Harvest for the World: A Practice in Strategic Non-profit Communication in Multicultural Communities

Avery Allen
Clemson University, averyallen92@gmail.com

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HARVEST FOR THE WORLD: A PRACTICE IN STRATEGIC NON-PROFIT COMMUNICATION IN MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Communication, Technology, and Society

by
Avery Allen
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Accepted by:
Dr. Erin M. Ash, Committee Chair
Dr. D. Travers Scott
Dr. Andrew Pyle
Mike McGirr, Executive Director, Feed & Seed
ABSTRACT

Feed & Seed is a food justice organization located in Greenville, South Carolina. Recently, the organization partnered with Spinx Corporation, a South Carolina based gas station and convenience store chain, to form the Spinx Market Garden. Spinx Market Garden is the latest Feed & Seed project designed to bring fresh and affordable nutrition options to an area in West Greenville that is considered a food desert. Feed & Seed has expressed a desire to increase outreach and engagement with multicultural community stakeholders in the West Greenville area. The purpose of this thesis project was to utilize strategic health communication theory to assist Feed & Seed in implementing outreach efforts that build community relationships and boost engagement for the Spinx Market Garden. I utilized strategic non-profit communication techniques as described by Patterson & Radtke (2009) to conduct a communication audit and create a plans book of recommendations to address Feed & Seed’s outreach reach and engagement concerns. I conducted meta-research on existing Feed & Seed data and communications and generated new data from interviews with organization internal stakeholders and external community stakeholders to inform the recommendations. I used diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) as the theoretical framework to conduct the research and to guide the plans book recommendations. The plans book content also draws influence from a culturally sensitive approach (Dutta, 2008) to assist the Feed & Seed in achieving the organizational objective of increased and meaningful multicultural outreach and engagement within the West Greenville area.
DEDICATION

This thesis project is dedicated to my father, Thaddeus Allen, my favorite Clemson Tiger.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members for guiding me through this process and challenging me to go beyond the basic requirements. I could not imagine having a better team of advisors. Thank you for your patience, expertise, and coaching. I would also like to thank my parents for supporting me throughout my academic career and instilling in me the value of perseverance and resourcefulness. Also I extend my gratitude to my cohort for being so supportive throughout our time together and to the lecturers with whom I share an office for your advice and encouragement.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

As society is moving toward a more equitable landscape, many industries are making an effort to be more inclusive with their business practices and communication. Multicultural advertising is an emerging trend in the industry. As a Black woman in the advertising field, I feel my work should be in furthering this mission. This is why for my master’s thesis I chose to conduct project-based research for a non-profit organization that is building its strategic approach to multicultural outreach and engagement.

The organization, Feed & Seed, is “a learning center for farm, food, and related business in the context of a working farm, market, commissary, grocery and cafe” (Hambright-Belue, et al., 2014, p. 2). Choosy Farm To Belly is a partnership of Feed & Seed and the Greenville Health System to create a “one-of-a-kind food intervention program that provides preschoolers’ families weekly recipe kits and asked that families cook the food together as ‘homework’” (Greenville Health Systems [GHS], 2016, p.1). Both programs are currently working on many projects, including opening a venue for Feed & Seed, Farm To Belly at the Easley Bridge Head Start, and partnering with Spinx Store 112, a convenience store and gas station in downtown Greenville at the intersection of Easley Bridge Road and Pendleton Street. The location recently underwent renovations and reopened in January 2017. This location for years was one of the only food shops in the area. There is a Family Dollar location and OJ’s Diner, a soul food restaurant, but not much else. Feed & Seed has partnered with the Spinx Corporation to
provide shelf and physical space for fresh foods at the store, with a quarter-acre space outside devoted to Feed & Seed’s design and implementation of teaching gardens and community space. The space has been named the Spinx Market Garden. This thesis project focused on the specific issue areas of increasing community involvement in local efforts by a non-profit organization through outreach and engagement.

I chose the project option for this thesis because of both the nature of communication and non-profit work. These fields require hands-on practical application of theory and resourcefulness. My previous communication education featured a project element I feel prepared me for the industry and was also enjoyable. Non-profit work is something I have been involved with from a young age. I was inspired to create a project on this subject matter because it was a rare opportunity to highlight my interest areas and to utilize my talents and training to help improve the lives of others. The issue area of Feed & Seed and Farm To Belly is one I am passionate about. Food security is a right and everyone should have access to healthful nutrition and consistent sustenance. The purpose of this thesis project was to utilize strategic health communication theory to assist Feed & Seed and Spinx in implementing outreach efforts that build community relationships and boost engagement.

Living in an area without easy access to nutritionally rich, affordable sustenance can contribute to issues with establishing and maintaining food security. Food security is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life” (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2016). In a
recent report, Coleman-Jensen et al. (2016) found that since the 2008 Great Recession, U.S. household food insecurity rose to a high of 14.9% in 2011 and has trended downward to 12.7% as of 2015. Though significant study results suggest that efforts to alleviate this issue are effective, more work is certainly necessary to continue the trend toward food security for all. Finding fresh, affordable foods is a problem that extends and spreads into other areas of an individual’s overall wellbeing. According to data from Hambright-Belue et al. (2014), 75% of healthcare spending prior to 2014 was on chronic illness linked to diet. In the Upstate South Carolina area, 69% of adults are overweight or obese. Childhood obesity also manifests similar health issues as adults such as hypertension and insulin resistance. Further, complications related to childhood obesity can affect children’s school and social performance (Ebbeling et al., 2002). In sum, nutrition is a large part of tackling these issues (Han et al., 2010).

Appropriate and effective communication is imperative to the success of any organization, especially in the non-profit sector, as outreach and engagement practices can motivate a community to take action. In the case of Feed & Seed, great effort has been put into the creation of an implementation for the farm and market infrastructures. The board and staff have purposefully refrained from neighborhood-specific outreach until certainty of the physical location was assured, in order to avoid setting false-expectations. Now that venue and partners are finalized, Feed & Seed wishes to work with specialists to address potential challenges to achieving the organizational mission in the multicultural aspect of their work. Leadership has reached into neighborhoods
through conventional channels: neighborhood associations, elected representatives, other
non-profits working in the area, and identified public leaders, seeking to engage them in
the design and operation of programs in the Feed & Seed venues. Ethnicity is a possible
factor in the challenges facing Feed & Seed; relative age and life-experience are others.
Long-held perceptions of non-profits entering the community likely influence their
cautions in terms of engagement and participation. Existing organizations that have
attempted to do work similar to that of Feed & Seed have not approached the target
communities in sincere and inclusive ways. The largest segments of the neighboring
communities are African American and Latino/Hispanic. Mistrust of outsiders is
common. However, minority communities have histories that rationalize this way of
thinking. Examples of this include medical malpractices, such as the infamous Tuskegee
experiment or eugenics programs, and discriminatory policies in housing and education.
In Greenville County specifically, race relations were affected by the legacies of slavery
that had lasting impact on social and governmental proceedings early in the area’s history
(Mathis, 1971). Some remnants and perceptions of the negative effects of such historic
episodes still remain. The goal of my project was to uncover channels for dialogue and
inclusion so these communities can be a key part of the decision-making processes as
Feed & Seed builds the Spinx Market Garden and allocates space and resources towards
its neighbors.

With the goal of inclusion in mind, I chose to use Everett Rogers’s diffusion of
innovation theory as the theoretical framework for this project. Diffusion of innovation
was introduced in 1962 and updated in 1971 and 1998. However, I will focus explicitly on the fourth edition, which addresses challenges in public health areas and updates the theory to accommodate the modern era (Rogers, 2003). In order for this theory to be most effectively applied in terms of achieving my thesis project goals, I positioned food security as a public health risk according to data previously cited and use the theory as a guide to develop ways of addressing it. The assumption of food security posing a public health risk was not far-fetched. Research shows that lack of access to nutrition can affect many aspects of a person’s life. Children especially are susceptible to the dangers of food insecurity (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2016; Ebbeling et al., 2002; Han et al. 2010). Given the descriptions of both Feed & Seed's mission and work and the nature of food insecurity as a public health risk, it was reasonable to consider feed & Seed as a public health initiative. Therefore, the organization's communication challenge areas were addressed in consideration of public health strategic communication practices.

This research was a case study of multicultural outreach and engagement in the non-profit sector. Specifically, it was a communication audit and compilation of recommendations for future practices for Feed & Seed as it implements the planned project at Spinx Market Garden in West Greenville. Patterson and Radtke (2009) provide protocol for creating strategic communication plans for non-profits. I adhered closely to this text. They suggest using interviews and content analysis to both assess the organization’s current communications and identify best courses of action (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Creswell (2013) also suggests interviews for this type of work and...
industry field. I followed Creswell’s recommendations for conducting all the research in this study. The research questions were explored through interviews with the senior management and external community-leader stakeholders, in which they were asked for recommendations for at-large community stakeholders (Creswell, 2013). Research questions were defined based on the goals of the organization, and the objectives of the project informed the method. The goals, in short, were to: work with Feed & Seed on the Spinx Market Garden in West Greenville, conduct community research, and provide the organization with a plans book for the future.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Strategic Non-profit Organization Management and Strategic Communications

Both strategic planning and communications allow non-profit organizations to most effectively respond to new situations. For example, strategic planning shapes the ways in which the organization makes decisions and implements practices (Bryson, 1988, p.74). Bryson (1988) outlines eight steps through which an organization strategically plans their operations. These steps are: developing an initial agreement concerning the strategic planning effort, identifying and clarifying mandates, developing and clarifying mission and values, assessing the internal and external environments, identifying the strategic issue, developing strategy, and providing a description of the organization for the future (Bryson, 1988). Feed & Seed has already completed most of them including: development and clarification of mission and values, identification and clarification of
mandates, development of an initial agreement concerning the strategic planning effort, and internal environmental assessment (Bryson, 1988, p. 74-76). Bryson (1988) also includes necessary procedural elements for making the implementation and efficacy of strategic methods. A process sponsor, a strategic planning team, and the ability to pull information and people together at key points for important discussions and decisions are among them (Bryson, 1988, p.80). These facets specifically were great opportunity areas for my thesis project. In speaking to leadership, I ascertained the role of my work was to compile all of the existing documents and research of the organization and channel it into a plan to address the strategic issue. Mike McGirr was the sponsor. Other students who have conducted work for or on Feed & Seed and I became part of the strategic communication team, and the goal of the study was to pull all these pieces together for the end result of a community centered space at the Spinx Market Garden. This piece legitimized the use of strategic communication in this non-profit organizational effort.

Based on my observation of and dialogue with Feed & Seed leadership, strategic measures have been implemented since the inception of the project. The clearly defined mission statement, objectives, and purposeful actions of the organization allowed me to confidently describe the organization as a strategically planned entity looking to advance their goals with further carefully strategized methods. Bryson (1988) mentions that part of strategic planning involves “key decision makers [needing] reasonably structured pieces to help them identify and resolve the most important issues their organization faces” (p. 74). Part of the established strategic methodology of Feed & Seed would
logically include strategic communication plans. My thesis project built upon the existing communication efforts by conducting research and helping the organization address the strategic issues.

Austin (2000) examines the potential for impact that lies at the intersection of the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. He states that industry convergence is unavoidable in the modern era and that it is driven by social, political, economic pressures (Austin, 2000). Theory on the topic of cross-sector collaboration has largely been focused in behavioral sciences and management. A large portion, according to Austin (2000), has been interested in strategic collaboration and corporate social performance. Kanter (1994) describes such partnerships as “collaborative advantage” (p. 96). This ability for organizations and/or companies to work in a mutually beneficial fashion with others provides both with a competitive edge, especially if they are able to move beyond surface-level interaction (Kanter, 1994). This information relates back to some of the steps covered in Bryson (1988). Austin (2000) and Kanter (1994) works discussed what can be subsets of these strategic planning steps. Collaborative advantage specifically can be seen as a product of external and internal environmental assessment covered in Bryson (1988). Development and clarification of mission and values discussed in Bryson (1988) is key for an organization that wishes to establish a cross-industry collaborative relationship outlined by Austin (2000).

This cross-industry collaboration was a key element of the research and resulting recommendation I provided with this study. Austin (2000) describes the ways in which
these relationships evolve along what is known as a “collaboration continuum” (p. 71). Within the continuum, a cross-sector relationship can be qualified as philanthropic, transactional, and integrative (Austin, 2000).

Philanthropic cross-sector relationships are characterized by a one-way value flow (Austin, 2000). In this type of relationship, there is little interaction between two organizations outside of an annual request, a fulfillment of the request, or a “thank you” note (Austin, 2000). This simple transaction model is why the philanthropic stage is considered a first step in establishing a cross-sector relationship. Philanthropic relationships follow traditional understandings of interaction between non-profits and for-profits (Austin, 2000). Austin (2000) states that the philanthropic stage is not necessarily a negative type of cross-sector relationship, because non-profits will always need resources and charitable donations work to build brand image for for-profit organizations. It is only a surface relationship that requires both entities to dig deeper for stronger integration (Austin, 2000).

Transactional relationships are mutually beneficial with two-way value flow and intentional creation (Austin, 2000). Cross-sector relationships can grow from the philanthropic stage to this one through richer collaboration and value transactions. It is similar to a buyer-seller relationship in that both parties search for specific value that can be gained from one another (Austin, 2000). One key factor in the specific value search aspect is the identification of commonalities in missions and values. When organizations
are able to reach this level of interaction, they have at once strengthened one another’s positioning and brand goals (Austin, 2000).

Integration is the final stage of cross-sectoral relationships. To reach this point, non-profit and for-profit entities must have cycled beyond philanthropy to a transactional interaction and on to a mutual mission relationship (Austin, 2000). At this level, there are little to no boundaries between the organizations. They share monetary and human resources and capital as well as similar missions and goals (Austin, 2000). For this relationship type to work, both the non-profit and for-profit must have distinct brand identities in the partnership. Though the boundaries are blurred, stakeholders and operations personnel should be able to identify the unique aspects of each organization (Austin, 2000).

A concept not explicitly covered in Austin (2000) but that can be extracted by readers is the idea of capital. In every facet, sharing funds, materials, staff has been mentioned. Kong (2008) explores ideas of various types of capital. The concept of intellectual capital is defined as the knowledge, experience, and information an organization uses to create wealth or gain an edge in a given market (Kong, 2008). Intellectual capital can take the form of human, structural, or relational resources (Kong, 2008). It is characterized as a concept traditionally applied to the for-profit sector, which is logical in the context of its definition (Kong, 2008). However, it is founded on the somewhat cliché yet still relevant phrase “knowledge is power” and can be beneficial as an element of strategic non-profit planning and management (Kong, 2008, p. 282). Non-
profit organizations are investing in people and ideas instead of profit, but they still face competition in a saturated market. Kong writes specifically about the ways social service non-profit organizations are able to utilize intellectual capital to gain an advantage on the competition (2008). It does seem somewhat incongruent to consider the non-profit sector in terms of competition. However, based on Kong’s and Bryson’s arguments, factors of distinction can be considered competition. The information collected and harnessed as capital in non-profit efforts is usually qualitative and concerned with strategic prospects not tied by financial aims (Kong, 2008). Non-profits can use intellectual capital to create meaningful content and integrations for stakeholders, which in turn can boost their standing within the community (Kong, 2008).

The previous section on strategic non-profit planning and management has provided me with adequate context with which I was able to position strategic communication as a part of such governance. An organization’s capability to address issues it faces with a coordinated and purposeful communication plan is a valuable asset. Patterson and Radtke (2009) argue strategic communication is critical for affecting social change (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). They define strategic communications as a “[description of] the combination of plans, goals, practices, and tools with which a non-profit organization sends consistent messages about its mission, values, and accomplishments. Communication is strategic when it is integrated, orchestrated, and ongoing” (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). They break down communication planning in to
seven steps: preparation, foundation, focusing, fostering, promotion, advancement, and ensuring.

Preparation of a strategic plan begins with identifying an organization’s mission, vision, goals, situation, objectives, and communications objectives (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Practitioners should have a clear understanding of why the organization exists, where it wants to be positioning-wise, what the organization wants, what factors are affecting the organization, how it produces deliverables, and who they want to reach and why. Without this basic yet crucial information, the strategic planner cannot properly conduct the latter steps of the process (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). The foundation of the planning process are strategic scans of the industry landscape for an organization. Analysis of the organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) must be done to determine the best possible courses of action given these internal or external factors (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Internally, practitioners can explore the organization’s culture, administration, programs, human resources, development, and infrastructure (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Externally, economic, political, technological, and social factors must be considered (Patterson & Radtke, 2009).

Focusing the plan involves gaining a deeper understanding of the target audience (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). There are three types of individuals a strategic non-profit communication plan should seek to address: the active public, the engaged public, and the aware public (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). The active public consists of individuals who are involved somehow as stakeholders, The engaged public includes persons who
are currently working on the issues, and the aware public are those who know about the issue and can be convinced to join in on issue actions with some effort (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Understanding demographic, psychographic, and geographic information can help practitioners gain the deeper understanding that is called for in this type of communication planning (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Fostering audience support is the fourth step in the strategic communication process. This is done through communications objectives. Objectives should describe the organizations desired results and should assist the organization in reaching their programmatic goals (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). They should be measurable and focused on outcomes. The SMART test is a tool practitioners can use to make sure the communications objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (Patterson & Radtke, 2009).

