

Beyond the Box, Take 3: Mobile Summer Meals Program

Des Moines Area Food Bank - Des Moines



The food bank is proud to showcase how our community came together around the food bank's mobile summer meals program. As a result of this collaboration, over 14,000 nutritious summer lunches and snacks were provided for children in the heart of low-income neighborhoods, together with activities and special events. Community collaborators included state and city government, United Way, Food Lifeline and other emergency food programs, the school district, local churches, the YMCA, the local farmer's market, and Lions Club International. Each of these partners played a unique role in serving children at risk of hunger.

It takes initial capital investment to begin a new program and the food bank received this start-up support from United Way to fund the purchase of necessary equipment such as tables, signs, coolers, tents, etc. On-going funding was also critical to pay for summer meals staff, food, and transportation. The state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) summer meals program provided reimbursement for each meal or snack served while also providing invaluable training, meal planning expertise and oversight of the program.

State support is not sufficient to pay for all program costs, so the food bank relied on increased food donations to supplement its own spending. Food Lifeline support included single-serving food items such as yogurt, fruits and vegetables. Neighboring food banks and the school district also shared extra milk. This allowed the food bank to support its summer meals program with in-kind food without reducing its regular food distribution.

State-wide experience with summer meals programs has shown that more children participate in summer meals when activities are also offered. While food bank staff considered providing activities, we determined that our forte was food service and it was more efficient to involve experts in children's programming. Consequently, we invited the city's Parks and Recreation department to host our summer meals in conjunction with its summer camp program at one city park and to provide staffing for activities at another park. In addition, the local YMCA provided staff for one elementary school site to lead age-appropriate activities such as sidewalk drawing for young children and sports for older children. The food bank reciprocated by providing summer meals at two YMCA's for the weeks when their regular meal provider was not offering service.

Providing summer meals outdoors requires sheltered space. The food bank partnered with local elementary schools, city parks and recreation programs, the farmers market and two YMCA's, all of whom provided free space. Of course, space and manpower is also needed to make hundreds of meals daily. One church provided its kitchen five days per week at no charge while many community volunteers provided the labor to make meals.

The Farmers Market is the center of our community on Saturday mornings in the summer. In support of the summer meals program, the market gave the food bank free booth space to provide fun activities focusing on nutritional education for children while summer meals were offered. To provide additional access to nutritious foods, market tokens were offered to low-income families, allowing them to leverage every \$5 used from their Basic Food EBT cards with an additional \$5.

It was a special day when the Lions Club hosted their "Giving Library" at two summer meal sites. Each child received two books (in either English or Spanish) to take home for their permanent collection. According to a recent study, "Home library size has a very substantial effect on educational attainment (and) having books in the home has a greater impact on children from the least educated families. It is at the bottom, where books are rare, that each additional book matters most." Katie Brewell of the Lions Club was excited about the partnership, saying enthusiastically, "Kids walk away with a lunch and something to feed their minds!"

The food bank's summer meals program is at the center of a successful, community-wide effort to see that the most vulnerable children have increased access to highly nutritious, culturally relevant food and activities, providing them with a better chance to succeed.

What It Takes: This program is very replicable in high-need areas; planning must begin early in the year. First, we knew we needed more resources (funding, equipment, staffing and food) to support this program. The food bank immediately **approached a potential funder** to solicit their support and apply for funding.

Next, we had to **consider potential meal site locations** in our area, including schools, parks, churches, YMCA's, apartments, etc. (Locations in which over 50% of students qualify for the federal meals program are ideal because participants in these areas do not need to be prequalified on the basis of their family income.) After identifying potential school sites, we first approached school staff to **engage their support** and then went through an **application process** to receive school district approval. Likewise, for city park sites, we met with the Parks & Recreation director and applied for a use permit from our local city. The food bank made similar connections with the farmers' market and received permission from a church to utilize their kitchen at no cost. (Each of these relationships was an outgrowth of food bank participation in the local community; agencies do not need to work with this many partners in order to have a successful collaboration.)

As soon as site locations were finalized, we **hired additional staff** and **applied for the state OSPI program**, whose reimbursement for meals served would cover many of the on-going costs of the program. OSPI support required site **visits and trainings**.

Because we wanted to **add activities** to our meals, we approached several providers of children's programs, including the parks department and the local YMCA, both of whom were excited to provide activities on-site.

In order to ensure that its program was community based, the food bank **surveyed families** through the local schools regarding potential sites, meals and activities. A final list of meal sites was **advertised to the public** in numerous ways including flyers that went out with report cards through the local schools.

Finally, we **approached Food Lifeline** to become qualified as a meal program so that the food bank could place a separate food order for its summer meals.

Any food program interested in addressing childhood hunger should attend **peer-based trainings** throughout the year (including Washington Food Coalition's annual conference session on summer meals). Our own agency stands ready to assist any food program who wants to better serve hungry children by providing summer meals.

Taking Care of Teens

Teen Feed - Seattle



Teen Feed's mission is to work with the community and people from all walks of life to offer basic needs, build strong relationships, and ally with homeless youth as they meet their future off the streets.

For 25 years, Teen Feed has been the University District's only provider of dinner to street-involved youth and young adults, ages 13-25. We are open seven nights a week, every week of the year. Teen Feed addresses basic needs first: a hot meal, a referral to an overnight shelter, a few personal care items, socks, clothing, bus tokens, or crisis intervention. We recognize that a hot, nutritious meal on a cold and rainy night may get homeless youth in the door, but motivating a youth to move towards secure housing or a stable job usually requires a trusting relationship with a mature adult. Counselors and trained volunteers are present at every Teen Feed meal to help rebuild the trust that has often disappeared when youth have experienced family trauma. In 2011 Teen Feed served over 650 individual youth over 365 nights. We literally break bread together, and then we help street youth take control of their lives and help them to find a way off of the streets.

On May 25, 2011, Teen Feed sponsored Count Us In, the first point-in-time count of homeless youth and young adults in Washington State. Eight host sites provided meals, incentives, and activities during a two to three hour period in which trained staff and volunteers counted and surveyed youth in attendance. Survey results provide insight into the lives of the youth that we see every night at Teen Feed:

- Youth reported that they spent the previous night at: a homeless shelter, outside, at a friend's house, in jail, at home;
- 44% did not complete high school (last grade completed: 11th grade - 50%, 10th grade - 25%, 9th grade - 8%, 17% - 8th grade);
- 53% reported having a disabling condition (serious health condition; substance abuse; psychiatric illness);
- 33% reported having a coexisting condition (depression, ADHD, autism, bipolar, epilepsy, HIV+, temporal lobe disorder);
- Youth spent an average of 25.58 months coming to the University District for services; and 67% were unemployed.

Youth also had the opportunity to provide their thoughts and opinions on what they valued about Teen Feed:

- Teen Feed is awesome! It's daily. I like how it's very consistent. It's really supportive.
- It's mainly their attitudes. They create a welcoming environment and see what they can do to help.
- They are always concerned about my health and well being. I can't think of a single thing. It's more of a cumulative thing. You come in and someone says, "hello" or "hi."
- They listen. "Hey what's going on"? They see you on the street and wave. They ask me my opinion on stuff. They treat me like a human being. They smile.
- They treat us like equals. Most service people treat you as if you are insignificant.

We believe these comments are as valuable as the numbers because they reflect that Teen Feed provides what is most important and, sadly, lacking in the youth's daily lives—consistency, safety, and respect.

We are in the process of replicating the Teen Feed meal program right now as part of our Five Year Strategic Plan (2012-2016). We are in the early stages of this plan, which involves three basic steps:

- Determine where the need is greatest and where the program is replicable and sustainable.
- Implement Teen Feed's presence to establish and support ongoing collaborative efforts and support the movement toward countywide coordinated entry of homeless youth to identified social services in their neighborhood.
- Identify, train and support volunteer meal teams and advocates.

Perhaps the best measure of our effectiveness is the fact that we have food on the table 365 nights a year, trained staff and volunteers who help and support youth each of these nights, and a record of successfully helping youth obtain safe housing and a way off the streets (50 youth in 2011). We also evaluate the program by:

- collecting data on a monthly basis to evaluate and track program metrics including: whether a participant is new to the program, age, gender, outreach hours, volunteer hours and contributions;
- Performing subjective evaluations of programs through staff assessments and youth surveys; and
- Collaborating with Street Youth Ministries and the University of Washington to develop a database that tracks data relevant to individual youth's experience and evaluates the clinical services provided by our programs.

