# Environmental Health Information Partnership

## 2022—2023 EnHIP Outreach Awards

### The University of Texas at El Paso – El Paso, TX
*A Mixed Methods Analysis of Food Security Outcomes During and
After the COVID-19 Pandemic for a Comprehensive Food Pantry Program in El Paso, Texas*

The goal of the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) project is to determine the effectiveness of a comprehensive food pantry program at decreasing food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. This program, where roughly 90% of the clients served are Hispanic, addresses the root causes and consequences of food insecurity by offering healthier eating options, case management, healthy eating and active lifestyle classes, employment readiness training, language classes, and opportunities to volunteer at the agency. The specific focus for the project is on participants enrolled in the program during the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020 to present).

Project objectives are to complete secondary analysis of existing outcome data for program participants enrolled in the program since March 2020, analyzing change in outcome indicators at baseline, recruit approximately 25—30 graduates of the program as participants to conduct individual interviews in order to learn more about their experiences in the program, to determine factors that supported sustaining their gains in food security, and to identify barriers they experienced to sustaining program gains.

Quantitative data will consist of data collected routinely for all clients at baseline, 4 months, and 9 months, which includes the USDA-adapted Food Insecurity/Hunger Survey and the Missouri Community Action Family Self-Sufficiency Scale. Scores on scales will be analyzed to determine change over time during the program. Qualitative data will consist of individual interviews, analyzed for common categories, themes, and implications. It is anticipated that this approach will illustrate the effectiveness of the program during the pandemic while also providing a richer contextual understanding around what it takes to sustain gains in food security in this community.

This project targets health literacy and COVID-19 as focus areas, well-aligned with the EnHIP and NLM strategic plans which promote the use of data and community engagement in the dissemination of health information. The focus of this project is to reduce health disparities in the community, specifically targeting food insecurity, a social determinant of health experienced at higher rates for Hispanic individuals. Through completing this project, we will also foster the capacity of faculty and students at this Hispanic-Serving Institution to engage in community partnerships that advance data-driven practices while reducing health disparities.