After the plan has been built on a solid foundation and focused on SMART objectives, it is time for the organization to be promoted through issue framing and message development (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Issue framing is done through a careful process of message development. Message development incorporates the image of a non-profit organization, its mission statement, description, current messaging, slogans, media platform, contextual framing (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Themes are key to crafting appropriate and effective messaging that can be a tool for a non-profit organization (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Advancing the plan involves selecting dissemination modes and strategy (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). There are many strategic options for advancement and choosing the best for an organization and its goals is
important to the success of a communications plan. To determine which strategies are best suited for an organization and their plan, practitioners must consider audience responsiveness, organization-to-audience relationships, audience perception, message control, implementation efforts, budget concerns, and potential future uses or uses with other audiences (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Each item for consideration must be evaluated in terms of the identified target audience. Broadcast vehicle selection is as critical as strategy selection, if not more so. Modes for dissemination include in-person meetings, print, and electronic methods such as email, audio, video, and internet (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Modes must also be evaluated in a similar fashion to strategy.

The final stage of strategic communication planning is ensuring the plan is successful by implementing a series of measurement and evaluation protocols (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). This step involves similar methods to those in the initial preparation stage. Practitioners must review the issues pressing the organization and its stakeholders, target audiences, objectives, and messaging (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Common evaluation tools are focus groups, content analysis of media hits and clips, and surveys. Information here should be collected and presented to the client (Patterson & Radtke, 2009).

After each step is completed, the work done should be transferred to a set of documents, including mission and value statements, communications objectives, clear strategies and tactics, key messaging, main products and services, budget,
implementation timeline, and evaluation benchmarks (Patterson & Radtke, 2009, p.3). All of this information is compiled into a plans book along with an executive summary of contents and other related material such as sample slogans, imagery, and peripheral documents like call log templates or protocols.

The messages and practices recommended in the plan should be driven by an organization’s mission statement, focused on stakeholders, and geared toward action steps, according to the Patterson and Radtke’s (2009) guidelines. They state that strategic communications plan should be a living document that encompasses the totality of an organization’s educational, programmatic, advocacy, and fundraising aims (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). A plan must constantly be evaluated in terms of five questions: what are we trying to achieve, whom are we trying to reach, what do we want them to do, how do we encourage them to do it, and how will we know if we have succeeded (Patterson & Radtke, 2009, p. xiv).

Patterson and Radtke (2009) list a “communication audit” as the first step in completing a strategic communication plan. Communication audits are conducted to assess problems with an organization’s current communication practices. They are especially useful in instances where organization leadership feels their messaging is not as effective as it could be with target audiences (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). An audit consists of interviews of internal members and external stakeholders about the organization’s communiques thus far, content analysis of previous messaging, and a review of the organization's existing research. Based on the interviews and analysis, a
plan that addresses the challenge areas and gets the messaging to stakeholders in the best manner can be created. These methods can be seen as a means of establishing intellectual capital, which can help a non-profit organization matriculate through the stages of relationship styles as part of a larger strategic design (Austin, 2000; Bryson, 1988; Kong, 2008).

**Public Health, Uncertainty & Risk Management, and Food Security**

The intersection of public health, risk management, and food security is the base upon which my thesis was built. Rogers (2003) updates the original theory to include the element of uncertainty. Uncertainty occurs when details of an event or situation are unclear and/or complex (Brashers, 2001). It also involves assessment of both alternatives and faith in the efficacy of the alternatives and drives people to seek information (Rogers, 2003). Information is key in uncertainty communication, especially in the case of cross-cultural interpersonal communication (Brashers, 2001). Information and uncertainty are among the factors that comprise risk. As such, I proposed uncertainty be categorized under the umbrella of risk and the use of risk communication in this strategic health communion plan. Risk was also integral to my public health claims. Each article assisted the case I proposed for food security being a public health concern and should be handled with strategic health and risk communication principles.

A study on housing instability and food insecurity and healthcare barriers showed food injustice as a factor affecting one’s health-care actions (Kushel et al., 2006). The research team used data from the National Survey of American Families in which
participants self-reported their healthcare practices in 2005. The researchers defined access as not having sources of usual care, postponing medical care or medication, not having an ambulatory care visit, visiting the emergency room, or inpatient hospitalizations (Kushel et al., 2006). Both the original data collection and the one used by the present researchers defined food insecurity in terms of not having enough food, worrying food would run out and having the means to replace it, or having reduced or skipped meals in order to conserve food supply or funds (Kushel et al., 2006). These terms are somewhat different from the ones used by Feed & Seed and for the context of my research. However, they were close enough in the sense that they could be considered as byproducts of living in areas without access to fresh and affordable food. The connection the researchers draw between food insecurity and healthcare positions the issue well within the realm of public health. Roughly 10% noted that their health had declined in the previous year, 25% had a “work-limiting health condition” (Kushel et al., 2006). They found that food insecurity is associated with postponing needed health care and medications, despite the fact that it was not shown to be a cause for not having a regular source of care. Food insecurity was also found to be related to emergency room visits and hospitalization (Kushel et al., 2006).

These results are similar in nature to those of research conducted on household food insecurity and adult health status (Stuff et al., 2004). Researchers interviewed randomly selected adults members in 36 counties of the Lower Mississippi Delta region population. Participants self-reported on their physical, mental, and overall health
condition. The research team found a significant predictor relationship between food insecurity and race in terms of overall health, both physical and mental (Stuff et al., 2004). Stuff et al. (2004) defined food insecurity in terms of the certainty of “nutritionally adequate and safe food and limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (p. 233). There are many other studies linking inadequate access to nutritionally beneficial and fiscally possible sustenance. Research has found links between food injustice to be linked to overweight in women and has consequences in elderly individuals (Townsend et al., 2001; Lee & Frongillo, 2001).

Public health and risk communication have a long relationship. Scholars have stressed the importance of situating discussions of public health risk communication within those of interpersonal communication (Bennett, 2010). Just as individuals in conversation with one another, public health risk communicators engage in a complex process with the public. Similar successes and challenges in messaging occur. The author notes that the same transaction occurs when speaking to a large audience as when talking to only one or two others. Errors in encoding, decoding, and interpretation can hinder the effectiveness of the message (Bennett, 2010). Just as in small-scale interactions, the outcomes of a public’s response to communication about risk can be uncertain. Messages can be well received or coldly met despite the most diligently conducted audience research. He attributes this to beliefs that resistance to messaging was a byproduct of ignorance and notes that newer modes of risk communications operate as a two-way model in which those with the information and the stakeholders they seek to inform learn
from one another (Bennett, 2010). This insight in particular resonated with the goals of my study. As mentioned in the introduction, community involvement was and is paramount in the proceedings of both this project and Feed & Seed. This piece legitimized my selected theory that sought to level with and learn from stakeholders. Bennett also asserts the importance of considering the fact that all risks and people are different (2010). This added another layer of credibility to the claim that living in an area with limited access to nutritionally dense and affordable sustenance can be a type of risk and respects the variety in stakeholders.

Bennett (2010) also gives insight into how to leverage risk perception and risk comparison while forming a communication strategy. “Fright factors” are elements of risk that make the danger more pressing and are more likely to yield a strong response. Risks can be understood as more worrisome if they are seen as being involuntary, inequitably distributed, inescapable through personal precautions, caused by new or foreign means, the result of manmade products or actions, responsible for hidden or irreversible ill health affects, or especially harmful to pregnant women or children (Bennett, 2010). Food injustice meets several of these criteria in some way, for instance involuntary nature, danger to pregnant women and children, one group benefits as another is harmed, result of manmade rather than natural sources, and hidden damage. Risk comparison is cited as an effective way to balance the fright factor, provide context, and correct misconceptions. The warning here is to avoid hasty generalizations or over-correcting which would yield adverse results (Bennett, 2010). Frewer (2004) in an
examination of the effectiveness of public risk communication shares the same sentiment. They stress the role of trust in informant-stakeholder interactions and calls for understanding on behalf of the information source of the differences in types of information individuals might need as well as in perceptions they hold. This further reinforces the two-way transactional communication model and suggests the need for transparency in the communication process (Frewer, 2004). It also speaks to the uncertainty and information leveraging mentioned in Rogers (2003).

Public health risk communication as a discipline has gained new importance and broadened the events considered public health risks in recent years. As more threats to the public's wellbeing become evident, the practice morphs to meet new needs. Recent scholarship establishes guidelines for the functions and implementations of public health risk communications (Aakko, 2004; Covello, 2003; Glik, 2007; Reynolds & Seeger, 2007).

Covello’s (2003) work in this subject area offers guidelines for best practices in risk communication. These practices include: listening to people, involving stakeholders as legitimate partners, honesty and transparency, coordination and collaboration with credible sources, clear and compassionate communication, and careful planning. Aakko (2004) echoes these principles by stressing that the key to successful risk communication is sincerity and interactive participation (Aakko, 2004). I implemented both these into my project design and the final Spinx Market Garden plans book; using Covello’s practices as tactical suggestions and Aakko as an example of theory in practice.
The public health and risk communication literature situates the ideas of food deserts and food security as public health issues with unique associated risks. These risks affect individuals and of course physical and mental health are very much personal matters. However, the aggregate effects of persons and families all living in an area with a common cause of these health threats turns the issue into a public matter. Feed & Seed’s mission in West Greenville was positioned as risk assessment and its outreach and engagement efforts as strategic health risk communication.

**Diffusion of Innovations, Health Communication, and Culturally Sensitive Approach**

Schiavo (2007) defines health communication as a process of advocating for and improving individual or public health outcomes. Health communication is used for multiple purposes under this definition including: informing and influencing, motivation, behavioral change, empowerment, and informational exchange in two-way dialogue. Schiavo (2007) also states that health communication should be relevant to the everyday lives of intended audiences. Not only must the communication be mindful of the audience member, but also respect the facts of their lives and cultures. Careful and respectful attention to the experiences of community stakeholders is paramount to Feed & Seed leadership. As mentioned throughout this work, respect and inclusion were guiding elements in this project. Each of the key words Schiavo (2007) notes as integral to effective and ethical health communications were either considered early in the developmental process for this study or were implemented in the deliverables. The author
continues on to discuss the characteristics of health communication plans. They are audience-centered, research-based, multidisciplinary, strategic, process-oriented, cost effective, and relationship building (Schiavo, 2007, p.12). Because health communication is interdisciplinary in nature, Schiavo suggests looking to social science and behavioral theory for frameworks in this field (2007). She explores diffusion of innovation theory because of its tiered approach to understanding how new ideas and practices can be spread within a society (Schiavo, 2007). The theory identifies five categories audiences fall under when introduced to a new concept: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Diffusion of innovation also states that change occurs overtime and relies on five factors: awareness, knowledge and interest, decision, trial, and confirmation or rejection (Schiavo, 2007, p.33).

Diffusion research has a long history stretching back to the early era of European anthropology (Kinnunen, 1994). The concept was rooted in Gabriel Tarde’s 1890 “laws of imitation” and applied mostly to inventions (Kinnunen, 1994). These laws described the ways culture is created by the sum of its individual and an individual person’s capacity to imitate others. For decades, diffusion was used in this context (Kinnunen, 1994). The modern understanding of innovation diffusion is more liberally understood and utilized. Schiavo (2007) cites Rogers (1962, 1971 & 1998) as landmark pieces in the subject area. In the text, Rogers outlined ways the classic framework could be applied to developing nations (Rogers, 2003). In the 1962 debut of the theoretical application, he used the principles of imitation and adoption to explain how these nations could potentially
receive innovations in agriculture, family planning, public health and nutrition. The 1971 version of the text added a cross-cultural aspect to the previous version (Rogers, 2003). The original purpose of the theory and the fact that it has been updated over a span of 30 years made me confident it would provide a sound foundation for my work and it did. I was particularly interested in the theory’s application to public health and nutrition.

Rogers (2003) defines diffusion as a process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system (p. 5). Transactional sharing of information between entities is a key component to the theory. The previous versions of the theoretical framework only consider the concept in terms of spontaneous unplanned promulgation. The most recent edition allows for strategic application of the theory, which is partially beneficial in the context of my work (Rogers, 2003). The author states there are four main elements to the innovation diffusion process – innovation, communication channels, time span, and social systems – that predict and potentially affect the ways an idea spreads (Rogers, 2003).

Innovation-decision dynamic process is activated by the consequences of the public health innovation. The process involves knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Haider & Kreps, 2004, p.4). A “change agent” typically leads audiences through the steps in this stage. Change agents are part of the communication channel as they either secure or prevent others’ adoption of the innovation (Haider & Kreps, 2004). Therefore, the quality of the relationship between an
organization and the change agents is a predictor of audience involvement (Haider & Kreps, 2004).

Communication channels are the means by which messages get from one individual to another (Rogers, 2003). They are incredibly important in the diffusion process as audiences do not typically assess an innovation in terms of scientific study of its consequences, but rather, audiences assess the ways in which they were informed about the innovation. Because of this, diffusion is a social process (Rogers, 2003, p. 18). Rogers (2003) gives the warning about the heterophilous nature of stakeholder communities. The degrees of difference are usually very great between change agents and community-at-large. Homophily, or the degree to which individuals share common ground, is a determining factor in the effectiveness of a communication channel and change agent (Rogers, 2003).

Time span and social systems are key in the diffusion process. According to Rogers (2003), diffusion studies are unique in their respect to time. Time is involved in three aspects: the innovation-decision process, the time frame in which one actually adopts or rejects an innovation, and the overall adoption or rejection of an innovation in a social system (Rogers, 2010, p. 20). Social systems are very important to both time and diffusion theory overall. Almost all aspects of diffusion are touched by structures within a social system (Rogers, 2003).

Throughout this work, I have mentioned many times that Feed & Seed leadership sees community involvement as a paramount aspect of their work. Culturally mindful and
appropriate practices and products are a part of their mission statement. Because of this, I chose to employ, along with diffusion of innovation theory, a critical, culturally centered approach to conducting research and constructing a plans book for Feed & Seed and Spinx Market Garden.

Dutta (2008) explores two possible uses for this approach: culture-centered and cultural sensitivity. Though they seem fairly similar, and they are, there are small differences that make one more appropriate in certain situations than the other (Dutta, 2008). Culture sensitivity was developed in response to increased immigration to the United States and focuses specifically on the United States and addresses communication strategy that adapts to cultural groups (Dutta, 2008). The culture sensitivity approach addresses issues of health access and individual and community-based health practices with the goal of reducing the disease burdens of underserved communities through individual behavior change (Dutta, 2008). This goal aligned well with diffusion of innovation theory, as Dutta (2008) explains that culture is conceptualized by a group’s common beliefs, values, and behaviors. It is the communicator’s responsibility to identify the cultural markers and find ways to integrate it meaningfully to a plan. According to Dutta (2008), power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, gender meanings and roles are all markers to consider when composing culturally sensitive health communications. In addition, the author identifies responsiveness to cultural variables and ability to foster behavioral change in the target population as ideal
measures of effectiveness for culture sensitive health communications. These measures are also the goals of diffusion theory.

Dutta (2007) also theorizes about the importance of health communication, especially on a multicultural level. Although health communication practices are increasingly focused on creating programming that is culturally centered and/or sensitive, he suggests communication and actions surrounding health are built on assumptions one may have about another cultural community. The culture-centered approach focuses on marginalized voices in discussions of health. It works to subvert the tradition of Eurocentric dominance in what it means to be “healthy” and creates space for other meanings and interpretations of the same concept by centering on cultural voices in discourses on health issues and solutions (Dutta, 2008).

The approach is built on three principles: structure, culture, and agency. These elements are transactionally linked to one another (Dutta, 2007). Structure refers to the realm in which health communication is situated and the process of creating spaces for listening and understanding multicultural voices and experiences. Culture points to how to integrate health communication and outcomes to already existing cultural values and behaviors. Agency is about the individual managing their external and internal resources and is made meaningful in context of the structures surrounding health communication. The strategic communications plan that was created for Feed & Seed’s multicultural outreach and engagement in West Greenville about Spinx Market Garden was created with these principles in mind.
Research Questions

The literature reviewed here inspired the research questions for my study. Each of the research questions for the communications audit were fairly broad and simple. They were designed this way because of both the recommendation from Patterson and Radtke (2009) and the nature of investigative communication work.

RQ1: How can Feed & Seed address issue areas to improve the quantity, quality, and reliability of future communication practices?

RQ2: What are the attitudes toward Feed & Seed’s current communications?

RQ3: What do community stakeholders view as information most important for Feed & Seed to know?

The first and second research questions came directly from Patterson and Radtke (2009). They are the key questions a communications audit must seek to answer. I amended them to fit the Feed & Seed’s situation. They also harkened to the concepts discussed in Bennett (2010), Kanter (1994) Austin (2000), Kong (2008), Rogers (2003), and Dutta (2008). The principles of Bryson (1988) were woven throughout each research question.

I used RQ1 as a guide for my preparatory meta-research that informed the situation analysis portion of the plans book. I also used it to assess how external
stakeholders view what has been done. As mentioned, Feed & Seed has a dossier of data they have collected. I conducted analysis of it to be able to speak authoritatively on the state of play internally and externally for the organization. Research question three addresses the end-game goals of this project. Bennett (2010) informed this research question through his explanation of what is considered risky. I was interested in how, if at all, Feed & Seed has previously used this type of messaging. Also I wanted to see if there was any possible way it can be integrated into a future plan. The second research question was amended from its original form to include aspects covered in Austin (2000) and Kong (2008). In order to begin building meaningful relationships with the community and exchange capitals, it was important to assess the existing community perceptions. It was also important to determine these feelings from an internal standpoint. RQ1 and RQ2 laid the groundwork for the recommendations I provided for Feed & Seed and the Spinx Market Garden.