The Teen Feed meal program maximizes agency resources through a program design that relies heavily on volunteers and donations:

- Local churches and community organizations donate kitchens and eating areas every week to make Teen Feed possible;
- Meal team volunteers and others donate food for meals. The value of these donations totaled over \$66,015 in 2011;
- These same meal teams donated over 9,700 volunteer hours last year—buying the food, preparing it, serving it, and cleaning up;
- Another 3,800 volunteer hours were donated by our dedicated Advocates—trained community members who attend Teen Feed meals and sit down with youth, lending a sympathetic ear and directing them to appropriate community resources;
- A small but expert staff coordinates all meals and helps run our two other programs: a case management program for youth who are ready to take steps that will lead to a productive life off the street and a street outreach program that targets high risk youth who tend to avoid traditional social service agencies.

As the threshold program for many of the street-involved youth in Seattle, Teen Feed has identified a set of best practices and strategies to ensure that basic needs are met first (nutrition), and longer-term outcomes such as housing or a GED are achievable when youth are ready:

- We set very low barriers to participation: When a youth signs in to Teen Feed, we require three pieces of information:

name, age, and whether this is their first Teen Feed meal. We believe this has contributed to our consistently high utilization rates.

- We emphasize relationship-building: Research has shown that when street youth are given an opportunity to build rapport and trust with a mature adult, they begin to identify goals and develop a strategy to exit street life. Many of the youth we see have a difficult time reaching out for help from traditional social service agencies. Our staff and volunteers are skilled at building trust and rapport without alienating youth.
- We engage in an integrated, proactive team approach: We seek to reduce the time youth remain without support, reduce their exposure to harm and addiction, and fill a gap in the continuum of care offered by other agencies.

We rely heavily on volunteers: Teams from corporations, faith communities, schools and other businesses assume responsibility for buying, preparing, and serving hot, nutritious meals. With every meal served, community is built within the volunteer group, awareness of our larger community increases, and stereotypes are eroded

LISTENING TO CUSTOMERS

Survey Says: Customer Interviews Walla Walla Salvation Army - Walla Walla



Walla Walla Salvation Army (WWSA) appreciates the importance of hearing from customers regularly in order to provide the best possible service. They conduct customer surveys twice a year through one-on-one interviews. Questions they ask include: How long does the food you receive last? Are you on food stamps? What other foods would you like to receive? What isn't useful? How would you rate the atmosphere at our food bank? The answers are used to figure out if WWSA is meeting the needs of their customers and how they can improve. The survey is conducted on a single day, and they typically get about 25 responses each time. They use a visual scale with happy and sad faces, and provide interpreters to non-English speakers. Feedback is reviewed at a special staff and board meeting, and indicated changes are implemented. "Treating people with respect – that's primary, that's the goal. Knowing your customer base, serving your customer base – that's what it's about," says Reinikka.

What it Takes: Personable volunteers are needed to conduct the survey, and it will take time to develop a survey with well-worded questions that get at the information you need. Start with a short survey with five or six key questions. To show customers you are serious about respecting their opinions, make some level of change based on their input, and let them know it made a difference in how you run the food bank. This kind of input can be used to make incremental changes, and it is also great to collect information to inform a larger strategic planning process.

Another Survey Says: Take Two on Customer Interviews FamilyWorks Food Bank - Seattle



FamilyWorks food bank values the opinions of our customers to ensure that we are providing the best possible service to meet their food requirements.

Some of the highlights that we received from a recent customer survey include the following responses:

- Thanks for everything
- Treated with respect and dignity
- It's a good food bank
- Lots of resources
- It is truly a blessing
- Friendly people make you feel like we are one

- ...> This is a good place to come
- ...> Jovial, congenial attitude, therapeutic
- ...> Humble attitude
- ...> The people who help us were nice to me
- ...> That you are here to help us
- ...> It's always open when it says it will be
- ...> How they greet you and make you feel comfortable
- ...> The services that are offered
- ...> The assistance in reducing food expenses and out of pocket expenses
- ...> Food Bank management and staff
- ...> The people who help you care what you say
- ...> It's a lovely place
- ...> It's nice to see the volunteers interact with each other and us and talk to us
- ...> A place to come and forget about my problems for a bit
- ...> It leaves me feeling good and I have some food to eat
- ...> God Bless you for all your hard work
- ...> I feel like everyone is the same here, the staff is wonderful, even the police officer tries to relate to you
- ...> The people (staff & volunteers), are very friendly non-judgmental
- ...> A life saver!
- ...> Runs excellent
- ...> Great food: salads and fruit
- ...> Treated kindly and with dignity from all

What it Takes: Each customer that walks through FamilyWorks food bank doors is treated with human dignity and respect. FamilyWorks is an open and welcoming place that empowers people and families who might not otherwise have access to healthy, fresh food. Staff and customers interact together in relationships based on equality and respect.

In regards to the methods for administering the survey, FamilyWorks is required by United Way to get 200 surveys every year to their customers. They do the surveying in April. Board members & staff sit tables in the lobby and/or reserve a conference room. They usual get 200+ customers within a 2 week period. Most of their customers know the drill & don't need any interpreters, but they do provide the survey in English, Spanish and Russian. They are more than willing to share their surveys with others if you ask!

Translating Hunger: Meeting Community Needs

Hopelink - Redmond



In 2006, a team of volunteers from Leadership Eastside (LE) worked with Hopelink to conduct a series of focus groups with food bank customers, particularly non-English speaking immigrants. The research objective was to provide Hopelink with detailed information about the staple foods their ethnically diverse customer base would most benefit from receiving. LE organized five language-specific focus groups and two English language focus groups, scheduled at food bank locations. Outreach to customers to invite participation was done via phone calls by volunteer interpreters, and participants were given a \$20 gift card in appreciation of their input. The cultural/language groups covered were Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Eastern European, and Spanish-speaking. The following are selected comments from the report's executive summary:

- ...> Food bank customers know what good foods are and would like to have the resources to eat well every day. But good food is expensive and then need what little money they have for nonnegotiable expenses like rent.
- ...> It's not about quick and easy, but about making good, healthy food (soups, breads, meals) from scratch—they need ingredients, not convenience foods. This is not so much about maintaining and passing on traditions as it is about

focusing on healthy food.

- Often “lunch” is the main meal of the day and even kids who go to school prefer to come home to eat this meal (after school) rather than eat the free or reduced price lunch at school.
- Customers would like to be able to get more of the following items from the food bank: fresh or frozen meat, poultry and fish; fresh vegetables; dairy products, especially milk and cheese; fresh fruits; rice; flour; dried beans; tortillas; cooking oil; and sugar.
- The following items are less desirable: stale, moldy or expired dairy products, meat and bread; canned, boxed or processed foods. Acceptance of packaged foods could be increased if there was a way to get the labels translated into appropriate languages. Some of the reluctance is because the customers don’t know exactly what is in the can or box, or how to prepare it.

“The research has helped us to adjust some of our produce ordering for the populations we serve. For example, at our evening food banks in Redmond, we have a high number of Hispanics. In preparation for those nights, we stock jalapenos and other desired foods when our budget and availability permits,” says Scott Milne, Food Program Manager/Redmond Center Manager. “We also use this information when conducting food drives and purchasing other perishable and non-perishable food items.”

What it Takes: If your organization is interested in conducting market research with customers, you should seek out a person with relevant expertise to help you design an effective inquiry process. You may find that for-profit businesses in your community are willing to share their expertise in this area. Consider what incentives you can offer participants, and how to make them feel appreciated for their contribution to your learning. Also, make sure your organization’s leadership is committed to making changes based on the information they receive.

More good ideas...

- Recognizing that food bank customers also shop in grocery stores, the Pantry Shelf established a coupon exchange in their waiting area. “Price is important to our customers, and we can’t provide everything, so why not give them coupons?” comments Tom Galloway, Director. A sign on the coupon exchange box encourages customers to both bring and take coupons, and the coupons are being used.
- To better serve its diverse customer base, Tri-Cities Food Bank provides a multilingual fact sheet with instructions for registering and using their food bank in Vietnamese, Thai, Ukrainian, Russian, and Spanish. Rules about going through the food bank, an explanation of how the amount of food based on family size, and other basic information is outlined. “It’s important that people go through in a timely manner if we are busy, and we try to stay in the background so people don’t feel watched. This helps them be independent,” comments John Neill, Director.
- Hopelink noticed that some of their senior food bank customers have mobility problems, and had difficulty carrying their groceries home. At one point to solve the problem, Hopelink loaned rolling hand carts (like those used to carry a suitcase) to senior customers. They asked customers to sign them out just like a library book.

Community Relations

Emergency food programs need to be in constant dialogue with their community. As is evident throughout this catalog, strong relationships with all sectors of the community — low-income adults and families, business leaders, philanthropists, service clubs, faith communities — inform decision-making, reveal new sources of support and partnership, give your program greater visibility and reach, and enhance your reputation and your ability to fight hunger. The best practices below are organized into three categories: collaboration, public engagement and advocacy, and fundraising.

