We are in the formative stage of designing a GIS tool for agencies working with food insecure populations. The impetus for the project was a formal request by the Colorado Food Bank Association (CFBA) and the Food Bank of the Rockies (FBR) to participate on the writing of a USDA grant for the creation and design of a GIS tool. Although the grant was denied, interest in the GIS tool lead to a model GIS program being created that mapped five counties (Weld, Larimer, Boulder, Jefferson and Alamosa) and contained data sets from the 2000 US Census and the FBR.

By demonstrating the model GIS program to various agencies and getting their feedback through guided discussions and surveys, we hope to narrow in on key pinpoint locations and attribute data that would be of most benefit for a variety of agencies. After conducting six guided discussions and collecting fifteen surveys, we are in the process of reviewing the results and determining what course to take next.

One of the applications for the GIS program that has been discussed includes allowing administrative personnel to locate areas where food deserts exist in rural or urban locations. Another application for administrators would be the collection and sharing of data with which to write grants or compile quarterly or yearly reports. For personnel that work directly with clients, the GIS tool could be used to locate food pantries, afterschool meal programs, WIC clinics, Food Stamp offices or grocery stores as well as give these organizations, hours of operation and directions.

In the presentation I will explain the need for a GIS tool for Colorado food agencies, what agencies we have collaborated with, what information we have gathered so far to include in the GIS, and other GIS programs being used around the country to deal with food insecurity issues.
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