The final question inspired specific elements in the final plans book such as tactics and rollout timeline. Research question three focusses on the community contribution to the work we create. This one was the most important in the context of my research and the organization’s goals. I created this question specifically with Kong (2008), Dutta (2008), and Rogers (2003) in mind. Kong (2008) focuses on intellectual capital and Dutta (2008) and Rogers (2003) offer ways in which Feed & Seed can utilize such capital. With RQ3, I was interested in finding out what the organization can learn from community stakeholders and what community stakeholders have to say. This
question also spoke to the culture sensitivity approach I took to applying diffusion of
innovation theory as I drafted the strategic plan for Spinx Market Garden.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

The work I conducted for this thesis project focused primarily on producing the strategic health communication plans book through a communications audit. Patterson & Radtke (2009) include interviews as the primary research method for conducting such an audit. I chose to focus on this aspect because it, along with providing the plans book, was the most beneficial work I could provide for Feed & Seed given constraints of time and feasibility. In this chapter, I cover the procedure, process, and rationale of the methodology for my thesis project. Each of these fully describes my research and interview questions, sampling practices, and the deliverables.

Procedure

Interview Questions. Patterson and Radtke (2009) state interview questions must exist in multiple versions in order to appropriately address the various types of interviewees. I interviewed a member of the Feed & Seed board and three community leaders with constituencies that are concentrated in the West Greenville area; two African American and one white. All of the external stakeholders work in the West Greenville community in a philanthropic capacity. There was some overlap in sectors, but this was expected as the area is relatively small and individuals who work in similar areas often operate in similar circles. Schulz et al. (2005) warns about these types of parameters. I explore these further in the sample and sampling discussion. The questions for the internal stakeholders at Feed & Seed were:
1. What are the specific challenge areas you have observed with reaching this desired audience?

2. What has the organization previously tried with this objective? Please elaborate on the successes and misfires.

3. How would Feed & Seed identify success with this objective and desired audience?

4. How do you feel about the organization’s communication efforts to reach and engage the target community thus far? What does Feed & Seed do well? What are areas for improvement?

5. What do you want to know from these groups of people? What do you want them to know about you?

6. What is your long-term vision of relationship between Feed & Seed and the West Greenville community?

7. What is the most compelling reason to support the organization?

   The questions for external stakeholders were essentially the same in tone and ideation, but redesigned so those who do not have as intimate a knowledge of Feed & Seed would be able to answer them confidently. The questions were:

1. What are your perceptions and/or concerns about non-profit organizations entering the community?

2. What advice and/or qualifications would you provide to an organization looking to work with and within your community?

3. What factors determine the trust level you have for non-profit organizations?
4. How do you envision the ideal partnership between a non-profit and the community it seeks to serve?

5. What have been your previous experiences with non-profit organizations trying to gain access to your community? (positive, negative, why)

6. How could Feed & Seed best engage with your constituency? What would they want to see and hear from the organization?

7. What do you want Feed & Seed to know about your community’s experiences? (i.e. nuances, values, concerns, behaviors)

Each of the questions were crafted to align with one of the research questions. Questions four and seven were pulled directly from the guidelines on conducting communication audits (Patterson & Radtke, 2009, p.35). I felt they were important enough to include in the way the author worded them because they get to the root of the issues I sought to identify and provide assistance addressing them. The questions for external community stakeholders were mostly aligned with RQ2 and RQ3. I briefed the interviewees with background on the organization so they have a clear picture of the organization before answering the questions. All of the external stakeholder participants were aware of the Spinx Market Garden and only needed to be updated on recent developments. This should help steer the responses from general to specific.

**Sampling Method and Sample**

I used a purposive sample and mixed sampling method for this project. Creswell (2013) states combination sampling uses triangulation to identify participants, meets
multiple interests, and most importantly is flexible. Based on Creswell’s descriptions of snowball, politically important, and opportunistic sampling methods, I triangulated these three. Mike McGirr provided a list of community leaders with which he had established rapport and would be open to being interviewed. The sample is politically important in the sense that participants are in some position of influence or power within the community. Also I used need opportunistic methods to identify emerging leaders within the West Greenville multicultural community.

I identified the larger target audience sample as multicultural communities in West Greenville and residents served by the Easley Bridge Head Start and Spinx Store 112. Multicultural in this context refers to African American and Latino/Hispanic women and men 18-49 years of age. For the communication audit, I looked persons who represent these larger communities. From the list provided, Mike McGirr and I were able to identify contacts that would have constituencies to whom the Spinx Market Garden would be most relevant. Also they are individuals that already had a knowledge about Feed & Seed so they needed less briefing and were able to share greater insights. I contacted seven total individuals to interview; two internal stakeholders and five external. I ultimately interviewed one internal stakeholder and three external stakeholders. All of the interviewees were women; two white and two African American. I defined the term “leader” to be a literal elected or appointed position, religious leaders, or social justice organization leaders. One of the external stakeholders is an elected official, one a social justice leader, and another a support service industry leader. As I mentioned briefly earlier
in this section, there was some trouble with applying geographical parameters to sample selection. Schulz et al. (2005) discusses community-based participatory research. Though I did not use this method, the text offered some solid information for my research. Often communities are determined by zip codes or county lines. However, it is the experiences that bind people together (Schulz et al., 2005). The authors suggest being mindful of the lines the target individuals have designed for themselves; a theme that appeared during interviews. West Greenville is an area name that was the neatest, so to speak, to use for this thesis project.

**Recruitment and Analysis**

Participant recruitment occurred via email. As mentioned, I am somewhat connected to external stakeholders in the and area and I used Feed & Seed’s existing contacts to decrease uncertainty levels. A copy of the recruitment emails is included as APPENDIX A. After they accepted my request for an interview, I had them select a meeting location. I preferred that they select the location because I believed I would be able to get the most accurate answers in a space where they are comfortable. I met the internal stakeholder at their home, two of the external stakeholders in their offices, and the final external stakeholder at a local coffee shop. Creswell (2013) mentions the importance of rapport in interviewing and I wanted to have an environment that is conducive for that. Being in spaces of their choosing made the interview process feel more personal. Also during interviews with two of the external stakeholders, we realized
we knew each other fairly well so that made the process more comfortable, I believe, for both parties.

Before the interviews, I sent the confidentiality statement for the participants to review. During the interview session, I read over it again briefly and asked what questions they had about the project. I stated clearly that they were free to stop the interview at any time or to not answer questions they wish to not answer. All of the participants responded to all of the questions asked. I did not offer any incentive for participation. All of the participants were very gracious for being a part of my research. I asked the external interviewees self identify their demographic information to avoid making any assumptions. I also asked the internal stakeholder to provide whatever demographic information they wish to share with me. I also asked all the interviewees to share whatever information about their background in non-profit or community activism work. The interviews were all held in person because I am only a few miles away from Greenville and it was fairly easy for me to get to Greenville from Clemson. Each interview was audio-only recorded on my phone or laptop.

After each interview, I transcribed the responses for each question so I could conduct line analysis. The themes I extracted from the analysis were used for the executive summary, situation analysis, and recommendations in the Spinx Market Garden plans book.

Because I am worked with human participants over the age 18 and did not inquire about highly personal information, I received exempt IRB approval.
Communication Audit

The communication audit was the research portion of my thesis project. I followed the steps laid out by Patterson and Radtke (2009) in their book devoted to this process to fully complete the audit. There are five tasks involved: planning, interviewing, inventory and analysis, findings presentation, and additional research (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Feed & Seed has a dossier of research that has already been done and they have also been communicating with stakeholders for a while now. I conducted analysis on their existing materials and notes from meeting with Mike McGirr. Analysis here means, according to Patterson & Radtke (2009), a critical, in-depth review. I looked for patterns, strong points, weak elements, and coupled that with some of the insights collected from the interviews. Findings from the content analysis are presented as the situation analysis in both the findings chapter and in the final Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden plans book, which is included as APPENDIX B. I also remained in contact with Feed & Seed leadership and updated them as new information emerged from the data. Task five is optional (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). It involves going back into the field to conduct more research after the process. I did not perform this step but I have included in the discussion section as a limitation and suggestion for future research.

Plans Book

I followed Patterson and Radtke’s (2009) guidelines for developing a plans book. In accordance with their research, the components of the final Feed & Seed Spinx Market
Garden plans book include the executive summary and situation analysis, objectives, strategies and tactics, a contact bank of potential change agents, and appendices with focus group protocols, sample survey questions, and change agent contact logs. The executive summary is simply an overview of book’s contents. The situation analysis has internal and external components. Here I presented and examined all the forces to be considered with Feed & Seed’s general operations and the Spinx Market Garden. The situation analysis provided context and foundation for the rest of the plan. The objectives, strategies, and tactics portion includes the recommendations I have created for the organization’s overall goal. Each objective addresses a segment of the Feed & Seed’s overall goal of multicultural outreach and engagement. The strategies associated with each objective were directly translated from interview data and emergent themes. The tactics for enacting strategy to complete the objectives are specific action steps the organization can take toward their goal at the Spinx Market Garden. Each strategy was crafted to adhere to Rogers (2003) diffusion theory and each tactic was drafted to be culturally sensitive according to criteria laid out in Dutta (2008). Also, each tactic will be subject to a SMART test. This tests a strategy’s or tactic’s specificity, measurability, achievability, realism, and timeliness (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). Evaluation measures are included throughout and an appendix of functional documents, such as meeting logs and contact sheets, are included. The plans book document is included as APPENDIX B.
Practicalities, Inclusions, and Exclusions

I only focused on West Greenville because of the location of the sites and in accordance with the needs of the Feed & Seed organization. The purpose of the Spinx Market Garden is to serve the West Greenville community, one that currently does not have reliable and affordable access to nutritionally dense sustenance. I chose to exclude traditional media from the plan and instead focus on communication within the multicultural community network. This decision was based in challenges faced in mass communication efforts such as the digital and broadband divides and targeting messages to specific audiences and to avoid gentrified saturation. I explained these concepts further in the situation analysis, interview findings, and final Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden plans book.
CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

The purpose of my thesis project was to determine the best strategies to assist Feed & Seed with the planning and opening of the Spinx Market Garden in West Greenville by applying strategic health communication theory. The final product is a plans book analyzing the organization’s current situation and outlining recommendations for how to approach community outreach and boost community engagement. Each recommendation is not only rooted in diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2003) and considerate of a culturally sensitive approach (Dutta, 2008), but is also informed by interviews with internal and external stakeholders (Patterson & Radtke, 2009).

Patterson & Radtke (2009) state that communications audits and subsequent recommendations should be founded in data collected on the state of and perceptions about the organization’s current communications. Stage one of communication audit research is to conduct analysis on existing organizational research (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). For this, I reviewed a dossier of information Feed & Seed has curated. I also used conversations with my point person in the organization to gain insights. The results of this investigation are available in the plans book as the situation analysis. The situation analysis consists of the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing an organization (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). This section of the plans book acts as an orienting agent for the recommendations. Data collected from the stakeholder interviews was fused with the theoretical concepts to drive the recommendations.

Situation Analysis
Situation analysis is process of unpacking an organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). It is a unique service communications professionals can provide to clients and can be very helpful to the future success of a strategic communications plan. Feed & Seed has as wealth of collected data that I was able to use to conduct this analytical stage. From this dossier, I could extract nine different strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Feed & Seed’s strengths are their partnerships with other non-profit and for-profit entities, the purpose and mission of their work, and the organization’s newness. Weaknesses for the organization include name and brand recognition, and outreach and engagement. Service offerings, location, and the newness of the organization are all opportunities for Feed & Seed. Finally, changing demographic scape of their location, competition for resources, and the new political landscape are potential threats for the organization.

**STRENGTHS**

A clear vision and purpose, location, partnerships, and novelty are Feed & Seed’s strengths. Each of these are major assets for the organization and will be ever more valuable as Feed & Seed continues to grow within the community and beyond.

**Vision and Purpose**

Feed & Seed’s primary strength is the organization leadership’s desire to be different. In speaking to Mike McGirr, it is evident the vision for the organization is to provide service to the West Greenville area that is not a duplicate or rehashing of other non-profit’s work. The vision is simple “local provisions for all.” The inclusionary tone of the existing slogan echoes the earnest nature with which the organization goes about its work. Not only is the tone welcoming, the organization’s members are adamant about
standing behind what they say. “Transparency” is a word that came up frequently in interviews with both internal and external individuals. There is a perception of non-profit organizations as being secretive or not completely honest with constituents. For example, Feed & Seed sees itself as different and ready to work toward changing some of the more negative stereotypes of non-profits that already exist in the area.

The organization’s purpose is also a major strength. The mission is inclusive and accessible to support, which is especially important for potential funders and partners. While no pitch for support, be it financial or otherwise, is an easy thing to do, it is a bit less taxing when an organization’s mission does some of the heavy-lifting. Feed & Seed is dedicated to bringing affordable fresh foods to families and individuals who need such access. They are also committed to farmers and craftspersons who have product that is not getting to tables or shops. Introduce quote. “We’re building [Feed & Seed] up to help people create hundreds of business opportunities across the state,” says McGirr. Feed & Seed is currently acting as a liaison for partners and community and vice versa. Beef is the most current example of this liaison role. The high value forage farms are the latest farm-based campaign for the organization. In short, cattle are sold off as “yearlings” for dollars on the pound to processes farms that feed the livestock manufactured nutrition. They are later sold as full grown product and shipped to grocery stores. Farmers who allow cattle to graze on traditional grass and forage greens for longer periods produce better quality livestock that sell for more and are free from pharmaceutical intervention. Mike McGirr is traveling the state to educate farmers on this process and encourage them to consider changing their model. Moreover, the organization is working to make new connections for new successes. McGirr describes the liaison status as “meeting success with more success and failures with innovative and possible solutions.” This is one of the more prominent organizational strengths that can power the tactics in the plans book.

**Location and Partnerships**
Another strength for Feed & Seed is the physical location of both the flagship location and Spinx Market Garden. Feed & Seed’s hub is situated on Welborn Street in downtown Greenville by the west side of the city, which as recently experienced a boom. Spinx Market Garden, as stated, is at the gateway to the new arts district in downtown Greenville. It is also near to main street, shops, and other local attractions. The West Greenville area is growing at a rapid pace, partly because of the growing needs of Greenville and the effects of gentrification. Traditionally, the area around the Spinx station and Market Garden has been populated by African American families and businesses. In the past ten years, housing and commercial developers have purchased land and erected homes priced drastically above the income levels of the existing residents. Families have been pushed out of the area made favorable by its proximity to bustling downtown Greenville. The face of the neighborhood is changing. There was a time when white people could not be found in the area after a certain area. Now they are happily walking through shiny new sidewalks with pets and children at all hours.

Businesses such as smaller grocery markets and larger stores have been driven from neighborhoods in the area as well creating a food void which puts lower income families especially in a vulnerable nutrition position. Therefore, new and old residents are in need of grocery spaces. Partnerships play a key role in the strength of the location. Because there is somewhat of a lack of public transportation in the West Greenville area, partnering with existing businesses helps with some of the logical challenges the area presents. The GreenLink, Greenville’s public transit system, is an option for some individuals, however the routes are limited. Aligning with another organization can also boost recognition or support if the partner is already known in the area for their deeds. Feed & Seed has strategically partnered with Greenville Health System and Spinx Corporation, entities that are well established and have strong name and brand recognition. Greenville Health System has medical centers throughout the upstate that provide healthcare and rehabilitation to many South Carolina residents. Spinx
Corporation has gas stations and training centers throughout the upstate as well. In West Greenville specifically, Spinx stores are one of the only food shops in the area so residents are familiar with shopping at the location. Greenville Memorial Hospital is only a few miles away from Feed & Seed headquarters and in very close proximity to another Spinx location. The proximity of these locations is significant for potential physical co-branding and name recognition.

Novelty

Novelty is associated with many different perceptions. It can be seen by some as negative because new things are often fleeting. For others, newness presents an opportunity to discover ways to solve problems or connect with others. Feed & Seed’s novelty is unique among the assets and liabilities mentioned in this analysis because it occupies each of the situation analysis categories. It is simultaneously a strength, weakness, threat, and opportunity. As a strength, the focus is on the excitement, flexibility, open-mindedness of the organization. Most of the internal and external study participants expressed some level of excitement around Feed & Seed’s work in the Upstate. Media hits about Feed & Seed’s other projects, such as the Farm to Belly program and the opening of Willy Taco in the former space for the hub that inspired the name of the organization, have expressed excitement for the new projects in the Greenville area. They were excited to see what innovation the organization can provide through product and partnerships, how they will use the space, or how they will integrate themselves into the West Greenville narrative. Community members at large have also been excited about the organization’s ventures. Receiving so much of this energy can be overwhelming. At once, knowing there is buzz among stakeholders and constituents about your organization’s work can be a motivation factor. There is also a certain pressure that comes with knowing people are looking out for your next move. This is when being flexible becomes a key strategy. Feed & Seed is learning and growing. As an organization, they are open to suggestions and trying new techniques to achieve the
organization’s goals. The organization is approaching their mission and work in West Greenville with an open mind.

**WEAKNESSES**

Oftentimes it can be challenging to discuss an organization’s weaknesses for fear of offending its members and stakeholders. However, it is imperative that they be examined and highlighted in order to address them. Feed & Seed is very welcoming of constructive criticisms, which is one of the reasons this book exists in the first place. Based the findings gathered for this analysis, Feed & Seed’s weaknesses as an organization are brand recognition and outreach.