In addition, we offer the following general best practices for strong community relations:

- Network and participate in coalitions that connect you with other emergency food providers. Food banks, meal programs and other anti-hunger programs have a lot in common, and staying in touch, attending statewide conferences, and joining local coalitions is likely to pay off for your organization in multiple ways. The successes of coalitions based in King, Kitsap, Spokane and Whatcom counties are sprinkled throughout this catalog, illustrating the old adage that there is strength in numbers.
- Increase your connectivity in the local community. Participate in civic organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and service clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis. These forums will give you a big picture perspective on your community and how your efforts fit into the larger scheme of community building and economic development. They are also a goldmine of potential supporters, board leaders and partners.
- Educate the broader community. Engage in discussions with people of all ages in your community about hunger and solutions to end hunger. People who are informed about the problem of hunger in their community and the best ways to combat it are likely to become strong supporters of your efforts. However, they may need you to connect the dots. For example, it may not be obvious to casual food drive donors that your need for cash is greater than your need for cans.

COLLABORATION: WORKING IN COALITION & CREATING PARTNERSHIPS

“Everyone has a lot of energy about the coalition and that’s what keeps things going!”

– Julie Washburn, Washington Food Coalition

Sparkling Anti-Hunger Activism

Anti-Hunger Coalition Whatcom County - Bellingham



Whatcom County’s Anti-Hunger Coalition (AHC) started because there was some tension between local programs regarding territory and donor relationships with stores. It wasn’t clear who was rescuing food from which stores, and what each food bank or meal program’s service area was. The group came together to clarify who serves who, coordinate open hours so that more days were covered, and to make sure that all stores were being asked to donate, but only by a single program. Once clarity of roles was addressed and relationships were built, AHC focused on networking and sharing of effective practices, such as leads on cheap stuff, how to buy a truck, etc. Many years later, the coalition still operates informally, with participation from food banks, tribes, meal programs and other anti-hunger advocates (such as a gleaning project, Bellingham Community Meal, and students working on anti-hunger projects at

Western Washington University). Networking and mutual support are still high on the group’s agenda. However, they have also gotten involved in political education.

A few years ago, the group was sitting around complaining that at the local candidates' forums, there was a lot of talk about environmental issues, but no one was talking about other issues affecting low-income people. AHC created a candidate's forum for mayoral, and city council and county council candidates where they ask pointed questions about issues such as hunger and homelessness, such as "What do you think the city's role should be in ending hunger?" Candidates make public statements about what they will do, and AHC can hold them accountable. Organizationally, AHC benefits from having a paid facilitator to coordinate and run their meetings. This person is paid by Bellingham Food Bank (BFB) out of general operating funds. Mike Cohen, BFB Executive Director, comments, "I don't have the time to do the facilitation, and it's nice because it's not being directed by the EFAP lead agency—the facilitator manages the agenda. If things ever got contentious, it would be helpful." He also notes that AHC is not a forum for EFAP-related business, and welcomes all anti-hunger programs and advocates. This helps keep the focus on issues, not dollars.

What it Takes: A broad focus on ending hunger helps draw on diverse community programs and resources. Keep your coalition simple. Set a consistent meeting time and place. If you are having trouble figuring out where to start, identify common issues that affect all emergency food programs, such as the Letter Carriers' Food Drive, or coordination around holiday events. Larger organizations within the coalition may be in the best position to contribute resources: meeting space, money for refreshments or supplies, or funds to pay a facilitator.

Collaborative Food Distribution Program

Jewish Family Service, Seattle Jewish Day School of Metropolitan - Seattle, Bellevue



In September 1993, Jewish Family Service (JFS) formed a partnership with the Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle (JDS) to provide a food bank for more than 100 households of senior-aged Russians living in the Crossroads area of Bellevue. This program is a joint project of JFS and JDS with the dual goal of serving food to the growing population of senior Russian immigrants and offering the JDS students an opportunity to give back to their community while learning about community service, hunger and poverty issues. Once per month, food is purchased from Pioneer Human Services' Food Buying Service and delivered to the JDS storage shed. As part of the 5th grade curriculum, classroom students help with the assembly of bags of groceries with teacher supervision. The bags include a variety of 10-15 items, such as cooking oil, canned goods, soap and toilet tissue. Food distribution occurs after students are dismissed. Additional adult volunteers then assist food bank staff members with food distribution. The partnership with the JDS and the efficient and effective use of resources at the JDS are critical to the success of the program.

What it Takes: The first step is to identify a public or private school partner. Meet with school administration and teachers to formalize relationship, including outlining clear expectations for the food program and for the school. Keep in mind that the school will need storage space. Develop program infrastructure, including how food will be procured and delivered to school, volunteers to assist with distribution, tracking of customers, and schedule for classroom involvement. Provide training to teacher(s) and volunteers on supervision of students, personal and food safety, and food distribution guidelines.

Community Resource Center: Bringing a Range of Services Under One Roof

West Seattle Food Bank - Seattle



When the West Seattle Food Bank (WSFB) planned its new home, the organization elected to partner with others to develop a dynamic, multi-use building. The new West Seattle Community Resource Center has the food bank on the first floor, space that is leased to other community nonprofits on the second floor, and 34 units of low-income housing on upper floors. The housing is owned and operated by Delridge Neighborhood Development Association, while WSFB owns their space and the office space above. Tenants all share a large conference room which can also be rented to outside groups in the community. WSFB recognized the value of having other human service nonprofits in their building since their customers may overlap. Rents are set so that WSFB offsets their costs. WSFB is also partnering with additional providers who conduct outreach and offer services on site in their large waiting area. The lobby is big enough to accommodate outreach tabling by programs such as Basic Food and Lettuce Link, and there is also an adjoining private office that can be used by visiting service providers. "We invited others in before, but they ended up conducting outreach to people in the line outdoors. We are excited to have this space," comments Steven Curry,

Executive Director.

What it Takes: Capacity to own or lease additional space beyond the food bank's needs, property management skills, commitment to collaboration.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Adapting a National Event Locally: Hunger Awareness Day

Ocean Shores Food Bank - Ocean Shores



In conjunction with National Hunger Awareness Day sponsored by Feeding America, Ocean Shores Food Bank (OSFB) holds a food and donation drive at their local grocery store. The store participates by stocking needed items that the food bank requests, and flagging them with attention-getting orange shelf markers throughout the store. OSFB volunteers greet shoppers at the door throughout the day, and pass out flyers about Hunger Awareness Day. They use materials from Feeding America to organize and publicize the event, and used Food Lifeline, Feeding America and OSFB logos across top of letter. "It's important for people to know that it's part of a national day, we really want to hook into that," comments Dalene Edgar, Chairperson of the Food Bank Committee. This type of event raises awareness of hunger and provides an opportunity for anyone to donate at the level they can. "I have an image of a senior on a fixed income donating a jar of peanut butter and feeling really good about it, really connected," says Edgar. She continues to say that another woman at this year's event said, "What do you mean there's hunger in our community?" After a 20 minute conversation with an OSFB volunteer, and — now — a real belief that hunger exists in Ocean Shores, she gave a \$200 check. Overall, the drive raised \$1,700 in cash and collected over 2,000 pounds of food. "We had an extremely successful day. It raises awareness, which is the whole idea. Many people don't know that there is a food bank."

What it Takes: OSFB used Feeding America materials to help craft their press release. Local papers carried articles about the event before and after. OSFB has a strong relationship with the local grocery store and the store manager, who supported the event. Feeding America also provided orange lapel ribbons, and these were very popular for people to wear and show their support. "We decided to keep it really simple," Edgar comments. "We tried to reach people so they can understand it, they can all participate. For us, the food drive was simple and people understood it. I went on the A2H website and read about what others did. You need to make it work for your community."

Taking It to City Hall: Engaging Public Officials

Seattle Food Committee, Meals Partnership Coalition and the City of Seattle - Seattle



The Mayor's End Hunger Awards originated as a program of the United States Conference of Mayors in the early nineties. At that time, City of Seattle staff brought the idea to the Seattle Food Committee (SFC) and encouraged nominations. Now, Seattle Food Committee (SFC) and the Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) work with the city to maintain the program, which includes recognition of five individuals and/or organizations doing extraordinary work to end hunger at an annual luncheon (timed in October near World Food Day). Nominations are solicited each year in several categories: business or community partners, volunteers—group or individual, and program leadership—individual or organization.

The event raises awareness of the work being done in emergency food and the people who support these city-wide systems. Award winners are often people who are donating thousands of hours or dollars worth of goods or services to the emergency food system. It's also an opportunity for food bank staff to meet and share their work with the Mayor and City Council turnout from public officials has been great. For the past few years, the event has been held at one of Northwest celebrity chef Tom Douglas' restaurants with his strong support. Attendees pay \$20 which helps cover the event costs. "We make sure it's a quick program and a great event with a great location and food. We are lucky to have the Mayor's commitment to be there to give the awards. It makes people feel really special," comments Trish Twomey, Food Resources Manager, Solid Ground. There is no fundraising ask at the event. Press coverage has varied over the years.