**Brand Recognition**

Currently Feed & Seed has many projects underway in the Upstate and in West Greenville specifically. This diversity and variety in organizational offerings is an effective strategy for developing awareness and garner excitement about the organization within the community. However, it can be confusing for external stakeholders and constituents that must distinguish all of the services Feed & Seed offers from one another. The organization needs a single cohesive brand that translates across all the partnerships and is clearly defined and recognized as Feed & Seed. The organization already has a logo in place that can be used on branding materials. It is simply the name of the organization and tag line stylized by various type faces. This simplicity is fine as a logo should not be overly complicated and readily recognizable. However, the changing fonts are somewhat confusing. Having different type face styles for different ventures or functions is understandable as they connote different aspects of the organization. However, there is a need for an image that appears on all Feed & Seed projects with or without text that immediately communicates “This is Feed & Seed.” The organization’s website features a rustic and industrial version of the title logo and tagline so consistent use of this iteration of the logo along with a graphic or image that pairs with this stylization would be beneficial. Finding and implementing the right wording and strategy
to use with the branded materials with existing projects is the challenge with this weakness.

**Outreach & Engagement**

Outreach and engagement challenges are the primary inspiration for this plans book because they represent Feed & Seed’s most significant weakness. Organization leaders are well aware of the issues they face within the community and are making strides to rectify them. According to internal stakeholders and meta-analysis of existing Feed & Seed content, outreach has been an issue in terms of getting in contact with influential members of the various communities Feed & Seed serves. The challenge of engagement involves motivating constituents to take actionable steps to help Feed & Seed in their mission and to use and/or participate in those services. Both issue areas can be attributed to the organization’s novelty and the uncertainty of new people and entities entering the community. Previous negative experiences with inhospitable non-profit organizations can shape attitudes toward new organizations. Having to confront these perceptions is an instance when being new can hurt the organization. Novelty is a benefit in the sense that the organization has yet to make a lasting impression on the community, but lingering perceptions create an obstacle to building new relationships and inspiring participation.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

Feed & Seed’s service offerings, location, and novelty present the most promising opportunities for the organization.

**Service Offerings**

Feed & Seed leadership has a very specific vision for how the organization will function in the West Greenville community. When asked about the vision of Feed & Seed’s offerings, McGirr stated “we want to be a one-stop offering multiple community services and industry.” Blueprints for both the flagship location and the Spinx Market Garden confirm this goal.
Contacts and connections are a major component of making this vision a reality. Internal stakeholders are already working to pull in community partners to flesh out this vision for the Spinx Market Garden. Leadership is regularly in communication with local area farmers, artisans, partners, funders and donors, vendors, and other non-profit organizations to curate the offerings of the space. Ideally, Patrons will be able to get fresh and affordable foods, local goods, cottage industry products, and financial counseling and assistance all at this one location. One example of the relationships Feed & Seed builds and the variety it hopes to offer can be found in the Deal Mart Foods store located about a mile from the Spinx Market Garden. Deal Mart Foods is one of the very few grocery shops in that segment of West Greenville. Prices are very low to accommodate the socioeconomic demographic of the area. Product offerings are somewhat sporadic. Mike was in talks back and forth with local farmers and the store to find ways for the store to have irregular streams of fresh local product available at affordable costs for consumers. Feed & Seed has many other similar ventures in the works such as mobile markets. This is an example of the organization maximizing its flexibility to show its values to the community rather than just telling.

While there are many other organization’s in the West Greenville community and in the Upstate at large, Feed & Seed is unique. The organization’s unique blend of services that will be available under one roof sets it apart. The Spinx Market Garden partnership is an entirely new integration in the area and an entirely new approach to the community garden model.

**Location and Novelty**

As mentioned in the previous sections, location and novelty can be categorized in multiple ways. Both present their own set of positives and negatives, which make them exciting opportunities. Exciting is not typically a term associated with negatives but in this instance it represents the potential for high reward risks and return on investment. West Greenville is growing. However, infrastructure presents a challenge in some areas.
Community members may not have access to reliable transportation or may rely on the local bus system, Greenlink, which has a fairly small circuit and limited stops. However, a positive for the Spinx Market Garden is that the physical location of the market is near a bus stop and in a familiar area for some residents.

Because West Greenville is growing, there is an increased amount of attention on businesses in the area that presents a great opportunity to expand name recognition and branding and to capitalize on the organization’s novelty. Feed & Seed should keep in mind that being present and active in the community also creates informal attention through word of mouth, which can be even more effective in developing trust among constituents. Simply following through on the mission statement and remaining transparent is a major opportunity for Feed & Seed.

**THREATS**

Factors that are potential threats for Feed & Seed include location, competition for resources, and the new political landscape. Each of these challenges may affect the trajectory of the mission at hand. Awareness and preparation will provide the organization some advantage in the non-profit field in West Greenville.

**Location**

West Greenville is being gentrified. New residents are changing the demographics of the area. Young, comparatively wealthy, typically white newcomers to the area are pushing out many of the current residents. The new demographic not only displaced community members but also discourage constituents for whom the space was intended from patronizing the Feed & Seed location and Spinx Market Garden. A market that sells fresh, local, equitably grown and sourced goods and features a community garden will likely be appealing to new residents. Their presence and support can give the Feed & Seed a certain reputation that could be seen as unfavorable by stakeholders. The challenge will be to welcome all patrons but to prioritize the residents most in need of the services.
Competition for Resources

There are over 300 non-profit organizations in the Upstate South Carolina. Some have vastly different missions than Feed & Seed and others very similar. One thing they all have in common is the need for funding and sponsorship. With so many organizations vying for resources, non-profit work can become competitive. Competition can be good; it can keep an organization open to new avenues for success and options. However, it can be a threat when competing for limited resources, including financial support, constituents, and space within the market. Feed & Seed must leverage their strengths and opportunities in order to counteract this potential threat.

Political Landscape

The recent 2016 presidential election was an unexpected upset. Donald Trump winning the position affected the political climate. The Trump Administration poses a significant threats to Feed & Seed’s success. Government agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), are in jeopardy. Such agencies are being re-administered, reorganized, and possibly eliminated. Feed & Seed is funded by grants though the USDA. Not having those organizations would be a huge blow to Feed & Seed’s mission. This threat, however, is complicated. In some instances, it would be a benefit to the organization for the USDA to be dissolved because of outdated and strict mandates currently in place on school nutrition and regulations and complicated applications for farmers access to federal grants. These challenges would be dissolved with the USDA and make Feed & Seed’s work a bit easier in that sense. But in another, the elimination of the USDA would make the everyday lives of many families living in the West Greenville area much more difficult.

The duality and scope of this threat is especially challenging. However, there are very few things Feed & Seed can do preemptively as an organization to plan for potential federal policy changes such as the elimination of the USDA.

Interview Data
Data presented in the situation analysis only serves as an orienting factor for the rest of the work in the Spinx Market Garden Plans Book. In order to address the specific case of the Spinx Market Garden, I followed the option given in Patterson & Radtke (2009) to interview both internal and external stakeholders. I chose to identify the participants by stakeholder type and order in which they were interviewed for this report. The first and only internal stakeholder participant is noted as “ISP1” and the external stakeholder participants are “ESP1,” “ESP2,” and “ESP3,” respectively. The internal stakeholder participant (ISP1) is a Feed & Seed board member, former chef, and returning Greenville native. This participant works primarily with the fundraising and development aspects of the organization. The external stakeholder participants (ESPs) represent various sectors in the community and have constituencies located in the target West Greenville area. The first external stakeholder participant (ESP1) is a “fifth generation Greenville-ian” and works in the financial sector assisting low income families with financial planning and loans. The second, ESP2, is part of the faith-based community and works with low income housing and mental health. The final external participant, ESP3, is an established elected official who represents the district in which the Spinx Market Garden is located.

Responses from both sets of interviews have been transcribed and coded using line analysis to reveal themes for understanding Feed & Seed’s potential strategic communication practices. Emergent themes for ESPs are research and respect, promoting and perpetuating community autonomy, and consistency. Themes from the ISP1 are
essentially the same as those of the external stakeholders. The primary thematic
difference is the element of transparency. I have chosen to include transparency as a sub-
theme of the external stakeholder theme consistency because the two concepts are closely
related.

**Theme 1: Research & Respect**

Histories can be defining parts of a community’s identity and respecting the
backgrounds that shape the members’ current experiences should be a goal for non-profit
organizations when entering a new space. This first theme is categorized by participant
responses about how a non-profit organization should approach a community into which
the organization wants to integrate. This is especially the case for multicultural and/or
low income communities. Simply moving a new center or program into the area is not
enough; an organization should get to know the people’s needs, wants, and realities. Non-
profit organizations looking to engage communities should also be very cognizant and
attentive to the living experiences of prospective constituents. Participants gave specific
examples of how Feed & Seed can research the area and respect the past and present
positions of multicultural people in West Greenville.

“One of the advice I would give is first do your research, do your homework, find
out about the community. Even a little bit of its history.” This quote from ESP3
summarizes the overall meaning of this theme. Throughout their interview, ESP3 shared a
wealth of historical context during their interview that spoke to the importance of this
theme. For example, the name of the area where the Feed & Seed hub will be located:
Different neighborhoods actually call themselves different things. Like the Southern Side Community is not the Southern Side, it’s West Greenville. But it’s called itself [Southern Side] because they were right around the Southern Depot. That’s what it was called. Now it’s the Amtrak but it was the Southern Depot so they’re the Southern Side. It’s really the West Washington Southern Side Community. Same thing; there were some parts of West Greenville people don't call West Greenville but it actually is West Greenville. (ESP3)

They go on to explain the similar background of communities around the downtown Greenville area. This short break down of something so commonplace as the name of the area has great historical meaning to the community. Paying attention to the history is parallel to respecting the people who live there.

Early in the interview process, “research” and “respect” became buzz words. Each of the participants, internal and external, mentioned having a level of respect for the residents in the area as well as the history of the area itself. I decided to combine them as a theme because of the context in which they were shared. When one was mentioned, the other was not far behind. The following are all excerpts highlighting that close ties between research and respect. The excerpt at the beginning from ESP3 catalyzed the research and respect theme. The following is the completion of the quote that started the thought process behind this theme:
So I say to a non-profit: get your facts and history together because some of the people in the community are like me — they're still angry about something that happened in 1976. (ESP3)

ESP2 shares a more general version of a similar sentiment as expressed by ESP1 with the following excerpt:

If you are serving a particular population in need, I think you really need to spend time getting to know the constituents and people you are going to be serving. Also in the area you need to be able to identify and talk with other stakeholders. (ESP2)

ESP1 discusses research and respect as well in the following excerpt about cultural understandings and experiences:

I think Greenville is a very benevolent community; it’s driven by a lot of faith based work which is great but unfortunately a lot of the people who want to volunteer and help don't have the experience. When I say the experience, so as much as you might want to help you can’t really, you know culturally I think, you can’t really understand where..you know walked in someone’s shoes. I think its a little more challenging. I think it’s so easy, it’s easy for all of us, to kind of get in the trap of, you know, really imposing your value system on others. Again, if you haven't walked that walk then it’s hard to do. (ESP1)

ISP1 mentions the same principles of research and respect, but from the perspective of a non-profit organization entering the space. The quote shows ISP1 is
aware of concerns that exist within certain multicultural communities about non-profits entering their space:

I think you have shiny white people telling people what to do. That having been said, the non-profit model is changing. Rather than going into communities and telling them what they need, it’s going into communities and saying what do you want and where. So that’s part of the whole research of the culturally appropriate products. (ISP1)

ESP1 gave a recommendation for Feed & Seed specifically that suggests ways the organization can emphasize the importance of research and respect, especially for multicultural communities in West Greenville:

Before Greenville continues to change even more rapidly, these historical neighborhoods that have been there, we need markers we need their stories, we need to promote the history. You go to some of the other cities that have their little branded neighborhoods. You know that this was that. Yeah, it may have gentrified BUT there’s some history there that hasn't been forgotten. That’s something I think groups like Feed & Seed can help preserve some of that. And like I said, I know economically when you're in a high risk project some of that stuff you can’t do but there are easy, small things like that that you can contribute to that would be meaningful. And respectful. You just don't come into people’s neighborhoods and forget that they even lived there. (ESP 1)
In reading these and looking back at notes from the session, it became clear that research and respect go hand in hand. Each of the ESPs also mentioned respect not only from a historical standpoint but also from the point of view of many of the current community members. Being not only aware but also sensitive to the realities for many of the families in the West Greenville area is a major key for succeeding at this sort of non-profit work. The following excerpts highlight the link between the two concepts.

ESP2 shared the importance of understanding and accommodating the day-to-day realities of people an organization seeks to serve. The following quote uses a narrative common for many low income families to illustrate this idea:

You gotta realize given the choice of heathy or cheap, people are going to sometimes choose cheap because of their circumstances and we have to allow for that and work with that. You have to meet people where they're at and that’s where they are in their lives. There are some single mothers out there, single mothers that have two jobs they're not able to come home at night and put a nice dinner on the table. We want to try to make those people’s lives easier. Because they want their children to eat better but it’s just they're tired. (ESP2)

ESP1 also uses living examples and offers suggestions for ways a non-profit can actively work to respect the everyday realities of constituents:

Because a lot of the people you want to engage are busy, they're working, their schedules may not be convenient for them to maybe meet during the day. So I think you gotta think outside of the box in terms of how you get their input and
how you get them involved. I think you have to do that with an incredible amount of respect and treat people with dignity and look for innovative ways for them to become engaged. (ESP1)

ESP2 also used narrative to explain various situations of individuals living in the West Greenville area around the Feed & Seed flagship location. This quote highlights yet another way for Feed & Seed to research and respect the unique positions in which constituents live:

The people at Reedy Place are taken shopping once a week usually by a case manager for mental health. So you have a dinner and you talk about this and what you want, [Reedy Place] is right down the street from Welborn, so you want the case managers to take them down the road to do some shopping. Because people with mental illness, some of the problems with the new medication is people gain weight. It’s not unusual for somebody to gain 50 pounds in a year. Their symptoms are better but maybe they have diabetes. (ESP2)

ISP1 echoes the sentiments shared by the ESPs. The participant also uses statistical data and stories as a tool to highlight why researching and respecting multicultural community realities is important for non-profit organizations:

One [reason to support Feed & Seed] is the obesity rate in South Carolina. Because of that obesity rate we have major health issues, hyper-tension and all the diseases associated with obesity. Part of that is people aren't eating well and the main reason for that is they don't have access to that food. Feed & Seed will make
that food accessible and affordable, hence why we have our non-profit status. And
the community wants to buy local. I think if you’ve done any research into where
your food comes from, it’s really scary. Now the folks over behind the Spinx
station don’t give a shit. They’d love to be able to afford a pack of hamburger; a
pound of hamburger or pork chop or whatever it is they want. How can we make
that affordable to them? (ISP1)

Finally, this quote from ESP3 summarizes the attitudes shared by other participants, both
internal and external. It condenses, in a way, the pathos of the narratives used to
communicate the logos of non-profit organization research and respect:

A history, a lot of hard working people who oftentimes are not given credit for
maintaining high family values because of the negatives. (ESP3)

Each of these excerpts paints a picture of a different facet of individuals’ and
families’ realities and ways Feed & Seed can respect those realities. Some of them even
continue on to expound on strategic ideas for the organization that I have included in the
final plans book.

An unexpected layer to this theme is research of and respect for other
organizations in the space. The ESPs all mentioned not doing what has been done,
stepping on or over anyone’s work, and the importance of collaboration. I vacillated on
including this as part of the thematic break down. However, the respondents all made
point to share it with me and used language that aligns with the other facets of this theme.
Repetition and the notion of getting a feel for the field of play are common topics in
discussions for any for or non-profit organization. Below the excerpts touch on the matter in relation to research and respect:

ESP2 mentioned having a level of respect for other non-profits also working the area as a strategic measure:

You have to have a strong strategic plan and you have to be able, if you're new, you have to be able to successfully articulate what's different about you as opposed to some of the other non-profits in the same field that you're working in.

(ESP2)

ESP1 also mentioned the concept of respecting other non-profits in strategic terms. This participant also gave a suggestion about possible partnerships for Feed & Seed to explore:

Are they working with Mill Village? I think Mill Village seems to really be doing a good job. That’s Dan [Weidenbenner], I mess up his last name all the time, is really a good example. I actually go to Long Brand and he goes to Long Branch. He lives in the community, he works in the community, he worships in the community, he has created roots. [Feed & Seed] definitely needs to be partnering with [Mill Village]. (ESP1)

ESP1 shared some history about past community activists that worked with the community in an exemplary way. This can serve as a model for Feed & Seed going forth with multicultural outreach and engagement within West Greenville:
I know Greenville Housing, and both Nicholtown and Spartanburg, Green Line Spartanburg have done a great job of getting neighborhood support and buy in. Before that I think Allen Temple when Charlie was still living he was really the rockstar. He was really the model for sitting in their living room and finding out what they need; he was just great at it and I think he really set the stage for a lot of that. (ESP 1)

ESP3 also mentions the strategic benefit of researching the field before entering for non-profit organizations. The quote also ties field research back to the importance of understanding what under-served communities want and need in their space:

Look at other possible resources. Try not to bring something thats a duplication of services that are already existing. Because when you do your research, you’ll find out if there’s a need for that. (ESP3)

Not only do these excerpts illustrate a need for context when understanding the work that has been done in the community, they also have a historical element of their own. They each touched on past or living history in some way, which harkens to both of the major elements of this theme.

This theme was eye opening and served as a major orienting factor for the final product of this study. Participants gave suggestions through quotes in this section that have been translated to recommendations for the Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden Plans Book. This final quote from ESP1 so neatly summarizes the purpose of this theme and is simply so well stated and beautiful that I am compelled to include it:
I tell you, I think it’s because I grew up in and around a lot of these neighborhoods, it’s such a big trust issue because especially African Americans have felt that they’ve lost so much. And we have. In this community, it’s almost like we’ve lost our identity. We’ve lost a lot of our institutions, our schools, our churches, a lot of our leaders are gone. And all of a sudden it’s going to feel like their were never any of us ever here. I think people are very suspicious now when somebody comes up with a new idea, a new program that’s gonna help them (laughs). Just because we have lost so much. You know, I'm 5th generation Greenville-ian and my family has been here a long time and we matter. (ESP1)

**Theme 2: Promotion and Perpetuation**

This theme is very similar to research and respect, but has been separated as a discrete theme for one very key reason. While it is important to understand the history behind and the current experiences of a community, it can be seen as hollow work. When an organization moves beyond this stage, community input can be used to inspire institutional and practical change. This sort of transactional exchange model can work to create deeper and more meaningful community integration for an organization. Promotion and perpetuation of multicultural community autonomy is goal of the “new non-profit model” (ISP1). In this model, non-profit organizations are moving away from telling constituents what they need. Rather, non-profit organizations are looking to stakeholders to find out what services they want. Having the community as an integral part of the work is the next step beyond researching and respecting the unique positions
of constituents. “In integrating into a neighborhood: A. we don't think we need to reinvent the wheel, B. we may have the wrong wheel on but we’re willing to change it to accommodate a particular population.” This excerpt from ISP1 highlights the purpose of this theme and gives an example it looks like in praxis.

Most of the participants, internal and external, spoke at length about this element. For the sake of understanding, I have presented the data according to one element of this theme. The following quotes show the concern for promoting community autonomy shared by participants.

This quote from ESP3 is somewhat of a transitional selection that mentions aspects of the research and respect theme while touching on ways an organization can promote multicultural community autonomy:

How much time they've spent in the community, getting the facts of the community, and getting to know the people are major factors [for building trust]. Not just walking in one day saying ‘this is my idea and I came to save you’ (laughs). But getting to know, and then you know when they get a chance to know the people and spend the time, then they can even reshape what they even had planned because then it focuses actually on what the people want than what they need. (ESP3)

ESP1 discusses ideas of promoting community autonomy in a general sense. The participant mentions the foundational concepts of the “new non-profit model” and offers
suggestions for Feed & Seed on how to do this within the West Greenville multicultural community:

I think that just generally if you're a non-profit the people that you're serving have some voice, some presence in the work. A lot of times non-profits are guilty of doing things “to” people instead of “for” them. The only way I know to avoid doing that is to make sure that you're not just listening but hearing when people tell you what they want and need. (ESP1)

ESP3 shares the same sentiment as ESP1 with the added layer of community self-sufficiency. This element was central in consolidating this theme:

My hope is that they are there to serve the needs of the community by first understanding and knowing. More importantly than that in terms of non-profits that it’s an opportunity for the people to have self-sufficiency and to be able to grow and to work and to have great health. (ESP3)

In this quote, ESP1 speaks more specifically about promoting multicultural community autonomy within West Greenville. This quote from ESP1 expresses the same sentiment as their previous quote in this section. However, this excerpt speaks more to institutional level collaboration between community and non-profit organization:

I think one of the upper level challenges we have as a community is really making sure that we have true community engagement and that's something that's difficult for us. I think we’re making more progress as we go along. I think more and more people are recognizing that a lot of the folks that we claim to be trying to help and
serve are not at the table. We’re being kind of prescriptive in our solutions. I’m just kinda on the bandwagon right now making sure that we’re being more inclusive, more diverse in bringing a lot of different perspectives and different kinds of people to the table. (ESP1)

This excerpt from ISP1 is simple but demonstrates how an organization can be open to institutional level integration of community input:

I think another thing is we’ll listen. It doesn't matter where you're from, your income, what you’re asking. (ISP1)

Participants shared their concern for community member representation in physical Feed & Seed spaces and in thought, word, and deed. This is only the first stage of autonomy. ESP1, ESP3, and ISP1 talk about ways in which conversations between stakeholders and decision makers can yield measurable, institutional level outcomes. Institutional outcomes, in this context, refer to changes in Feed & Seed operational and organizational functions such as membership and service/product offerings. The following excerpts show examples of promoting community autonomy can lead to perpetuating the standard.

ISP1 shared statements about Feed & Seed wanting to be an organization of and for the people. The following excerpt highlights the ideal trajectory for outreach and engagement efforts:

We do not want to be the non-profit that goes in and tells them what to do. We want to be the non-profit that goes in there and says what do you want when do
you want it how to you want it do you want it. A lot of times that’s not going to be answer that we get. If we do it right we’ll be out of business in 10-15 years when someone will come in and make it a for profit business then the culture will be set. (ISP1)

ESP1 shares a story of a time she met with Mike McGirr to talk about the organization’s purpose and ways in which Feed & Seed can include the community in a meaningful way in the work:

We were just bouncing around ideas for ways to make the neighborhood feel a part of it. We started ‘ok we’ve got a food desert so we’re going to create some healthy food opportunities.’ All of a sudden, I can see it being what the Salvation Army promised to be . . . very few of those people can even afford to go in there, so they're catering to a totally different market. So I'm just hoping it’s not. I have just been talking to Mike like ‘ok so how do you maybe carve out pieces of this where the neighborhood’s actually own a piece of that?’ (ESP 1)

Another selection from ISP1 highlights ways in which the organization can integrate community input at an institutional level that has lasting implications for Feed & Seed’s work at Spinx Market Garden and other projects:

I think we’re doing a fairly good job; again this is more Mike’s field than mine. It is going in or having someone go in and saying ‘look what do you want, where do you want it, how do you want to get it, what will you pay?’ And that’s where our in the future mobile market comes around because right now we've got a couple
mobile markets going around but they're not exactly in the right places at the right time. So we hope over our research time we will find out if the right place is in front of a housing complex, is it in front of a church, or is it in front of Spinx, thats where the bus stop is? (ISP1)

Participant responses in this section echo one another in the sentiment that listening is not enough to promote community autonomy. More is needed. Feed & Seed has to heed information shared by the West Greenville community. Fortunately, Feed & Seed, as an organization, is aware of this need and is making strides in this area. Most of the recommendations in the plans book are underscored with this theme.

Closing words from ISP1 summarize the spirit and feeling of promoting and perpetuating community autonomy and Feed & Seed’s attitude towards it:

If everything goes right, it will a poster-child. Not something that we parade, but it will be something that the community can say they were early participants and look its something and we made it. If we can’t pull it off in Greenville, which is somewhat progressive, we can’t pull it off in the rest of the state. That’s why we need spinx, the housing community, non-profit feed & seed to put together this. Here’s everything you need. Holler when you need it. (ISP 1)

**Theme 3: Consistency and Transparency**
This was the most multidimensional emergent theme because the ideas of consistency and transparency involve many different aspects. Following through with next steps, maintaining momentum created by excitement around the project, and establishing a pattern of communication are all part of this theme from the external stakeholder perspective. “They engaged in terms of their information but they need to continue to update the community, continue to let the community know what are their next steps; not just waiting until a ribbon cutting” (ESP3). This quote from an external stakeholder participant encapsulates the central ideology of this theme. Research and respect and promoting and perpetuating multicultural community autonomy are thematic steps that lead to this final thematic point. Below are excerpts from ESPs that highlight sentiments of following through with next steps and maximizing momentum.

ESP1 spoke about the Choosy program at Head Start and raised a question about what next steps Feed & Seed can take to ensure the accessibility of their efforts:

The youth program they have where they're teaching kids to do culinary training and all that. Again how do you build on that? How do you collaborate, not try to do something new because again more things that get thrown at these poor families is like “how do I keep up with all this stuff?”(ESP1)

ESP2 shared examples of what can be outreach challenges within the multicultural community in West Greenville. This participant discussed how the organization starts strong with outreach and offers some suggestions for how Feed & Seed can use consistency to drive engagement:
I think sometimes people associate healthy food with expensive food so you have to grate down that barrier and that idea that people have. And I think they're doing that already with the work they're doing at Head Start and those things like. That’s a good way to start off this ground working. And going into different communities. Last week [Mike McGirr] came to St. Anthony’s and talked about what they're doing; kinda grassroots and letting people know and working with small groups of people to educate and get the word out. I say to him ‘Mike, you gotta get the people, you don't want them to just shop at the Spinx station to make this work.’ (ESP2)

ESP3 also discussed the need for consistent contact with community constituents. The participants mentions consistency in a way that harkens back to the first research and respect theme:

They need to come back and tell them ‘this is where we are’; this could be stage 2, 3, 4, or whatever it is. But come back to the same communities who were gracious enough to invite them and welcome them and partner with them. Come back to those communities at least quarterly to let them know where they are. And once they are up and running, same thing: come back. Because we want the people in the community not to only benefit, but to use it. (ESP3)

These elements of this theme are critical to the success of Feed & Seed’s endeavors, including the Spinx Market Garden. Updating and checking in with
community members is the first step in being consistent as an organization and establish community engagement.

Transparency was included as a sub-theme because it was a major key point from the internal stakeholder participant’s responses. It was not made a stand alone theme because being consistent involves a level of transparency; the two are interdependent. Being honest about operations and intentions and receptive to suggestions and criticism is key for any organization no matter the sector. Excerpts from the internal stakeholder participant illustrate Feed & Seed’s willingness to be available to stakeholders and constituents.

ISP1 begins their discussion of organizational transparency by reinforcing the organization’s willingness to listen:

We actually say what we’re going to do. We have nothing to hide. And the nice thing about it is you can’t hurt Mike’s feelings. And I don't have an ego either. So I think criticism we really listen to. (ISP1)

ISP1 continues and transitions into an explanation of how Feed & Seed is currently approaching outreach and ways the organization can continue engaging constituents in utility and truth:

It is making sure that we've got a tight enough presentation that answers enough of the questions we know the community is going to have ready when they say jump. Mary Duckett at Southern Side knows about us but it’s a matter of when can we get on Southern Side Neighborhood Association calendar to come and do
a presentation at one of their monthly meetings. Father Pat, they're going to do a couple dinners at St. Anthony highlighting what Feed & Seed is going to be doing; they're not fundraisers. So it’s finding that and it’s not going to be one size fits all. Maybe it’s picnic lunch in the garden next to Spinx for Pendleton place.

It’s gotta be go with the flow. (ISP 1)

Transparency with other organizations, both for and non-profit, was also a factor in this sub-theme. Other organizations in the same physical area or service field might view Feed & Seed as competition. While some competition for resources is unavoidable, it is not Feed & Seed’s express goal to be adversary to other enterprises. The following quotes illustrate this sentiment.

In this excerpt, ISP1 addresses the role of transparency in their partnerships; specifically with Spinx Corporation:

[Feed & Seed Mobile Market] is not taking any business from Spinx because they're not selling that item anyway. So I think that’s a challenge within this community and connecting within this community. (ISP1)

ISP1 shares frustrations with organizations that compete instead of collaborating. The participant discusses how transparency with other organizations can promote partnerships that can be mutually beneficial to the community and organizations:

I don't think there really is anyone we’ve *truly* pissed off. We’ve had some people who don't truly understand what we’re doing. They think we’re competing organizations and we are not. We’re complimenting them. [The competition
between non-profit organizations] drives me nuts. When we had the economic crisis in 2008/2009, I was kind of hoping some of the non-profits would merge and collaborate. It didn't work. I guess that's my altruistic world; two is better than one. (ISP1)

ISP1 also shares feelings about transparency with organizations that have similar product offerings or constituencies as Feed & Seed. The participant echoes some of the sentiment shared in the previous excerpt:

Now, I understand where the nervousness comes from competing for dollars, and yes we are right now. But that all having been said, we won't keep competing for money. Ours is start up money other than a small amount of yearly donated money. So it's some profit but not enough to make us for profit other than what we use for operational costs. (ISP1)

Be it profit or non-profit is we are not here to compete. Swamp Rabbit saw us as competition but we're actually going to be supplying you. You're gonna want washed chopped product. You're not gonna want a case of dirty broccoli (laughs). The farmer dropping dirty broccoli at your back door, that's not what you want.

(ISP1)

The final element of this theme is excitement. Excitement is a catalyst for consistency. While it can be easy to generate buzz about a new product or service, the true challenge is to the follow-through on promises and to transition from flash-in-the-pan events to sustained support and growth. The excitement element also serves as a

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motivating factor for consistency. Knowing that community members are supportive of the work and want to see what will become of it can provide a necessary wind of inspiration. The following selections from both internal and external stakeholder participants catalyze this thematic element.

ESP3 talks about the role of excitement in non-profit work and the role of patience in excitement. Patience is a large factor in consistency:

I’m just so excited that they are coming and it’s a process and I’m always reminding the people it’s not something that will happen overnight. It takes time, it’s a process. So I'm just so excited about the process, and the idea, and the vision that some of the people had and hopefully this can not only be a model but it can spin off and use it in other parts of the community as well. (ESP3)

ESP1 echoes the same sentiments about excitement shared by ESP3. This participant focuses on Feed & Seed leadership’s dedication to their work as a reason to be excited about the process and progress:

I’m just so excited to see how far they’ve taken this idea bc it was very conceptual when I first learned about it but you know he is, Mike is very very committed and of course he's got Anna Kate working with him. What a team. So I think its good stuff. (ESP1)”

ISP1’s selection shares sentiments about excitement in terms of using community input and this research to improve Feed & Seed’s product offerings and functioning:
I’m excited because I know we’ve got to be making some mistakes somewhere. There is no way this is going as smooth as we think it’s going. But I want to be able to get to it before it comes back to get us. (ISP1)

**Summary**

Research and respect, promotion and perpetuation, and consistency and transparency are the themes that emerged from interviews with a Feed & Seed internal stakeholder and three community leader external stakeholders. Each theme not only highlights specific points found in the data, but also work together to illustrate a logical flow of ideas that begins with research and ends with measurable deliverables. This analysis informs the recommendations I have drafted to meet Feed & Seed’s specific challenges with the Spinx Market Garden. They also follow a similar flow and timeline that coordinates with the opening of the market. Selecting passages from the transcripts was incredibly difficult. All of the participants were earnest and forthright with sharing information; I felt almost guilty for having to parcel out their responses. However, the themes weave a cohesive narrative that honors their time and contribution to this living work. A final quote captures the sentiment and informational merit of the emergent themes and Feed & Seed’s work individually and as a unit:

> I love it that Greenville is on the top 10 list everywhere but I just do think we have an obligation to the people that live here to try to make life here as best as we can for them. And not forget because everybody is so excited about the
growth and I am too but I just don't think we can take our eyes off folks who've lived here. (ESP1)
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

This thesis is a practical application of strategic health communication and social
science theory to address the situation local food justice organization, Feed & Seed, is
having with reaching out and engaging with the multicultural communities in the West
Greenville area. Specifically, I worked to create strategies and recommend tactics for the
organization to build new relationships with and gain insights from the West Greenville
community on how to approach the new Spinx Market Garden. My research inspired
three specific questions for my work: How can Feed & Seed address issue areas to
improve the quantity, quality, and reliability of future communication practices? What are
the attitudes toward Feed & Seed’s current communications? What do community
stakeholders view as information most important for Feed & Seed to know? These
research questions guided my interview design and the results from informed the final
deliverable to Feed & Seed.

Findings and Interpretation

Each of the emergent themes from the interview data were presented in a way that
followed logically from one point to the next and in a way that answered one or more of
the original research questions. They also related the existing research explored in the
literature review. Most of the literature reviewed is more-so instructional and theoretical,
because this is a project-based thesis. The connections between my findings and existing
knowledge are best described as examples of praxis. Praxis is defined as the practical
application of theory (Doherty, 2005). Through the application of theory, one can use insights gained from the practical application to further understandings of the theory (Doherty, 2005). Aako (2004) is an example praxis. Theory described and knowledge generated were all used to create the final Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden Plans Book.

**Theme 1: Research and Respect**

The central ideas of this theme helped answer research questions one and three which were derived from points made in the literature that inspired the questions (Bennett, 2010; Dutta, 2008; Kong, 2008; Rogers, 2003). Analysis of interview data I extracted for this theme showed that having a working knowledge of the community’s past and living history is an important step in demonstrating respect and building trust. Studying history, sharing information, and being respectful of the experiences for that community are all concepts echoed in the key literature for this research question.

Historical and living information of a community can be seen as intellectual capital (Kong, 2008) shared between sources. Many members still residing in the area can recall days passed and give their points of view on various episodes from history. Current or new individuals and families have their own perspectives to share on their day-to-day realities. This information very much is intellectual capital. Historical contexts and living examples of realities touch all three of Kong’s modes of intellectual capital: knowledge, experience, and information (2008). Having a strong and sincere
level of respect for the people and the information they carry and share can be a catalyst for relational building and exchange for Feed & Seed.