What it Takes: This event requires management of the nomination and selection process, coordination logistics and registration for the event, and handling of press relations. Many SFC members contribute – one person brings flowers for the tables, another picks some up for the awardees, a local company donates the plaques and these small touches help make the event a success. Hunger Awards could be done on a smaller scale in other communities, with simple certificates and a dessert reception rather than a luncheon. A relationship with a local restaurant to host is helpful, and you will definitely need a public official who is committed to be present and recognize awardees. It can be difficult to get small food banks to participate in nominating their leaders. Even with a simple nomination process, consider doing additional outreach to these programs so they can also be recognized along with more established, staffed programs.

Washington's Own Advocacy Event: Hunger Action Day

Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition - Statewide



During each legislative session, the statewide Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition hosts Hunger Action Day to make a difference in the issues facing hungry families in Washington. This lobby day is designed to build advocacy skills among anti-hunger program staff, boards and volunteers; to highlight the legislative priorities of the anti-hunger community during session; and, to bring hungry people's stories to legislators so they can make positive changes.

This event began more than 10 years ago and has grown to a successful event with over 150 people attending in Olympia. Attendees spend the morning networking, learning more about the legislative priorities that affect hunger and nutrition programs, and developing skills to advocate effectively for these priorities. The afternoon is spent meeting with staff and legislators to share customer stories and the importance of the Coalition's priorities.

What It Takes: To organize a lobby day, organizations need public policy expertise to develop and promote timely and effective legislative priorities. Then a planning committee - with skills related to communications, event planning, promotions, legislative relationship-building and outreach to partners - helps ensure that a wide diversity of advocates come to Olympia well prepared to talk to their legislators.

To participate effectively in a lobby day, organizations need to be sure they are receiving information about the legislative priorities throughout session and make it simple for their staff, boards and/or volunteers to come to Olympia to learn and share their expertise with their lawmakers.

Building Visibility and Brand Identity

Good Cheer Food Bank - South Whidbey Island



Good Cheer Food Bank worked with a local communications specialist to develop a marketing campaign that has improved over all brand identity and enhanced hunger awareness on South Whidbey Island. The first objective of the marketing program was to increase food bank funding. Increased revenues through thrift store sales, community donations and grants were identified as the sources available for funding. Other objectives included increasing its volunteer base and collecting in-kind donations. The success of the outreach program can be attributed to “smart marketing” techniques to raise awareness of Good Cheer through newsletters, posters, special events, press releases and advertising with the tagline of “creating a hunger-free community.” As a result of these efforts, public visibility, thrift store revenues, community donations, food allotments and numbers of volunteers steadily increased.

Good Cheer Food Bank & Thrift Stores celebrates its 50th year in the food bank business. The challenge to keep the message fresh while maintaining a consistent theme can present challenges. Good Cheer developed a branding tagline of, “Creating a hunger-free community.” The marketing program continues to use that tagline as its main theme while building on it with some community building themes such as, “Buy Local, Donate Local, Feed Local.” Each marketing/educational event uses the basic components of who we are feeding (neighbors & friends), what we are feeding (nutritional foods) why we are feeding them (safety net, compassion, feels good).

What it Takes: The marketing program could be replicated if customized to meet the needs of a particular food bank. The cost for developing the program depends on how much pro bono work from a consultant one can find. The costs for implementing the program depend on how well you use free social media (Facebook, blogs, websites) versus printed materials (newsletters, brochures, other printed and/or mailed materials).

Get Yourself to the Table: Being a Community Partner

North Helpline - Seattle



The North Helpline (NH), which runs the Lake City Food Bank, is actively engaged in the life of their community. Their executive director participates in the Economic Development Council of Lake City (EDCLC) as well as the Lake City Chamber of Commerce. As a result, both groups are supportive of NH’s work, and see the organization as an integral part of their community. Many of the local businesses represented have employees who rely on the food bank, and they recognize that. Meetings are a chance to share information and get support. EDCLC has a diverse membership, including apartment owners, business owners, and social service organizations. Together, the group has a good picture of their community and generates realistic ideas for community improvement. Executive Director Rita Anderson, who represents NH, indicates that she has learned a lot at the meetings about homelessness from another member who runs a service program through a local church. Anderson also feels that she has the backing of the business community as she enters into negotiations with a new landlord, and that they will advocate for NH if needed. “It’s important that we are looked upon as a business,” says Anderson. “I see this as a leadership issue. You don’t do anything in isolation, and you need those around you to get things done.”

What it Takes: Active involvement in a local chamber or other community organization takes time and energy, and may pay off over the long term rather than immediately. North Helpline is able to participate actively in several local business associations because they share the time commitment among several staff and volunteers. Serving as a liaison is also a good board member contribution, and good relations with the local chamber may lead to additional board or volunteer recruits in the future.

“It’s important that we are looked upon as a business. You don’t do anything in isolation, and you need those around you to get things done.”

– Amy Besunder, Executive Director North Helpline

A Community Celebration: Open Mic Night

Recovery Café - Seattle



Open Mic Night at the Recovery Café was started to serve three purposes: to create a night of fun without drugs and alcohol for people in recovery, to create a place where those who have what they need would come into contact with and develop relationships with those who do not have all they need, and to invite a broad range of community members to come learn more about the Café's work and to be a part of it.

Every month, Recovery Café hosts an Open Microphone Night. The Café sets up a PA system, and the community celebrates a night of good food, poetry, jokes, speeches and music ranging from a capella, rock and roll, and lip-syncing. Members and volunteers alike share talents to entertain and affirm each other. For many people new to recovery, there is a fear that without drugs and alcohol their lives will be better, but they will never have fun again. Open Mic night dispels that myth and provides a great opportunity for people to see what the Recovery Café community is all about.

A community partner "hosts" the night by bringing in a meal and decorating. Recovery Café found that many organizations are hungry for a meaningful volunteer opportunity that they can do with their friends, family and/or faith communities and Open Mic is appealing to different age groups, communities, and to the person coordinating opportunities for their group to serve in a way that has more energy than the traditional group volunteer projects. Volunteers for Open Mic become more engaged in the Café as regular volunteers, donors and advocates after their initial contact with the Café via Open Mic. Hosts of the Café's Open Mic nights have included a diverse range of groups including: a Boy Scout troop who cooked a meal in Dutch ovens, a competitive girls soccer team, several Church groups, youth groups, a traveling barbecue catering company, and Microsoft. Additionally, many groups bring gift bags for the Members that has included, socks, hats, hygiene items, etc. Beyond the practicality of the helpful gift bags, it also reinforces the Café's fundamental message to all who come: You are loved, you are worthy of good things. By creating a "safe" place where people interact, misperceptions about what it means to be homeless, or struggle with a mental illness can be dispelled. Open Mic provides an excellent venue for diverse groups and communities to plug into the healing power of the Café. Everyone is welcome to eat together, perform, applaud, laugh, clean up and enjoy the night in a beautiful place with an atmosphere of joy and mutual sharing.

What it takes: Procure either through purchase or donation a simple PA system. Recovery Café has Members that are trained to set up, run and take down their PA system to ensure efficiency. Each month, recruit volunteers who are willing to donate and prepare a meal, and be clear with them that you are counting on them to bring ALL the food for the night, the number of people they will need at a minimum to host the night, and what your expectations for clean up are so there are no misunderstandings or extra outlay of resources to make the night a success. Train someone to coordinate with the various volunteer groups, and create a template of what a group needs to bring in terms of how many people will be served, what time to come, basic parameters, etc. Recovery Café is happy to share our Open Mic template or to host interested parties at one of our Open Mic Celebrations.

Digging In: Engaging the Public in New Ways

Mother Earth Farm, Emergency Food Network - Pierce County



The Emergency Food Network (EFN) envisions a strong, local food system that prioritizes food security for low-income residents. As a part of this vision, EFN runs the Mother Earth Farm in Orting, where it has a long-term land lease on eight acres of farmland that produced more than 138,000 pounds of fresh food last year distributed through the emergency food system. Food is harvested in the early mornings and transported to designated locations for pickup by local emergency food programs.

This project is a good example of partnerships and collaboration because the farm operation depends on 1,100 volunteers and just one paid staff person. EFN has tapped groups of employees from corporations such as Boeing, Kraft, and Frank Russell Company, just to name a few. Staff from Metro Parks Tacoma

help out, along with children from local childcare centers and schools – with some schools tying the farm work in with their curriculum. Inmates from the Washington Correctional Center for Women at Purdy also provide many hours of volunteer labor. Finally, the farm has sparked lots of interest among the general public (who are then educated about emergency food system needs and often become donors). Furthermore, the land is leased at one dollar per year from a supporter.

When asked how this project came to be, Executive Director Helen McGovern shared, “We decided to do it because the opportunity came up and the board allowed it to happen. We were afforded the ability to do this because we are a local, Pierce County organization. We have deep roots in our community, relationships that led to this. I believe the most effective response to the local hunger problem is a local effort.” She also adds that, “We were told that an organization like ours can’t do this. We are now in year twelve. It’s a great source of community pride.”

EFN is building on this success with additional local food projects. It has planted a 13-acre orchard on land connected to an affordable housing project developed by the Korean Women’s Association, and is in negotiations to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project that will preserve Pierce County farmland and generate revenue as a social enterprise to underwrite some of the operating costs of Mother Earth Farm.

What it Takes: An affordable, long-term lease on land; a person knowledgeable enough to rebuild soil and prepare the land for farming; an upfront, visionary funder to underwrite the first year of operations; strategic partnerships; ability to rally community support and media attention; and, the capacity to harvest and distribute fresh produce grown.

All Aboard! Hunger/Emergency Food Provider Tours

Seattle Food Committee - Seattle



During the month of August, Seattle Food Committee (SFC) members visit area emergency food programs instead of holding a regular meeting. A new tour is developed each year highlighting a theme of interest to members (new equipment, remodeled programs, a neighboring community). The tour lasts the better part of a day, and visits five to six programs for 30-45 minutes each (lunch is served at one of the sites).

The tour is particularly educational for distribution center staff, administrative staff or board members who wouldn’t otherwise get out and see multiple programs, so it attracts a different crowd from those who attend SFC coalition meetings. “You always learn new things,” notes Trish Twomey, Food Resources Manager, Solid Ground. “It might be little things, like a new way to hold plastic bags when loading them, but there is always something.”

What it Takes: An organizer to pull the tour together. In this case, Food Resources contacts the programs to be visited and handles the arrangements. This past year, they even graduated to using a tour bus so that everyone could ride together to each site (in the past, tour participants carpooled). While this cost money, it was great to promote information sharing and networking en route. SFC charges attendees part of the cost of their lunch, and this seems to lessen last minute no-shows.

Making Your Case: Documenting Unmet Customer Need

Thurston County Food Bank - Olympia



Thurston County Food Bank (TCFB) has been collecting information about the level of unmet need in their food bank, and sharing the information with Washington State Senators and other elected officials to demonstrate the need for supplemental funding. In particular, with the amount of federal commodities dropping, TCFB wanted to document unmet need for this program. They decided to use the existing program sign-in sheet, and ask people to sign in if they qualified for the commodities program, even if no commodities were available. They then marked these sign-in sheets noting that no food was available to distribute to these customers. Their message to legislators: “Here are all the people who meet the guidelines for TEFAP, but couldn’t access food. The

information is compelling,” says Executive Director Robert Coit. “These are real people, real signatures, real addresses. This is not a generalization or blanket statement.” TCFB didn’t want to create a separate system to measure unmet need. They used what was already in place.

What it Takes: This effort would be easy to duplicate. You will need to coach your volunteers to explain the rationale, perhaps even provide a script, so that it is clear to customers why you are asking them to sign even though they can’t receive food that day. TCFB has primarily done this with customers that they have a relationship with, so that they don’t confuse a new customer or lose trust. In order to make sure that customers get the message about how their signature makes a difference, you may want to have a regular, trained volunteer make the request.

Holistic Emergency Food Systems

Meals Partnership Coalition - Seattle



In all communities both large and small it takes a combined effort to ensure that everyone has access to nutritious and whole-some foods. Since its inception in 1999 Meals Partnership Coalition (MPC) has seen the value in creating an equitable emergency food system. One practice that has been occurring in many communities across Washington is the collaboration between emergency food providers. Traditionally this has been focused on relationships between food banks and meal programs separately. MPC advocates that its members look not only to their normal community partners, but to the entire community for sharing relationships. Meal providers and food banks can both look to one another for information about what they are serving, who is seeking support, where the need is greatest, and to identify excess resources which can be shared. In addition, it is critical to come together as a community to educate local leaders about the importance of community based investment into the emergency food system.

What it takes: Building a list of local emergency food providers, coming together to discuss the needs of the community, and a strong commitment to value all community members as equally important.

Bricks & Mortar: Running a Successful Capital Campaign

What is a capital campaign? It’s a special fundraising drive to pay for a major capital project such as a new building, building renovation, or purchase of costly equipment. The campaign pays for a one-time cost, usually “bricks and mortar.” The following tips come from Toppenish Community Chest, and West Seattle Food Bank, two organizations that have run successful capital campaigns to build new facilities.

- Strengthen your board of directors. Your board should be connected with different segments of the local community, and be united in their support for the project.
- Complete a feasibility study – an assessment of community support for your project and whether you can meet your fundraising goal. You need to look at your internal capacity to carry out a capital campaign, and understand your donor base and whether they will support your project. The feasibility study helps you understand what resources are in your community that you can tap for support and increases visibility for the project.
- Determine the nature of your project, and set a realistic campaign goal. Are you building a simple, warehouse style structure or community showplace? Will you build alone or co-locate with other community services? Multi-use projects can be wonderful, but they are also more complex and can be more expensive ventures.
- Anticipate increasing costs. WSFB’s project costs skyrocketed from \$1.2 million to \$3.3 million from initial design concept to finished construction.
- Map out your community to identify potential supporters. TCC looked at “everyone” in their community – churches, businesses and individuals. They would request an appointment and go and make their presentation and request support. Most were able to help, though you need to be prepared to have a few doors slammed in your face.
- Be aware that fundraising consultants don’t do the fundraising for you. Staff and volunteer leadership is required from within your organization to strategize and ask for gifts.
- Cultivate legislators so they will assist you in accessing public funding at the city, county or state levels.

Going Beyond Emergency Food: Advocacy

Oregon Food Bank - Portland



The mission of Oregon Food Bank (OFB) is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. According to Advocacy Director Jon Stubenvoll, the Advocacy Department is “the root causes part” of OFB. The organization’s advocacy efforts are focused on influencing policy affecting hungry and low-income people in Oregon and Clark County, Washington.

OFB works on a range of issues, including food and nutrition, food systems, housing, and human services programs. While advocacy efforts could focus on public education or outreach, OFB primarily concentrates on public policy advocacy, working directly on federal, state and legislative and budget issues. In addition, they have a core citizen engagement piece, focused on organizing food bank partner agencies and individuals to support public policies and working with low-income families to tell their real-life stories. Because food banks work with other organizations to distribute emergency food, food banks also have a unique opportunity to deepen the engagement of partner agencies and work with them on public policy.

OFB Advocacy’s recent successes and activities

- ...> Completion of 15th annual Voices project. Through interviews and focus groups, OFB collects the stories of emergency food recipients and publishes them in an annual Voices report. The goal is to ensure the experiences of hungry people are taken into account during public policy and budget debates.
- ...> Passed an innovative fish bycatch bill during the 2012 session of the Oregon Legislature. Under former law, bycatch fish (fish caught unintentionally during commercial fishing) could be turned over to food banks. However, food banks found it cost prohibitive to process the fish. Under this new law, fish processing businesses are able to keep a reasonable amount of the bycatch as a form of payment and food banks should now have an increased supply of fish.
- ...> Began a relationship with the Childhood Hunger Coalition (CHC) through which OFB provides staff and administrative support to CHC. CHC is an interdisciplinary group of health care providers and anti-hunger advocates that provide education, outreach, and research on the link between food insecurity and poor health outcomes. Recently, OFB secured a grant in partnership with CHC to fund a pilot project testing the feasibility of identifying and addressing hunger in a clinical setting.
- ...> Stubenvoll’s tips for organizations interested in getting involved in advocacy:
- ...> Engage your board of directors, and make sure your organization is committed to advocacy. This may be a new type of activity, especially for direct service providers.
- ...> Clearly define what you mean by advocacy. Does advocacy mean public education, public outreach, or influencing public policy?
- ...> Build advocacy into your strategic plan, and set specific advocacy goals. How will you impact root causes in an organized and thoughtful way? Being strategic might mean thinking about which issues are most important to your organization and constituents, for example, the federal food commodities program. Or perhaps you have a high percentage of disabled or senior customers, and want to advocate on those issues.
- ...> Determine what efforts are underway already. What coalitions of organizations are working on that issue? How can we make a meaningful contribution? Can we join forces?
- ...> Once you put yourself out there, you will be asked to join many coalitions, sign on to many efforts. While they may all be worthwhile, it is easy to get scattered or overwhelmed. Before agreeing to work on something, think about how you want to spend your limited time.