Bennett (2010) expounds on a transactional model of health risk communication that differs from the somewhat traditional one or two-way system. For this model to be effective, there needs to be an initial level of respect and trust. By being interested in where the people of West Greenville are coming from, Feed & Seed can lay the foundation for a strong transactional framework described by Bennett (2010). Studying the history of the area gives insight to what these communities consider “healthy.”

External stakeholder participant 2 talked about constituents caring about cheap food and cheap cigarettes. They also suggested in jest putting kerosene at the front of the Feed & Seed hub so the area’s low income residents recognize it as a place for them to shop. Many people in the area smoke. Smoking is one of the habits most people would agree is massively detrimental to one’s health. Kerosene heaters have also been linked to negative health effects such as carbon monoxide poisoning and asthma (Berenstein, et al., 2008; Lam, et al., 2012). However, many individuals smoke cigarettes and use kerosene to heat their homes. These instances are examples of what can be described as varying health realities rather than health definitions. It is incorrect to state people who smoke or use kerosene to heat their homes believe these actions are beneficial to their overall health, but these actions are part of their daily lived experiences. ESP2 mentioned smoking and kerosene in the same context with mothers feeding their children cereal for dinner after long shifts at work. So while multicultural communities in West Greenville might not
define such activities as “healthy,” they represent health realities that should be considered non-profit health organizations. Feed & Seed can use these insights to tailor their messaging about the Spinx Market Garden.

The responses calling for more attention and understanding about the where the community is from and where it is now highlight the first step in providing culturally sensitive content and product for constituents (Dutta, 2008). The internal stakeholder participant spoke at length about listening and applying the people’s desires to Feed & Seed’s product offerings. External stakeholder participants also mentioned having the voices not only be heard but represented in the work. Such concerns are at the heart of this piece of literature. I have used this thematic extraction as a starting point for the recommendations in the final Feed & Seed plans book.

The data for this theme did not have much in common with the findings and prescriptions of Rogers (2003). The main points of diffusion on innovations theory relevant to my work are the ways in which a new concept or product spreads throughout and adopted by a group of individuals. Change agents are influencers that drive the diffusion process through communication channels within certain time spans and social systems (Rogers, 2003). There is a very flimsy connection between these findings and the central ideas of Rogers (2003); communication channels and social systems can be considered in historical contexts. The ways in which the community used to receive and share information might have some bearing on how they go through the same processes today. Also the living realities aspect of the theme, like the neighborhood name insight
shared by ESP3, can be looked at as current examples of channels and means described by Rogers (2003). However, these connections do not resonate with the obvious meanings of the original text. Diffusion theory is a running theoretical foundation throughout each of the research questions and findings. So, potential connections may be present in all the data, some are certainly stronger than others.

Research and Respect is an important theme because of the ways in which the thematic data functions as practical examples of existing literature. The information provided by responses to interview questions crafted to address this research question offer very rich insight into approaching Feed & Seed’s strategy and tactics for Spinx Market Garden outreach and engagement.

**Theme 2: Promotion and Perpetuation**

Findings categorized under this theme, similarly to Research and Respect, provide an answer for research questions one and three. Most likely this is due to the close relationship between the two thematic concepts. Promoting and perpetuating community autonomy is a next step predicated by knowing and understanding a given community’s standpoint. This is also the added layer of community input affecting organizational level operation planning. The purpose of this thesis is to establish communication channels that build Feed & Seed’s relationships within the West Greenville area. These relationships serve the goal of not only being closer to constituents, but also making their suggestions and voice part of the work. Promotion and perpetuation findings relate in various ways to Austin (2000), Kanter (1994), and Kong (2008).
Austin (2000) examines intersectional relationships between for and non-profit organizations as strategic collaborations. As mentioned in the literature review, there are three categories into which these relationships can fall; philanthropic, transactional, or integrative (Austin, 2000). I have chosen to posit any future relationship between Feed & Seed and the community they seek to serve being an example of Austin’s (2008) transactional model. Both parties can benefit from institutional level interaction with one another; a sentiment echoed in Kanter (1994). Feed & Seed can provide product and services constituents actually want. Constituents can have influence on a business entering their community and receive goods and services they want and need. Promoting autonomy this way keeps constituent dignity intact and uplifts the new non-profit model. Such actions can empower community stakeholders to not only demand more from entities entering their space, but also send a message to future venture leadership. This is one potential way to perpetuate this level of autonomy.

As part of the intellectual capital concept, Kong (2008) notes that non-profit organizations can use the informational capital they gain to create meaningful and appropriate content while establishing deeper integrations while bolstering their brand. The central concepts of Kong’s work flow in a similar pattern to the first two emergent themes from my research and also are interdependent; intellectual capital is essentially useless without application. The potential for increased relational contact, more targeted offerings, and branding support are an explicit goals of Feed & Seed as well as the essential take-away from the promoting and perpetuating community autonomy theme.
These findings inform the most dynamic portions of the Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden plans book. It is an important grouping because it highlights theoretical understandings by providing practical examples and some tactical suggestions. I rely heavily on the information and research housed in this theme.

**Theme 3: Consistency and Transparency**

The final emergent theme represents a last step in the process started by and matured in the first two themes. Findings classified around the main ideas of consistency and transparency correspond to data presented in Bennett (2010), Dutta (2008), Kong (2008), and Rogers (2003) and contribute to answers for research questions one and two.

The connections between the thematic findings and existing literature are not readily evident, but they are strongly implied and can be explained. Consistency and Transparency as a theme represents follow-through. The two concepts are examples of a means by which the health risk communication transactional model theorized by Bennett (2010) can be continued using informational and human capital set out by Kong (2008). Ties to Dutta (2008) and Rogers (2003) strengthen the relationship of this emergent theme to the other works that inspired research questions one and two.

Part of cultural sensitivity approach is respecting the people your organization serves (Dutta, 2008). Establishing a pattern of receptiveness to suggestions and feedback can motivate change agents to drive home proposed innovations (Rogers, 2003). All of this is dependent on tangible, measurable, consistent, honest deliverables. Feed & Seed has garnered excitement among external stakeholders that have influence in their
respective fields and communities. For the Spinx Market Garden project to succeed, the excitement needs to extend beyond the initial stages. The concepts seem fairly simple when considered through this context. Performing tasks and completing start up missions is basic good business sense for any organization no matter the sector. However, when coupled with theoretical foundations, such simplistic findings and recommendations become a powerful outreach and engagement tool.

Consistency with promises and transparency in leadership are paramount. All of the best strategic planning and well outlined tactics are useless if there is no commitment to the work and to the people. The central idea of this theme provides ways that allow Feed & Seed as an organization to build trust with, show the utmost respect for, and empower the West Greenville community and its residents.

**Recommendations**

The recommendations inspired by this research are presented in the final Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden plans book. These recommendations acknowledge the gaps, similarities, and differences between the collected data and existing research. Each recommended strategy and tactic is designed to address the original problem area with a solution rooted in the findings and theoretical framework. The thematic category structure is echoed in the plans book reporting style for consistency.

The final Feed & seed Spinx Market Garden plans book is presented in three phases. Phase one is the situation analysis that is based on content analysis of existing Feed & Seed research and a review of media coverage and notes from meeting with Feed
& Seed leaders. Phase two includes the recommendations for objectives, strategies, and tactics. The recommendations in this phase are inspired by the findings presented in the situation analysis and findings from the interviews. It involves actions such as addressing issues of organization branding and newness. This phase also has information about how to address researching the area’s current situation to assess new communication channels for potential change agents as outlined by the first interview findings theme, Rogers (2003), and Dutta (2008). Phase Two also includes the actual work of meeting with potential change agents to begin a process called “feedback sessions” that function in “loops” of varying degrees and scope. This is all explained in further detail in the Spinx Market Garden Plans Book. The final stage of phase two involves long term ideas that affect physical garden opening and community slated for April 2018. Recommendations in this section include suggestions from external stakeholders such as engaging material placed in and around the Spinx Market and garden space, long term communication touch points with community members and leaders, and a documentary project on the history of the area now called the West Village. Phase three of the Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden plans book includes tools the organization will need to implement the recommended strategies and tactics to achieve the objectives for this project. Appendices of focus group protocols and sample questions, and change agent contact loop log forms. All of the phases are infused with principles from Rogers (2003) and Dutta (2008) because they are following the diffusion model and being culturally sensitive and respectful to the area and people.
Limitations

There are many limitations to this study, one of the most obvious being it is tailored to only benefit one organization with one project. Researcher challenges with access and time frame are the primary limitations that affected this thesis project.

I began this process later than I projected because of a lack of initial project focus. I knew I wanted to conduct practical research to earn my master’s degree, however the exact project was uncertain. I knew I wanted to work with Feed & Seed and produce work that contributed to the advancement of my hometown. Unfortunately, I did not have a clear picture of what it would be. I expound on this issue area specifically in the reflection section. However, the late start caused a rush in certain pre-research protocols such as IRB approval. The point person at Feed & Seed directed me to interview participants. I contacted them and scheduled interviews with the hope the IRB approval would arrive before the first appointment. This did not happen and I had to reschedule. Rescheduling caused me to lose three participants. I recognize a sample size of four is quite small but because the work is so localized and specific I believe it was satisfactory. Contributions from more participants would have helped give the data more depth and scope.

The nature of strategic communication planning also posed a time frame limitation. Typically, communications audits and plans book creation are conducted on a more longitudinal basis by an entire team. While I was able to complete all the necessary research, analysis, and produce the final plans book in the time allotted to a high standard
of theoretical and professional quality, having more time to fully deep dive into the community and the material would have improved the final product. Not only does a full team construct a strategic plan and plans book for their client, they also continue to work with the client on the project with designated points for evaluation. Evaluations have been included in the final Feed & Seed Spinx Market Garden Plans Book, however, because I will have graduated and most likely will have moved away from the area, I will not be able to see the work through.

Methodological Limitations

The primary methodological limitation for my work is the demographic interviewed for the communications audit portion. All of the external stakeholders are influential within their community sectors and are considered “leaders.” The insights they provided most likely differ from responses I would have collected from general community members. Rogers (2003) states there is usually a high degree of separation between change agents and thought leaders and the at-large community. I worked to include change agents in the plans book that are grassroots and active within their community sectors; the same attention was paid to selecting the external stakeholder participants. If given the chance to amend or redo this research, I would have a more representative mix of the target demographic audience to enhance the data with more varietal responses.

These limitations, though surmountable, are very real concerns for the work produced for this thesis project. Potential impact is not very high, but it is
important to be mindful of these obstacles and unexpected challenges in future research.

Reflection

This process has been challenging, to say the absolute least. I have been pushed to and beyond my limits as an academic and communications professional. Though it was hard, I am proud of the final product. This work represents so much more than the sum of its parts. “A Harvest for the World” is a meaningful contribution to the body of strategic health communication. Also, completing a strategic communications plan for Feed & Seed and the Spinx Market Garden has been a celebration of my educational and professional progress, as well as my personal narrative.

As mentioned briefly in previous sections of this chapter, much of the literature in the field of strategic health communication is theoretical. Articles mention exemplars that inspired the theory or use anecdotes to further understanding. However, there were few examples of praxis. The communications field is very much experiential at its core. The type of research I conducted added a tactility to the theories and instructions of existing literature. Respondents, in essence, echoed sentiments shared in virtually all the texts reviewed. Analysis of the research dossier revealed information that was covered in Bryson (1988) and Austin (2000). The final product was created by adhering exclusively to Patterson and Radtke’s (2009) instructions for completing this sort of work with wisdom from Rogers (2003) and recommendations from Dutta (2008). This research
project can sit alongside these academic triumphs as a living example for future scholars and practitioners.

Not only does this thesis project provide a much-needed tangible example of theory in practice, it harkens to my previous experiences in research and communications. The project thesis option was one of the deciding factors for me attending Clemson University. Researching a communications problem and using research and technique to strategically address it is familiar work to me. In the courses for my advertising major at Howard University, we as students were evaluated on practical applications of communication principles. So, this project thesis was not only an academic exercise, but a reflection of the various levels of my education. I completed my first research endeavor sophomore year of high school and it was an absolute mess. I did not take the subject or the presentation seriously at all. Senior year I had matured and respected academia only slightly more than I did at age sixteen. At Howard, I was an honors student in the School of Communications and the “honor” was that I had to complete original research. This was daunting but I approached it with a fairly cavalier attitude. The final product was much better than what I produced four years prior; however it was far from my best.

The opportunity to work with such a dynamic organization with a mission so critical as that of Feed & Seed is profound to me. When this idea was first hatched at a work mixer near Downtown Greenville one autumn’s eve, I never would have imagined it would have evolved and grown into the academically rigorous and practically applicable
final product that it is. Mike McGirr and I did not pinpoint a specific project but multicultural outreach and engagement are very important to me so we knew it would work out somehow by April 2017. The Spinx Market Garden provided a perfect channel through which to funnel my work. It was new, needed work dedicated to it, and specific enough to be manageable in the time frame. Little did I know at the time that narrowing the focus of my work would only present a host of other challenges. Questions about exactly how I could merge theoretical work with a quarter-acre of land into a project worthy of a spot on a university library shelf swirled for a very long time. I also questioned if I would be able to handle the workload as I have never undertaken such as large task by myself for a real world client with an immediate project at hand. However, conducting this work confirmed for me that there is such a state of being as wholly academic and wholly practical.

Not only did conducting this work force me to grow as a researcher and communications specialist, it is also an ode to my family’s academic tradition. My grandfather conducted his master’s research on race relations in the city of Greenville using critical analysis of city council records, living testimony, and historic landmarks and documents (Mathis, 1971). My mother and aunt vividly recall traveling with him to cemeteries to reference birth and death records and to the Library of Congress to for contextual study. Fast forward to the modern era where I am using Google Scholar and EBSCOhost to conduct research that focuses on a similar subject matter in the exact same town. It is truly an amazing and rare experience. My connections to Clemson also run
deep. My father played football for and graduated from Clemson University in 1979, and my cousin graduated from Clemson as well on the same day as I with her bachelor’s degree.

Not only is the tradition represented by this work academic, it is an homage to the values with which I have been raised. Social activism and justice has been a theme throughout my family’s history. As a younger person, this did not mean much to me; rallies and marches were just events I was required to attend with my parents instead of being at home and not fighting the powers that be. However, as I grew as a woman to see the impact protesting and calling out injustice has on people’s daily lives, I appreciated being brought up in this tradition. Almost everything I do is touched in some way by the fight for equality and human advancement. Using my particular approach to the academy and societal ills to assist Feed & Seed further their mission was an honor I look forward to having throughout my career.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The mark of any high-quality research study is its ability to inspire other researchers' work. My thesis project drew inspiration from previous academic experiences and suggestions from the literature. In turn, it is my hope that this work will be impactful to others.

The first suggestion for any future researcher is to explore praxis as an option for testing theory. Pairing theory and experience provided a new avenue of investigation for my academic career. Conducting a project was an exciting departure to me from the types
of research one typically finds in academia. The beauty of the field is that new ideas and means are constantly emerging. The opportunity to try something new can be a revitalizing research experience. It can be construed as a take on applied research but there are key differences that keep this sort of work from that arena. The hands-on nature of the work and the thrill of uncertainty gives the entire undertaking a fresh feel. Aside from the general note to other researchers to simply try this study model, the primary suggestions I have for future or further research are to approach similar research from varying theoretical perspectives, to utilize different methodology, and to address different geographical or demographical issues.

Strategic communication theory, combined with health communication theory, non-profit governance and diffusion theory, guided this work. There are some exciting potential research opportunities in different theoretical pairings. It could be very interesting to see what occurs when strategic communication is coupled with, for instance, critical race or queer theory to approach similar situations for non-profit organizations. There is also opportunity in the private sector for similar experimentation. For-profit entities might have different concerns or dedicated funds for such work which would open different channels for researchers.

Qualitative data collection was the methodology suggested by the lead textual guide for this research (Patterson & Radtke, 2009). However, there is a question of how this strategic communication model would function as a quantitative study. I typically conduct qualitative research because I value understanding the individual and experiences
behind the data point. Communications as a field is a highly subjective. Many interpretations can exist for the same data point. Despite my qualitative leanings, my thesis research was originally intended to be quantitative. I wanted to challenge myself to break out of my comfort zone and demonstrate academic versatility. However, I found myself back in a land filled with subjectivity and void of generalizability. This has happened in some of my previous research endeavors; I see a Likert scale response and feel the need to find out why the respondent strongly agreed or disagreed to a statement rather than simply agree or disagree. Qualitative inquiry has an important position within communications research, but I would be very curious to see this model applied to a large-scale survey study. I believe it would be easier to conduct such a level of work for a larger scale non-profit like the Red Cross or a for-profit corporation. Smaller grassroots efforts seem to have little need for data on that scale.

This practical application of theory situated in a particular site. The research and tactics used are all tailored to Feed & Seed’s specific needs within the West Greenville community and Spinx Market Garden project. It could be interesting to see how this research model can be applied in different spaces with varying demographics. This research was intended to examine sentiments from both the local African American and Latinx/Hispanic communities. However, I was only able to gain insights about African American populations. I suggest either conducting the same sort of work with more varietal demographics, exclusive to another ethnic group, or in another sector of town
with different situational challenges. This work could be very interesting in a rural area facing similar access challenges.