Everyone Counts: Individual Giving Program

Ballard Food Bank - Seattle



Ballard Food Bank's primary cultivation (relationship building) and solicitation — asking someone for money — methods include two newsletters sent to people on their mailing list, sending out two direct mail solicitations annually, and offering recurring donation opportunities (via credit card pledge) through their website. In addition, BFB has some very loyal donors that send checks every month to support their work. Nancy McKinney, Executive Director, observes that individuals are the core of giving to nonprofits. Grant funding can be intermittent, but individuals are dependable year in and year out.

What it Takes: At BFB, the executive director plays a major role in coordinating fundraising efforts. Our Development Associate takes on some aspects, such as generating thank you letters, and assisting in planning events, BFB outsources some work to contractors such as a mail house that sorts and labels the newsletter for bulk mailing. Contacts are managed using an online donor database system.

McKinney offers two key strategies for individual fundraising:

- Articulate a clear and compelling mission and communicate that mission to as many people as possible.
- Develop relationships. Donors give because they have a connection to your organization, so reach out to people most likely to be interested in the work you do.
- Volunteers are a good place to start. They can be ambassadors for the organization, and identify interested individuals or organizations that your organization can follow-up with and ask for a donation.
- Next, strengthen relationships with vendors and contributors of in-kind gifts, and ask them to consider financial support.
- Participate in and cultivate community organizations such as churches, Rotary Club, chambers of commerce
- Recruit a connected board of directors. BFB has 12 people with really good community connections.

Show Me the Money: Generating Revenues through a Thrift Store

Inter-Faith Treasure House - Camas



Inter-Faith Treasure House (IFTH) runs a thrift store in the same building as their food bank. IFTH has 200-300 shoppers per day, and the thrift store revenues are an important source of funds to purchase food. Their thrift store generates income of \$150,000—\$160,000 per year. Nancy Wilson, Director, notes that a thrift store requires community support, and that it takes a while for donors to learn about what types of donations are acceptable. Having the thrift store is complementary to the food bank in that IFTH can offer food bank customers clothing vouchers for use at the thrift store.

What it Takes: A thrift store is labor intensive, and requires a reliable corps of volunteers. IFTH is open six days a week, with four clerks on duty each day (two in the morning and two in the afternoon), plus a paid store manager (known as the Person in Charge) and four to five sorters to sort through new donations. IFTH has a volunteer manual and teams new volunteers up with experienced mentors for training. Wilson stresses the importance of reporting back to the community regarding what you are doing with the money, so they are committed to giving more. Finally, operating a thrift store requires finding a good location, and maintaining a bright, uncluttered store with quality merchandise.

Show Me More Money: Effective Special Events

North County Community Food Bank - Battleground



North County Community Food Bank (NCCFB) has an array of special events that raise funds to support their operations. NCCFB does two garage sales each year, a Victorian tea luncheon in the spring, a “Cruise In” car show and a fall dinner auction. The events net between \$2,000 (per garage sale) up to \$35,000 for the dinner auction. One of the special things they do at selected events is bring in local celebrities (such as the fire chief, mayor and the county sheriff) to serve tables. In addition to developing special events that engage different segments of the community, NCCFB uses direct mail and a giving circle to encourage further individual contributions. All these events bring in new donors, and NCCFB mails them all a solicitation letter during the holiday season. This appeal has a twist: donors are invited to make a gift in honor of a friend rather than purchase a traditional gift. NCCFB then sends a special card

acknowledging the gift to that person. NCCFB also created APPLE – the Association of People Providing Life Essentials, a circle of donors who give \$100 per year or more. They publicize this giving opportunity by branding their three biggest events

– the tea, auction and car show – as APPLE events. APPLE members may give a single one-time gift or pledge as little as \$10 per month.

What it Takes: “Make sure you have a crew to help you – you can’t do it alone,” says Elaine Hertz, Executive Director. Everyone pitches in to plan NCCFB’s array of events, including all staff and volunteers, and they are often involved in planning for several events simultaneously. Each event has specific demands. For example, the car show requires a permit for the location, outreach to local car clubs, sponsors for the event and for each trophy awarded, t-shirts, publicity, and a system to register cars. Hertz values sponsors particularly as they contribute in advance, providing funds that are critical to pay out event costs in advance of most of the proceeds coming in. NCCFB is set up to accept credit card donations – this is necessary for events, but also works out well as they can accept donations by phone.

Make it Your Own: Tailoring Events to Meet Specific Needs

Walk for Rice, Asian Counseling and Referral Service - Seattle



Walk for Rice is a major annual fundraising event for Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) Food Bank and Nutrition Programs. Due to the strength and dedication of volunteers, the Walk for Rice has grown from a small grassroots effort into an annual event that gathers over 1,000 participants. Some proceeds come from corporate sponsorships, but the bulk of funding comes from individuals who make donations as well as collect donations from others. Local businesses and community organizations form teams to fundraise and display solidarity against hunger in the community. In addition to raising money, the event raises public awareness of hunger and in particular, the needs of low-income members of the Asian Pacific American community. For example, ACRS is committed to keeping rice, a staple of most Asian diets, available at its food bank on a regular basis. Walkers are motivated to raise funds to meet this culturally specific need. “We need a message that resonates,” comments Gary Tang, ACRS Aging and Adult Services Director. “Walk for Rice – our message about Asians needing rice is really simple. People get it and they understand that all they need to do is walk for rice so people won’t go hungry.”

What it Takes: Advisory Committee, six month timeframe for planning and handling of all event logistics, including: reserve date and location, line up sponsors, develop publicity materials, conduct outreach to recruit walkers, register participants, line up volunteers and entertainment. Over time, as the event becomes more established, your effort to secure sponsors and your learning curve will lessen. Learn more at walkforrice.kintera.org

“We send out a newsletter twice a year thanking our community for their support and telling them the needs of our customers. We have a great response. Since we are all volunteers and we have been doing this for almost 19 years, our community knows we are committed to helping our neighbors in need and they willingly help us.”

– Fran Walster, Director, Maltby Food Bank

Milk Money Bellingham Food Bank - Bellingham



Got Milk? Not long ago, Bellingham Food Bank always ran out of milk early into each distribution. We had been relying solely on donated milk from grocery stores. The amount of milk we received varied greatly, but it was never enough. Finally, one of the volunteers who staffs the “dairy station” said she could not stand to tell all but the first few families that visited each day that we did not have enough milk. “Either get more milk or find another spot for me to volunteer. It’s no fun telling families that we don’t have enough milk for them.”

The volunteer inspired Bellingham Food Bank to create and launch its Milk Money program. Milk Money is a simple to implement and replicable. It was too much for us to find any donor who could buy enough milk for the food bank to meet the demand. But, when we looked at how much it might cost to ensure each family could get ½ gallon of milk each time they visited, the monthly cost didn’t seem as intimidating.

Essentially, Milk Money is a sponsorship program. We determined that if we had \$750 each month, we could buy the milk we needed. The food bank began to solicit a dozen sponsors that we believed had the capacity to raise \$750 in a month. We knew that if we could get 12 sponsors, one for each month, we could close the milk gap. Churches, local businesses, civic clubs and others were told of the program. We told each sponsor that we not only wanted them to sponsor a month, but to sponsor that month each year. They would “own” the month and would know the impact they were making. If successful, their contribution would purchase all the milk the food bank would need to give each family ½ gallon per visit.

Milk Money has been very successful. We now have more than one dozen sponsors and are buying more milk than ever before.

Sponsor a Holiday Product Program Snohomish Community Food Bank - Snohomish



A special Thanksgiving and Christmas Fare has been a long-standing tradition at our Food Bank and, even with the poor economy, 2010 was not going to be different ~ only more efficient. Our plan was to feed 100 more families this year over last, but how were we going to provide enough food for everyone? How were we to have enough room for all of the food drive collections to get the food we really needed to provide the same meals to everyone? The answer to both questions was in the Sponsor A Holiday

Product program.

Last October, we contacted schools, churches and civic clubs and asked them to help us to provide a week's worth of food for our 300 families for Thanksgiving and again for Christmas. Instead of the usual request of "Please hold a food drive and remember holiday food", we asked each group for one item, but in quantities of 300.

In years past, we utilized the request-a-food drive-method of virtually everyone in our community. Our back room would fill up with canned pumpkin, canned cranberry sauce, green beans and French fried onions rings, but other items were missing and we would have to shop for the difference.

Our community is very giving and supportive and we knew if we had specific requests, they would rise to the occasion. We had more customers than past years and needed the additional help to meet the needs of every family.

What It Takes: This program can be easily replicated! It only needs someone to plan ahead and keep it organized. We made a list of what we wanted to offer our families for Thanksgiving: Bacon, Cake or Brownie Mix; Cereal – Cold, Chicken Broth, Cocoa, Coffee, Corn, Cream of Mushroom Soup, Cranberry Sauce, Eggs, Evaporated Milk, Flour, French Fried Onion Rings, Gravy, Green Beans, Jell-O, Juice, Mandarin Oranges, Margarine, Marshmallows, Milk, Olives, Paper Towels, Peas, Pies, Pumpkin,

2011 Agency Excellence Awards – Excellence in Collaboration

Sausage, Stuffing, Sugar, Tea, Turkey Roasts, Turkeys, Turkey Trays and Vegetables, as well as our baby needs, senior section and special diet items.

We made a budget of what we could spend if we had to buy items.

We took an inventory of what we had in stock. We looked to Food Lifeline, NW Harvest and VOA to see what we should expect for the holidays. We noted those items that had been pledged, like the fresh vegetables from Klesick Farms. Finally, we found the best prices on items that couldn't easily be donated, like coffee and frozen pies, and placed an order.

Then, we made another list of the items that weren't covered and sent it along with a plea for sponsorship for one of those items. Within hours our first pledges came in: The School District sponsored Chicken Broth and Olives; St. Michael's Catholic Church requested Jell-O; the Girl Scouts wanted to collect marshmallows; The Bridge Church sponsored cocoa, juice, tea and mandarin oranges; and the list goes on and on. We asked the sponsors to deliver the items on the Friday or the Monday before serving our customers, so we could place the product on the floor instead of holding it in the non-perishables, as space is at a premium this time of year.

We had a community volunteer working to fulfill her Rotary member service requirements by offering to make calls requesting pledges for the turkeys and hams from local businesses. They answered her call to action.

This program worked with one exception. One of the groups failed to collect any of their pledged items and we had to buy the difference between what had been randomly donated of that product and 300 units. We still mark that as a victory. The grocery list was far shorter than it would have been without the help of our community.

The customers responded positively with the Director getting called to the floor often by persons who simply wanted to say thank you. Two telephone calls, an e-mail and three Christmas cards followed with the same message.

Explain the steps you've taken to ensure that your activities make efficient and effective use of your agency's resources.

The food that was earmarked for Thanksgiving and/or Christmas was held in its own location within our non-perishables room. Since the majority of it was pledged and being collected at various locations off-site, we were able to have the use of that space that would have otherwise made it crowded.

By taking inventory with our volunteer sorting teams, we were able to plan for specific numbers for donations and purchases. This way, we would not end up with too much of one specific Holiday product. Last summer, we tried to push out some of the leftovers by labeling one week of service as Thanksgiving in July – it just didn't sell! By e-mailing the list in one big request, there

was very little time spent on request for donations, explaining the program or even waiting for the sponsorships. Everyone was quickly on board! It was fun for the community groups, it was efficient for the Food Bank and it was a gift to our customers.

Another aspect of the collaboration was that in hearing we were limited in freezer space for the turkeys and hams that were being donated by individuals and businesses, the Superintendent of the school district came to the Food Bank and offered freezer space in one of two nearby schools. We were quick to accept their offer and trucked many boxes to the school's shelves where they stayed until the day of service.

On Tuesday, November 23rd, 185 families made it through the snow and ice to pick up their turkeys with all the trimmings. We were expecting 300, so we had an emergency opening on Wednesday. With a skeletal crew, we called as many customers as we could to tell them we were here. Fifty more families were served.

On Tuesday, December 21st, we offered the Christmas Fare to all of our customers by appointment, as we did not want to make them come for it on Christmas Eve (the regular Friday service day). 321 people shopped for their families from 11:00am until 8:30 that night. There were hams and turkeys for every family, as well as fresh fruit and vegetables, canned goods, milk, butter, eggs, bread, pies . . . breakfasts, lunches and dinners were provided for the full week.

The Sponsor A Holiday Product program was economic on time, space, and funds. It was good public relations as we reached out to our community with specific needs and they were comfortable with that request. Some even went above and beyond what we were asking. It proved to be an amazing team effort and in the end, families were well fed for the Holidays.

Just today, one of the gentlemen who drops off weekly donated food from his church reported that the program was recognized to the third hand when two Principals of local schools thanked them for participating in feeding families from their schools!

Empowering Local Programs: Fundraising Technical Assistance

Rural Resources - Colville



Rural Resources has a radical philosophy when it comes to fundraising. They believe that EFAP lead agencies should not be raising money for their emergency food programs in areas where their fundraising competes with that of local food banks they serve. “Don’t cook in your own backyard,” says Roger Trapp, Community Services Program Manager. “If we start competing with the local food banks for product or funds, we undermine the little nonprofits that are seeking out an existence in rural Eastern Washington.” Instead, Rural Resources focuses on soliciting large corporations rather than local businesses and individuals. They see it as their role to provide fundraising technical assistance to individual food banks. Rural Resources has assisted food banks in three of the 13 counties they serve with donor research such as information on income levels and types of housing in particular ZIP codes, and encouraged several food banks to work together on a mail campaign. They also support Northport Food Bank’s Friday Night Out annual event which draws a crowd to the small town of Northport for dinner, live entertainment and dancing. Rural Resources’ information technology staff person has also assisted the small food banks they serve. “You have to figure out who you are working for,” says Trapp. “We work for our food banks.”

What it Takes: Working this way is a philosophical commitment by Rural Resources because they know that the philanthropic capacity in small towns is limited. Their approach means that Rural Resources may pass on fundraising opportunities in certain communities, and even watch as the smaller organization fails to maximize a particular opportunity. However, they feel that their approach strengthens overall community capacity in the long run.

Advice on Grantwriting

- One person doesn't write a grant, it takes a team to write a good grant. Make sure you have a team.
- Look at other people's grants that have been successful.
- Make sure there is a match between the funder's mission and yours.
- Don't make mistakes. Follow their guidelines and wording. If not, they will drop it in the garbage.
- Remember that grants are usually either small or very competitive. It's not as easy as it used to be. According to Sue, a veteran grantwriter, partnerships and local relationships are the best way to go.

A great resource that we found in our travels through our friends at WHY Hunger is www.npguides.org. The “np” stands for non-profit and it's a website entirely about grantwriting! Templates are included.

Plug In: Maximizing Community Networks

Willapa Food Bank - Raymond



Talk to Director Bob High about fundraising for the Willapa Food Bank, and she'll immediately say, “I'm the wrong person to talk to. We don't do any fundraising here. We are fortunate to have enough resources.” The food bank is so successful, they turn down revenues from a local thrift shop run by the Ministerial Association, encouraging them to donate elsewhere. Further investigation reveals that the Willapa Food Bank has enough resources because they have outstanding visibility and a great reputation in their small community. The food bank benefits from a number of third party fundraisers — charity events organized by others where the proceeds go to the food bank. These include a “Food Bowl” competition at the local schools, and fundraising and food drives at the local hospital and local businesses such as Curves®, the women's gym, that take place annually. At the United Church, a food bank

volunteer has taken to handing out grocery bags as his fellow parishioners leave church services, and asking them to bring them back full the following Sunday. High also notes that if they are short on something, she can give the Elks or other local lodges and service clubs a call, and “food shows up on our doorstep.” How do they do it? “A lot of talking,” says High. “Everyone in town knows me, and knows that I am with the food bank. And our local paper runs a listing for us every week. We are amazed at the cooperation.” The small town-feel of Raymond, and overlapping memberships among food bank volunteers, civic clubs and churches are helpful in keeping the lines of communications open.

More Fundraising Ideas

- The Maltby Food Bank had an event at Ruby's Diner, which donated the cost of the meals purchased by food bank supporters who went to the diner that night and turned in the official event flyer, netting \$300. Why it's a good idea: Restaurants events are a win/win for your program and the local restaurant. The restaurant gets the chance to be a good corporate citizen, which creates some good publicity and new customers. The food bank gets needed funding and increased community visibility. An event like this makes giving easy and fun.
- When the Loon Lake Food Pantry & Resource Center bought their new building, they started a monthly giving club. Members pledge \$25 per month, and know the money is going to pay off the food bank's mortgage. Why it's a good idea: **Donors willing to commit ongoing support over time provide stable revenues and reduce the cost of fundraising. Donors like giving for a specific purpose, such as paying the mortgage. Offering a chance to give monthly makes giving larger amounts more affordable for donors.**

- ...► The Food Ball is an annual fundraiser and food drive that plays on the traditional rivalry between Aberdeen and Hoquiam High Schools by having high school students compete for most funds and most pounds of food collected during a 10-day period. Since its beginnings in 1981, the event has grown and now “supports five local food banks for from six months to a full year,” says Jim Coates of the Grays Harbor/Pacific County Food Bank Distribution Center. Why it’s a good idea: It’s engaging to high school students, it fills a social need in the community, it’s an annual tradition that builds naturally over time, and as a “third party fundraiser,” it doesn’t require as much food bank staff or volunteer time.
- ...► Emergency Food Network is encouraging supporters to host a Baby shower on behalf of not one baby, but for the 44,000 babies from low-income families in Pierce County. Invitations and the party format will resemble a shower (with games designed to educate people about the needs of low-income families), but cash donations rather than baby gifts are solicited. At each shower, guests are also invited to consider hosting their own shower in the coming year. This strategy requires qualified hosts who are well-connected in the community and will follow-through and make their party great. Staff support is also needed to design invitations and activities.
- ...► **Why it’s a good idea:** House parties are low-cost events (hosts offer their homes and often cover the costs of food and drink). Because they are intimate and personal, people are often moved to give more, and it’s a great, easy way for your supporters to invite their friends to get involved.