The beauty of this type of research is the possibilities are endless. Researchers can apply this practical model to any number of avenues within communications studies or beyond. Conducting research and a communications audit with accompanying plans book to specifically address Feed & Seed’s needs in West Greenville and at the Spinx Market Garden only produced one example of one possibility. The burden now is on the readers of both this thesis and the final plans book to use the information reviewed, data collected, and strategy generated to be fruitful. Go forth in curiosity. Seek knowledge and create opportunities to use it. Take on the challenges the world knows not better what to do with than hand to the academic in hopes of a solution.
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APPENDIX A

Internal Stakeholder Recruitment Email

Participation Request in Master's Thesis Research on Nonprofit Organizations - Avery Allen

Hi [Name],

I hope all is well. Mike McGirr of Feed and Seed gave me your contact information. I'm writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my research for my master's thesis. Let me explain a little about what my thesis and research are about.

My undergraduate degree is in advertising and non-profit work is one of my personal passions. I have decided to blend my interests for my master's thesis. The work is project-based research on multicultural engagement and outreach in the non-profit sector. I am working Feed and Seed, a local food justice organization in Greenville, S.C. I'm sure you are already familiar with their mission and work they have already done. I am particularly interested in researching how Feed and Seed can improve external communications and build stronger ties to the community it seeks to serve. The goal of the research is establish how the organization is perceived in the community and determine next steps in the process of defining and utilizing the organization's space at the West Greenville Spinx location.

Your input on this subject would be invaluable. As a staple leader in the community, your perspective is one that could greatly benefit my research as well as the organization. I am asking that participants be available for interviews about 30 minutes - 1.5hrs on any date between January 31 - February 14 (including weekends) to answer questions about Feed and Seed's positioning in the nonprofit food justice sector. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I will be able to withhold and names and/or other identifying information from the final product.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this request and for your consideration. I can be reaching via email or by phone 864-329-6584 with whatever questions, comments, or concerns that you may have. Again I hope you will be able to participate and I look forward to hearing back soon!

Best,

Avery Allen
Howard University '15
Clemson University '17

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External Stakeholder Recruitment Email

Participation Request in Master's Thesis Research on Nonprofit Organizations - Avery Allen

Hi [Name],

I hope all is well. Mike McGirr of Feed and Seed gave me your contact information. I'm writing to ask if you would be interested in participating in my research for my master's thesis. Let me explain a little about what my thesis and research are about.

My undergraduate degree is in advertising and non-profit work is one of my personal passions. I have decided to blend my interests for my master's thesis. The work is project-based research on multicultural engagement and outreach in the non-profit sector. I am working Feed and Seed, and I am particularly interested in researching how Feed and Seed can improve external communications and build stronger ties to the community it seeks to serve. Part of my research includes a look at the internal workings of the organizations communications objectives. The goal of the research is establish how the organization is perceived in the community and determine next steps in the process of defining and utilizing the organization's space at the West Greenville Spinx location.

Your input on this subject would be invaluable. As a [role] member, your perspective is one that could greatly benefit my research as well as the organization. I am asking that participants be available for interviews about 30 minutes - 1.5hrs on any date between January 31 - February 14 (including weekends) to answer questions about Feed and Seed's positioning in the nonprofit food justice sector. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. I will be able to withhold and names and/or other identifying information from the final product.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this request and for your consideration. I can be reaching via email or by phone 864-329-6584 with whatever questions, comments, or concerns that you may have. Again I hope you will be able to participate and I look forward to hearing back soon!

Best,

Avery Allen '15
Clemson University '17
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this plans book is to provide objectives, strategies, and tactics to assist Feed & Seed with multicultural outreach and engagement focused on the new Spinx Market Garden project. Spinx Market Garden is a quarter acre plot of land situated at gateway into the newly dubbed at Village of West Greenville in Greenville, South Carolina. The recommendations in this book are designed to identify the best plan for inviting and empowering constituents to take an active role in the planning and execution stages of the Spinx Market Garden. All of the information used throughout this book is derived from meta-analysis of existing research and original data gathered through interviews with community stakeholders conducted specifically for the Spinx Market Garden project. The outreach strategies and engagement tactics are inspired by diffusion of innovation theory and powered by cultural sensitivity. The combination of these various factors will help Feed & Seed implement measures over the course of the next year to involve the West Greenville community in a meaningful way in the garden planning and establish mutually beneficial relationships with community stakeholders. This book features a situation analysis, community leader contact dossier, timeline and budget, and auxiliary documents for Feed & Seed to use for the Spinx Market Garden and as a model for approaching strategic communications in other ongoing and future projects.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• Purpose: To improve outreach and engagement about Spinx Market Garden among multicultural communities in West Greenville.

• Strategic Approach: Utilize Diffusion of Innovation Theory coupled with a culturally sensitive approach to establish new contacts within the community that can affect stakeholder decision-making processes.
• Situation analysis: Findings explained in this analysis can be used to gain deeper understandings of objectives, inform strategy, and create tactics to approaching multicultural community outreach and engagement at Spinx Market Garden
  Strengths - Vision and Purpose, Location and Novelty, Partnerships
  Weaknesses - Brand Recognition, Novelty, Outreach and Engagement
  Opportunities - Service Offerings, Location, Novelty
  Threats - Location, Competition for Resources, Political Landscape

• Objectives:
  1. Identify New Communications Channels Within West Greenville Multicultural Community Sectors
  2. Collect and Implement Community Input
  3. Establish Lasting and Meaningful Multicultural Community Relationships

• Strategies:
  1. Research and Respect
     Tactics:
     1. Make initial contact with potential change agents
     2. Collect and Integrate Insights Gained from Resource Point Persons into External Communications
     3. Living History Documentary
  2. Promoting and Perpetuating Multicultural Community Autonomy
     Tactics:
     1. Activate Change Agents
     2. Community Sector Focus Groups and Feedback Sessions
     3. Create Opportunity for Multicultural Community Owned and Operated Businesses
  3. Consistency and Transparency
     Tactics:
     1. Provide Regular Updates to Community Stakeholders and Maintain Change Agent Relationships
     2. Host Multicultural Community Appreciation Functions
     3. Reciprocate Community Support by Attending and Promoting Events and Projects
• Potential Change Agent Roster: This is an evolving list that includes contacts in the arts, faith-based, senior, and youth and grassroots communities

Arts Community:
1. Lauren Johnson-Cummings - The Peace Center
2. April Wilson Harrison - Folk Artist and Activist

Faith Based Community:
1. Rev. Darian Blue - Pastor, Nicholtown Missionary Baptist Church
2. Rev. Sean Dogan - Pastor, Long Branch Baptist Church
3. Baptist Minister’s Fellowship of Greenville and Vicinity

Senior Community:
1. Sylvia Vandross - Senior Action Site Coordinator, Sterling Recreation Center
2. Agnes Young - Senior Action Site Coordinator, Pleasant Valley Connection

Youth and Grassroots Community:
1. Bajeyah Eaddy - Case Manager and Family Life Coach, Family Footprint
2. Shaterica Neal - Founder, Project Black Heart, Inc.
3. Tevin Smith - Minister, Rock of Ages Baptist Church; Historian

• Appendices: Sector touch point contact log, Feedback session focus group protocols and sample questions

Situation analysis

Every organization has strengths and weaknesses. There are also opportunities and threats to any organization’s future. Analysis of various factors facing an organization is a beneficial exercise that can inform strategic and operational decisions. Specifically, information about the sociopolitical, economic, and physical environment an organization inhabits can increase awareness or alleviate fears among organization leadership.
Situation analysis is conducted through meta-research on company documents and stakeholders.

In the case of Feed & Seed, there are many challenges and obstacles but also multiple potential opportunities that will be useful in the months to come. Through a review of the organization’s existing research dossier and communications with internal stakeholders, the following analysis is a general exploration focused on the organization’s position in the community. Many of the items listed throughout this analysis are categorized in more than one way. For example, the physical location of the Spinx Market Garden is at once an opportunity and a threat for the organization. This sort of overlap speaks to the diverse and fluid nature of nonprofit work. Situational findings explained in this analysis can be used to gain deeper understandings of objectives, inform strategy, and create tactics to approaching multicultural community outreach and engagement at Spinx Market Garden.

**STRENGTHS**

A clear vision and purpose, location, partnerships, and novelty are Feed & Seed’s strengths. Each of these are major assets for the organization and will be ever more valuable as Feed & Seed continues to grow within the community and beyond.

**Vision and Purpose**

Feed & Seed’s primary strength is the organization leadership’s desire to be different. It is evident the vision for the organization is to provide service to the West Greenville area that is not a duplicate or rehashing of other non-profit’s work. The vision is simple “local provisions for all.” The inclusionary tone of the existing slogan echoes the earnest nature with which the organization goes about its work. Not only is the tone welcoming, the organization’s members are adamant about standing behind what they say. “Transparency” is a word that came up frequently in interviews with both internal and external individuals. There is a perception of non-profit organizations as being secretive or not completely honest with constituents. For example, Feed & Seed sees
itself as different and ready to work toward changing some of the more negative stereotypes of nonprofits that already exist in the area.

The organization’s purpose is also a major strength in this area. The mission is inclusive and accessible to support, which is especially important for potential funders and partners. While no pitch for support, be it financial or otherwise, is an easy thing to do, it is a bit less taxing when an organization’s mission does some of the heavy-lifting. Feed & Seed is dedicated to bringing affordable fresh foods to families and individuals who need such access. They are also committed to farmers and craftspersons who have product that is not getting to tables or shops. Introduce quote. “We’re building [Feed & Seed] up to help people create hundreds of business opportunities across the state,” says McGirr. Feed & Seed is currently acting as a liaison for partners and community and vice versa. Beef is the most current example of this liaison role. The high value forage farms are the latest farm-based campaign for the organization. In short, cattle are sold off as “yearlings” for dollars on the pound to processes farms that feed the livestock manufactured nutrition. They are later sold as full grown product and shipped to grocery stores. Farmers who allow cattle to graze on traditional grass and forage greens for longer periods produce better quality livestock that sell for more and are free from pharmaceutical intervention. Mike McGirr is traveling the state to educate farmers on this process and encourage them to consider changing their model. Moreover, the organization is working to make new connections for new successes. McGirr describes the liaison status as “meeting success with more success and failures with innovative and possible solutions.” This is one of the more prominent organizational strengths that can power the tactics.

### Location and Partnerships

Another strength for Feed & Seed is the physical location of both the flagship location and Spinx Market Garden. Feed & Seed’s hub is situated on Welborn Street in downtown Greenville by the west side of the city, which as recently experienced a boom.
Spinx Market Garden, as stated, is at the gateway to the new arts district in downtown Greenville. It is also near to main street, shops, and other local attractions. The West Greenville area is growing at a rapid pace, partly because of the growing needs of Greenville and the effects of gentrification. Traditionally, the area around the Spinx station and Market Garden has been populated by African American families and businesses. In the past ten years, housing and commercial developers have purchased land and erected homes priced drastically above the income levels of the existing residents. Families have been pushed out of the area made favorable by its proximity to bustling downtown Greenville. The face of the neighborhood is changing. There was a time when white people could not be found in the area after a certain area. Now they are happily walking through shiny new sidewalks with pets and children at all hours. Businesses such as smaller grocery markets and larger stores have been driven from neighborhoods in the area as well creating a food void which puts lower income families especially in a vulnerable nutrition position. Therefore, new and old residents are in need of grocery spaces. Partnerships play a key role in the strength of the location. Because there is somewhat of a lack of public transportation in the West Greenville area, partnering with existing businesses helps with some of the logical challenges the area presents. The GreenLink, Greenville’s public transit system, is an option for some individuals, however the routes are limited. Aligning with another organization can also boost recognition or support if the partner is already known in the area for their deeds. Feed & Seed has strategically partnered with Greenville Health System and Spinx Corporation, entities that are well established and have strong name and brand recognition. Greenville Health System has medical centers throughout the upstate that provide healthcare and rehabilitation to many South Carolina residents. Spinx Corporation has gas stations and training centers throughout the upstate as well. In West Greenville specifically, Spinx stores are one of the only food shops in the area so residents are familiar with shopping at the location. Greenville Memorial Hospital is only
a few miles away from Feed & Seed headquarters and in very close proximity to another Spinx location. The proximity of these locations is significant for potential physical co-branding and name recognition.

**Novelty**

Novelty is associated with many different perceptions. It can be seen by some as negative because new things are often fleeting. For others, newness presents an opportunity to discover ways to solve problems or connect with others. Feed & Seed’s novelty is unique among the assets and liabilities mentioned in this analysis because it occupies each of the SWOT categories. It is simultaneously a strength, weakness, threat, and opportunity. As a strength, the focus is on the excitement, flexibility, open-mindedness of the organization. Most of the internal and external study participants expressed some level of excitement around Feed & Seed’s work in the Upstate. Media hits about Feed & Seed’s other projects, such as the Farm to Belly program and the opening of Willy Taco in the former space for the hub that inspired the name of the organization, have expressed excitement for the new projects in the Greenville area. They were excited to see what innovation the organization can provide through product and partnerships, how they will use the space, or how they will integrate themselves into the West Greenville narrative. Community members at large have also been excited about the organization’s ventures. Receiving so much of this energy can be overwhelming. At once, knowing there is buzz among stakeholders and constituents about your organization’s work can be a motivation factor. There is also a certain pressure that comes with knowing people are looking out for your next move. This is when being flexible becomes a key strategy. Feed & Seed is learning and growing. As an organization, they are open to suggestions and trying new techniques to achieve the organization’s goals. The organization is approaching their mission and work in West Greenville with an open mind.
WEAKNESSES

Oftentimes it can be challenging to discuss an organization’s weaknesses for fear of offending its members and stakeholders. However, it is imperative that they be examined and highlighted in order to address them. Feed & Seed is very welcoming of constructive criticisms, which is one of the reasons this book exists in the first place. Based the findings gathered for this analysis, Feed & Seed’s weaknesses as an organization are brand recognition and outreach.

Brand Recognition

Currently Feed & Seed has many projects underway in the Upstate and in West Greenville specifically. This diversity and variety in organizational offerings is an effective strategy for developing awareness and garner excitement about the organization within the community. However, it can be confusing for external stakeholders and constituents that must distinguish all of the services Feed & Seed offers from one another. The organization needs a single cohesive brand that translates across all the partnerships and is clearly defined and recognized as Feed & Seed. The organization already has a logo in place that can be used on branding materials. It is simply the name of the organization and tag line stylized by various type faces. This simplicity is fine as a logo should not be overly complicated and readily recognizable. However, the changing fonts are somewhat confusing. Having different type face styles for different ventures or functions is understandable as they connote different aspects of the organization. However, there is a need for an image that appears on all Feed & Seed projects with or without text that immediately communicates “This is Feed & Seed.” The organization’s website features a rustic and industrial version of the title logo and tagline so consistent use of this iteration of the logo along with a graphic or image that pairs with this stylization would be beneficial. Finding and implementing the right wording and strategy to use with the branded materials with existing projects is the challenge with this weakness.
Outreach & Engagement

Outreach and engagement challenges are the primary inspiration for this plans book because they represent Feed & Seed’s most significant weakness. Organization leaders are well aware of the issues they face within the community and are making strides to rectify them. According to internal stakeholders and meta-analysis of existing Feed & Seed content, outreach has been an issue in terms of getting in contact with influential members of the various communities Feed & Seed serves. The challenge of engagement involves motivating constituents to take actionable steps to help Feed & Seed in their mission and to use and/or participate in those services. Both issue areas can be attributed to the organization’s novelty and the uncertainty of new people and entities entering the community. Previous negative experiences with inhospitable non-profit organizations can shape attitudes toward new organizations. Having to confront these perceptions is an instance when being new can hurt the organization. Novelty is a benefit in the sense that the organization has yet to make a lasting impression on the community, but lingering perceptions create an obstacle to building new relationships and inspiring participation.

OPPORTUNITIES

Feed & Seed’s service offerings, location, and novelty present the most promising opportunities for the organization.

Service Offerings

Feed & Seed leadership has a very specific vision for how the organization will function in the West Greenville community. When asked about the vision of Feed & Seed’s offerings, McGirr stated “we want to be a one-stop offering multiple community services and industry.” Blueprints for both the flagship location and the Spinx Market Garden confirm this goal.
Contacts and connections are a major component of making this vision a reality. Internal stakeholders are already working to pull in community partners to flesh out this vision for the Spinx Market Garden. Leadership is regularly in communication with local area farmers, artisans, partners, funders and donors, vendors, and other non-profit organizations to curate the offerings of the space. Ideally, Patrons will be able to get fresh and affordable foods, local goods, cottage industry products, and financial counseling and assistance all at this one location. One example of the relationships Feed & Seed builds and the variety it hopes to offer can be found in the Deal Mart Foods store located about a mile from the Spinx Market Garden. Deal Mart Foods is one of the very few grocery shops in that segment of West Greenville. Prices are very low to accommodate the socioeconomic demographic of the area. Product offerings are somewhat sporadic. Mike was in talks back and forth with local farmers and the store to find ways for the store to have irregular streams of fresh local product available at affordable costs for consumers. Feed & Seed has many other similar ventures in the works such as mobile markets. This is an example of the organization maximizing its flexibility to show its values to the community rather than just telling.

While there are many other organization’s in the West Greenville community and in the Upstate at large, Feed & Seed is unique. The organization’s unique blend of services that will be available under one roof sets it apart. The Spinx Market Garden partnership is an entirely new integration in the area and an entirely new approach to the community garden model.

**Location and Novelty**

As mentioned in the previous sections, location and novelty can be categorized in multiple ways. Both present their own set of positives and negatives, which make them exciting opportunities. Exciting is not typically a term associated with negatives but in this instance it represents the potential for high reward risks and return on investment. West Greenville is growing. However, infrastructure presents a challenge in some areas.
Community members may not have access to reliable transportation or may rely on the local bus system, Greenlink, which has a fairly small circuit and limited stops. However, a positive for the Spinx Market Garden is that the physical location of the market is near a bus stop and in a familiar area for some residents.

Because West Greenville is growing, there is an increased amount of attention on businesses in the area that presents a great opportunity to expand name recognition and branding and to capitalize on the organization’s novelty. Feed & Seed should keep in mind that being present and active in the community also creates informal attention through word of mouth, which can be even more effective in developing trust among constituents. Simply following through on the mission statement and remaining transparent is a major opportunity for Feed & Seed.

**Threats**

Factors that are potential threats for Feed & Seed include location, competition for resources, and the new political landscape. Each of these challenges may affect the trajectory of the mission at hand. Awareness and preparation will provide the organization some advantage in the non-profit field in West Greenville.

**Location**

West Greenville is being gentrified. New residents are changing the demographics of the area. Young, comparatively wealthy, typically white newcomers to the area are pushing out many of the current residents. The new demographic not only displaced community members but also discourage constituents for whom the space was intended from patronizing the Feed & Seed location and Spinx Market Garden. A market that sells fresh, local, equitably grown and sourced goods and features a community garden will likely be appealing to new residents. Their presence and support can give the Feed & Seed a certain reputation that could be seen as unfavorable by stakeholders. The challenge will be to welcome all patrons but to prioritize the residents most in need of the services.
Competition for Resources

There are over 300 non-profit organizations in the Upstate South Carolina. Some have vastly different missions than Feed & Seed and others very similar. One thing they all have in common is the need for funding and sponsorship. With so many organizations vying for resources, non-profit work can become competitive. Competition can be good; it can keep an organization open to new avenues for success and options. However, it can be a threat when competing for limited resources, including financial support, constituents, and space within the market. Feed & Seed must leverage their strengths and opportunities in order to counteract this potential threat.

Political Landscape

The recent 2016 presidential election was an unexpected upset. Donald Trump winning the position affected the political climate. The Trump Administration poses a significant threats to Feed & Seed’s success. Government agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), are in jeopardy. Such agencies are being re-administered, reorganized, and possibly eliminated. Feed & Seed is funded by grants though the USDA. Not having those organizations would be a huge blow to Feed & Seed’s mission. This threat, however, is complicated. In some instances, it would be a benefit to the organization for the USDA to be dissolved because of outdated and strict mandates currently in place on school nutrition and regulations and complicated applications for farmers access to federal grants. These challenges would be dissolved with the USDA and make Feed & Seed’s work a bit easier in that sense. But in another, the elimination of the USDA would make the everyday lives of many families living in the West Greenville area much more difficult.

The duality and scope of this threat is especially challenging. However, there are very few things Feed & Seed can do preemptively as an organization to plan for potential federal policy changes such as the elimination of the USDA.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND TACTICS
This section provides specific recommendations designed to use the organization’s strengths and opportunities to address the weaknesses and threats facing the Spinx Market Garden. All of the data provided in this section was extracted from interviews with external community stakeholders about the state of Feed & Seed’s general external communications and partnership with Spinx to create the market garden. The overarching objective of multicultural outreach and engagement has been broken into three distinct sub-objectives for the Spinx Market Garden: Identify new communications channels within West Greenville community sectors, Collect and implement community input, and Establish lasting and meaningful community relationships. Each of these objectives have associated strategies that are direct thematic findings from external stakeholder interviews and address ways though which information about Spinx Market Garden. They are: Research and Respect, Promoting and Perpetuating Community Autonomy, and Consistency and Transparency. Tactics for accomplishing each strategy to meet objectives are immediate, mid-term, or long term are tailored communicate directly to the majority African American West Greenville community.

The recommendations have been shaped using diffusion of innovation theory established by E.M. Rogers (2003). The theory states that new ideas and products spread throughout a market or community through a diffuse process. The diffusion process is affected by communication channels, time frame, social systems, and the innovation itself. Feed & Seed’s partnership site at the Spinx Market Garden is the innovation to be spread through the faith, youth, arts, and senior communities of West Greenville. Spinx Market Garden is slated to open April 2018 so the recommendations are all categorized as immediate (0-4 months), mid-term (5-8 months), or long-term (9-12+ months) to fill this time frame. Change agents and feedback sessions have been designated as the communication channels for this diffusion process.

The overall approach to creating and executing these recommendations is culturally sensitive as theorized by Mohan Dutta (2008). This approach was created to
address methods for communicating with various cultural groups in ways that are respectful and relevant to their experiences. Feed & Seed leadership has expressed a sincere desire to work for and with community stakeholders to provide fresh local produce and services. The West Greenville area is 82% African American so this is the target audience for outreach and engagement.

Currently there is no budget allotted to the execution of this project. The organization is non-profit so the tactics included have been drafted with this understanding. There are minimal, if any, costs associated with the recommendations in this book. However, there is potential in the future for the funding to be raised and dedicated to completing certain aspects of this and future strategic communications plans.

**Objective 1: Identify New Communications Channels Within West Greenville Multicultural Community Sectors**

The goal of this objective is to address issues with exhausted or overused communication channels for accessing various multicultural sectors in the West Greenville community. Strategy associated with this objective involves researching underutilized contacts and emerging leaders who represent the interests of the senior, arts, youth and grassroots, and faith communities. Another element of the associated strategy involves respecting the history and living realities of the individuals and families currently residing in the area directly surrounding Spinx Market Garden.

**Strategy 1: Research and Respect**

This strategy speaks to the importance of understanding historical contexts of African Americans in the West Greenville community and being always mindful of how those histories affect the daily residents’ daily narratives. Tactics created to address the parameters of this strategy include ways to do acknowledge the past while creating opportunity for the future.
Tactic 1: Make initial contact with potential change agents - Immediate

- Utilize list of resource point persons to follow up with initial contact emails facilitated by strategic communications planner. Inquire about must-know facts of life for their community sectors (what are most pressing concerns, what are they proud of, how do they see themselves in context of larger community, what resonates with them, what are their passion points, etc.). Seek snowball contacts/resources.

- Establish regular rapport if they are interested in any way with Spinx Market Garden. Have scheduled time periods, every month or so, to update them on project developments. Inquire about attending meetings or events as an observer-participant. Become familiar with issues on agenda for the community sector. Attend events within the sector (art shows/productions, fundraisers, church sponsored functions, etc.) in an informal capacity. If they are uninterested or unable to engage on Spinx Market Garden, very infrequently check in, roughly every 3 months, to maintain the contact. They can be a potential resource for other local projects or planners.

- Maintain a contact log of notes of and next steps for each touch point with sector point persons. A contact touch point log is included as APPENDIX A. Evolve relationship based on notes and contact to position them as change agent representatives for their respective community sectors. There should be three touch points between April 2017 and August 2017.

Tactic 2: Collect and Integrate Insights Gained from Resource Point Persons into External Communications - Immediate/Midterm
• Begin laying groundwork for community feedback sessions. After establishing rapport with sector point persons, work with them to determine a time frame that is comfortable for them to introduce community sector to Feed & Seed. Time frame should make sense with other community events.

• Determine the best meeting style for broader community engagement event; what event styles are familiar/preferred by community sector members. Community dinners are an option that has been effective in the past; be flexible and negotiate events that make sense for both the community sector and Feed & Seed. Look for innovative or creative solutions. Use this time as a catalyst open dialogue about what the community wants and does not want as part of the Spinx Market Garden Space.

• Find ways to implement ideas shared formally or informally in initial planning and layout steps. Refer to notes from touch points and community events in meetings with internal decision makers to enter them into consideration. Communicate non-proprietary information about relevant developments with sector point persons and allow them to share with broader groups what information they see fit. This should become a transactional process.

• Mention Living History Documentary project (Tactic 3) to sector point persons during second touch point interaction. They can begin to gather consensus from community members about what items could be included.

• Involve children and youth with naming the space. Find ways for sector point persons to collect youth input in whatever form (drawings, notes, etc.).
Whatever they feel expresses what the space means to them as part of their day-to-day activities.

**Tactic 3: Living History Documentary - Longterm**

- Collect artifacts (videos, photos, interviews, stories, letters) to include as part of a long term project to preserve the history of the West Greenville area. Find out what the community sectors feel is most important to share about their history and current experiences. This can be an installment series that looks at the West Greenville in various time periods and highlight various episodes in the area’s history.

- Contract MJ Ray to execute the documentary. She produced the Choosy Farm to Belly fund raising video and is familiar with the area. Her services are expensive so funds would have to be raised and allocated for this tactic.

- Integrate some historical findings into Spinx Market Garden. Rotating visual displays outside that highlight snippets from community narratives.

- Distribute documentary to various media outlets as something co-branded with Feed & Seed and West Greenville community. This will distinguish Feed & Seed and give credit to community contributors in a visible and meaningful way.

**Objective 2: Collect and Implement Community Input**

The goal of this objective is to address Feed & Seed’s intention of sincere and meaningful integration of community input into all projects, especially Spinx Market Garden. The strategy to achieve this objective can be construed as a companion to the research and respect strategy for objective one. Promoting and perpetuating community
autonomy is the next step beyond researching and respecting the history in the West Greenville area. This objective seeks to create deeper partnerships between organization and community.

**Strategy 2: Promotion and Perpetuation**

This strategy reflects the new non-profit model that centers constituent wants and needs as they define them, rather than what organizational leadership might tell them their wants and needs should be. Having the community as an integral part of the work is the next step beyond researching and respecting the unique positions of constituents to utilizing community input to affect institutional and practical change. This sort of transactional exchange model works to convert conversations between stakeholders and decision makers into measurable, institutional level outcomes with Spinx Market Garden. Tactics recommended to enact this strategy include transitions sector point persons to change agents, conducting community research, and using data extracted to bring the Spinx Market Garden to life.

**Tactic 1: Activate Change Agents - Midterm/Longterm**

- Identify potential change agents. Change agents power the diffuse process by advocating throughout their sphere of influence to activate innovation adoption. Sector point persons are key candidates to perform this role in their respective communities. By this point there should have been at least three touch points with sector point persons. Their potential to be a change agent should be evident from interactions.

- Rally sector point persons around the concepts of food justice and maintaining neighborhood identity. Discuss the functions of this role and allow them time to consider acting in this capacity. If they agree, determine how they envision
performing the duties of the role. Encourage delegation to other community sector leaders for a broader scope and ease the work load. If they decline the role, maintain relationships and continue to seek opportunities for future partnership.

- Maintain regular contact on process and update them new information regarding Spinx Market Garden to share with larger community. Change agents work to initiate diffusion through whatever communication channels they see fit. Establish designated check points for them to measure progress with sector members. The rate of diffusion depends on factors such as age of community members, access, and overall motivation to adapt to change. So this process may span the entire time frame for this strategic plan and beyond. Change agents should relate information about Spinx Market Garden to concepts and ideas familiar to community sector members for increased reliability. Change agents should also collect feedback data from community sector members and report to Feed & Seed contact.

**Tactic 2: Community Sector Focus Groups and Feedback Sessions - Midterm/Longterm**

- Coordinate with change agents to establish community feedback sessions. Feedback sessions are intended to collect community sector member’s perceptions on Spinx Market Garden developments. The spaces can also be used to generate new ideas for Feed & Seed to consider implementing.

- Establish Feedback session loops. Feedback sessions can be as formal or informal as change agents see as most appropriate for their constituents. It is suggested the sessions be structured like focus groups with the change agent
acting as moderator with a survey of questions drafted in joint with Feed & Seed point person. There are focus groups procedural protocols and a sample survey for this model included in APPENDIX B.

- Conduct Feedback sessions regularly. The sessions should be a transactional occurrence that can extend past the Spinx Market Garden timeline. Definition of “regular” to be determined by change agents and Feed & Seed point person. One feedback session every two months is suggested.

Tactic 3: Create Opportunity for Multicultural Community Owned and Operated Businesses - Midterm/Long Term

- Identify community business owners through change agents or time spent with community sector members. Determine a meeting time to discuss their business and Feed & Seed’s projects, specifically Spinx Market Garden. Work to establish working relationship with business owners. If appropriate, provide space within Feed & Seed flagship location for proprietors. If it is not appropriate or desired, work to connect business owners with other vendors to promote success for both parties.

- Utilize community vendors when possible to supply needs for Spinx Market Garden and other Feed & Seed projects. This can include options such as printers for signage outside the garden, packaging design by local artists or community members for products sold in the Spinx location, ground breaking ceremony opened or closed with comments from faith community, and so on. Such utilization can be physical representations of community input which stakeholders can be proud.
• Co-brand Feed & Seed with community businesses when appropriate and possible to provide relevant programming for community stakeholders. These partnerships can be patterned similarly to the Choosy program where Feed & Seed acts as supplier. Determine appropriate levels of integration. This can be extended beyond the Spinx Market Garden project as a way to stay engaged with events and developments within the West Greenville multicultural community.

Objective 3: Establish Lasting and Meaningful Multicultural Community Relationships

The goal of this objective is to address the final aspect of the outreach and engagement process. The contents of this plans book have carefully researched, drafted, and presented to lead Feed & Seed to the point of lasting relationships within the West Greenville multicultural community. The majority of the work necessary to get Feed & Seed to this point has been addressed in the previous recommendations. Strategy devised to achieve this goal is simple but has potential to be very impactful.

Strategy 3: Consistency and Transparency

This strategy was derived from the most multidimensional emergent theme from external stakeholder data. Consistency requires action steps such as following through with change agents and next steps, maintaining momentum created by excitement around the Spinx Market Garden, and establishing a pattern of communication. Transparency requires honesty about operations and intentions and receptive to suggestions and criticism.

Tactic 1: Provide Regular Updates to Community Stakeholders and Maintain Change Agent Relationships - Longterm
• Continue the established transactional model. Amend feedback session schedule to reflect periods of swells or lulls in Spinx Market Garden developments. After opening the garden, feedback sessions can transitioned to update sessions with are more organic and occur on a quarterly basis. Informal feedback can be collected in the field, literally, at the Spinx Market Garden or in other community spaces to which Feed & Seed point persons have been granted access and have become familiar.

• Maintain change agent relationship. Change agents may be less essential as they were in Objective 2 as ideally Feed & Seed point persons have become familiar with the community sector communication channels and social systems. However, they served an invaluable function in the diffusion process and should be kept as close personal contacts for the organization.

• Actively seek ways to show appreciation for their contribution by supporting events and projects important to their work. Continue to update them on changes with Spinx Market Garden to keep them abreast of the state of play for the space. Inform them of upcoming projects that might interest them in the event they can assist with the diffusion process at a later date.

**Tactic 2: Host Multicultural Community Appreciation Functions - Longterm**

• Host Feed & Seed events celebrating landmark occasions such as the official opening of the Spinx Market Garden in April 2018 and flagship location at Welborn Street are great opportunities to recognize the West Greenville multicultural community for their active roles and support. Consult with change agents about what types of events would be the most appropriate to honor community involvement.
• Consider hosting seasonal events. For example, block parties are great for summer and spring months. The events are typically family friendly functions that bring people together. There is also historical context for block parties as a means of uniting various sectors of a community to mark a significant occasion. Winter wonderland or harvest haven events could be possible events to mark the winter and fall months. There is ample space for an event like these at the Welborn Street location. Such a mass gathering may not be logistically feasible at the Spinx Market Garden. However, the ground breaking and opening of the market should be marked by meaningful celebrations.

• Erect a plaque commemorating the Spinx Market Garden opening day that mentions community associations and sectors by name. This relates to the research and respect strategy entering Feed & Seed and Spinx Market Garden as part of the living history of the West Greenville community.

**Tactic 3: Reciprocate Community Support by Attending and Promoting Events and Projects - Longterm**

• Attend and support partner and change agent events. Greenville overall very much is a city that values reciprocity. It is expected that long standing contacts will show support for one another by attending events, purchasing tickets, and/or promoting functions. When this expectation is not met, it is remembered negatively and can impact future support. Alternatively, reliable support is highly regarded and a strong predictor for future engagement. It is imperative that this sort of relationship be maintained.

• Return regularly to community meetings after the opening of the Spinx Market Garden to stay aware of happenings (concerns, recent events, etc.). Attend
events and programs to check in with community members and see what they are doing in their spaces. Find venues for informal interaction such as church sponsored functions, art shows or productions to show support and appreciation.

**Evaluation**

Evaluation is just as, if not more so, important to a strategic communications plan as the objectives, strategies, and tactics. Regular check points throughout a plan are imperative to ensure the success of the overall process. Each of the recommendations included in this section were subjected to the SMART test. This test is a tool to determine the specificity, achievability, realism, and timeliness of an objective, strategy, and/or tactic. Feed & Seed should do a self-check every three months to determine if their methods are effectively meeting their goals.

**POTENTIAL CHANGE AGENT ROSTER**

Feed & Seed leadership has identified four community sectors in which they want to establish new contacts. The arts community, faith-based community, senior community, and youth and grassroots communities. They also expressed a preference for contacts that are native to the area. Below is a living list of contacts that have been notified about Feed & Seed and primed with information about Spinx Market Garden. Contacts are likely to change, or confirm or deny the invitation to engage with Feed & Seed on the Spinx Market Garden.

Names and contact information of potential change agents have been removed from this thesis to preserve their identity. Feed & Seed has a full list of eleven individuals and organizations to contact regarding the Spinx Market Garden project.