Transportation

The area of transportation presents many challenges for emergency food providers. Fuel costs have risen steadily, and the costs of owning or leasing a truck are high. As the system shifts from primarily non-perishables to an emphasis on fresh and frozen foods, refrigerated transport is required to ensure food safety. Distribution centers and food banks are meeting these challenges by sharing resources and cooperating to maximize efficiency and ensure that trucks are full rather than empty as they move food around the state. General best practices in transportation include:

- Distribution centers and larger agencies investing in trucking equipment and transporting food on behalf of smaller food banks and meal programs
- Food banks working in coalition to share the expenses and benefits of owning a shared vehicle
- Working in partnership with trucking companies and trucking schools who can provide donations of transportation and vehicle maintenance

Going Places: Trucking School Partnerships

Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc. - Moses Lake



Community Services of Moses Lake, Inc. (CSML) partners with the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) program at Big Bend Community College to safely and reliably transport food. The partnership is beneficial for both: students need to complete a certain number of hours of driving time and CSML needs additional transportation resources. CSML contracts with the CDL program to pickup from Northwest Harvest (NWH), Yakima once a month. They complete three direct drops to area food banks, and the rest comes to CSML in Moses Lake. The program promotes safety and maximizes resources. It also works out well for NWH, since they have to load one huge truck instead of nine little ones. "It's a win-win for everyone, as far as we can see," says Penny Archer of CSML. "Plus the drivers get to learn interpersonal skills – they're getting more than just a driving experience." One challenge with a school relationship is that there are always new drivers. However, the instructors are a constant, and handle the scheduling directly with NWH to match their changing class schedule. The partnership grew from a single volunteer who suggested that CSML staff meet his instructor.

What it Takes: The school provides the trucks and drivers, and carry their own insurance coverage. CSML's board insists on an annual contract that releases them from liability. CSML covers gasoline costs at fifty cents per mile. Students cannot participate in loading or unloading, so it's important to be able to field volunteers to unload the truck promptly on arrival.

"Fuel costs are so high, none of us can afford to roll those wheels empty."

– Mike Regis, Director of Procurement Northwest Harvest

Evaluation: Working for You

Rotary First Harvest -Greater King County



Rotary First Harvest (RFH) acts as a conduit between farmers and the programs that serve hungry individuals and families in our region, collecting produce and other nutritious food and getting it into the existing emergency food distribution channels. Since their focus is on transporting food, they solicited funding to conduct research on ways to improve transportation for the hunger

response network. The research was conducted by a professional research firm, and included key person interviews with diverse stakeholders such as commercial trucking groups who were donating services or offering reduced rates, as well as distribution centers and EFAP lead agencies receiving high volume donations. The resulting report provided fresh insights for RFH and their partners. To David Bobanick, Executive Director, important learnings included gaining insight into businesses motivations for donating and increased clarity about key transportation corridors and trucking hubs statewide. They also learned that “it’s a deal breaker if the truck and driver has to sit and wait at either end” of a donated trucking run, so they are working to reduce waiting times at both donation locations, such as cold storage facilities and distribution centers. These insights will allow RFH to be more strategic in deciding what donations to accept and to advocate for changes that will improve the experience of donors and their willingness to continue to provide pro bono trucking services .

What it Takes: Research can be an invaluable aid to meeting your mission and goals more strategically. In particular, listening to donors and other community partners can reveal new opportunities to leverage resources and talent for community benefit. Formal research such as the study RFH commissioned requires expertise to design effective and scientifically valid research methods. For this type of research, you may want to seek outside funding and/or join together with other organizations that would also benefit from the research in order to support consulting costs. The project will also require active involvement from your organization’s leadership to help define research questions and identify relevant stakeholders.

Traffic Busters: Cooperative Trucking

Emergency Food Network, Northwest Harvest, Coastal Harvest - State-wide



The agencies above have been collaborating for some time on transportation, sharing food and moving it out to people. By working together, the group is able to increase efficiency, reduce transportation costs, and take advantage of special opportunities. This was coordinated in response to a situation several years ago, when Emergency Food Network (EFN)’s past Executive Director David Ottey received a call about a very large potential donation of frozen vegetables in Grandview and Wenatchee, Washington. The amount of food was too large for EFN to handle on their own, and without collaboration, they would have had to refuse the donation. After consulting with Northwest Harvest (NWH)’s Director of Procurement Mike Regis, a plan was worked out for NWH to secure temporary storage for the Grandview vegetables, while EFN dispatched a truck to retrieve the donated product in Wenatchee. On the way to Wenatchee, EFN’s

driver stopped at NWH’s Seattle warehouse to pick up a load of food they needed delivered to Wenatchee, so the truck didn’t travel out there empty. Meanwhile, during this same 36-hour period, EFN received assistance from Coastal Harvest, who drove to Oregon to pick up a donation on their behalf. Regis sees many benefits to the collaborative relationship these three organizations have developed: “Fuel costs are so high, none of us can afford to roll those wheels empty. We try to make the most efficient use of our equipment and professional staff. In addition, this increases our ability to serve donors — you have to make sure that when the donor calls, you can respond. And all of us are getting into delivery now. We receive more donations of frozen and chilled foods, and the health department has become more stringent about keeping food at safe temperatures, which means we need to deliver in refrigerated trucks.”

What it Takes: This collaboration has been very successful because all three agency leaders have a can-do attitude to help each other accept donations quickly. “We jump on it,” says Regis. To establish this type of collaboration, try to find partners who have a collaborative and can-do attitude when dealing with challenges — a willingness to go after the product and say thank you in a sincere way. For food banks in other parts of the state, going in together to share transportation costs may allow you to accept greater quantities and new types of donations, especially if together you can afford to share a refrigerated truck.

Collaborating Locally: Sharing a Truck

In Seattle, South King County and Kitsap County, food bank coalitions are working together to ensure that they are able to get the deliveries they need from Food Lifeline (FLL), Northwest Harvest (NWH) and others. Here's how it's working for these coalitions:

- In Seattle, Solid Ground (SG) operates two trucks to provide delivery service to 19 of the 26 food banks in the city. One refrigerated truck is owned by SG. A second truck is leased three days a week. Both are driven by professional drivers employed by SG, and they also budget for maintenance and repairs, fuel, insurance and a cell phone system to communicate with the drivers. Thanks to City of Seattle funding, SG is currently able to offer delivery service to food banks free of charge. In the past, food banks have contributed to cover trucking costs based on a formula that accounts for their size and usage. The schedule has been developed over the years, and is difficult to change as many food banks plan their hours according to the delivery schedule. SG has a relationship with a local trucking service that provides substitute drivers when the regulars are ill or on vacation, and having these reliable substitutes has been very helpful.
- The South King County Food Coalition Transportation Project was developed to increase the capacity of emergency food providers in South King County. Instead of using rented trucks, unreliable paid transport service or volunteer transport, the Transportation Project pools resources from several agencies to purchase a truck and fund a driver to pick up and deliver donated food. Participating food programs have better access to food from FLL and NWH and other local businesses as a result. By sharing cost and transportation, food delivery is streamlined. After initial research and negotiation, funding was acquired to hire a part-time driver – three days a week – and to purchase a 20-foot delivery truck with a 12,000 pound payload and electric pallet jack. The Multi-Service Center (MSC) is the fiscal agent of the project and the primary owner and caretaker of the truck. Currently, six agencies operating eight programs are Transportation Project participants. Each agency pays a per-trip cost that covers part of the costs of operating the program, and grant funding covers remaining costs.
- In Kitsap County, many food banks benefit from Bremerton Foodline's truck. They carry FLL and NWH deliveries out to the north end of Kitsap County at a cost of \$20 per food bank per trip. This works well for everyone since the trucks used to drive that way empty en route to pick up donations of fresh produce from grocery stores in that area. The Kitsap County Food Bank Coalition (KCFBC) also has a partnership with a local trucking company. KCFBC collectively purchased a truck trailer, and the trucking company keeps the trailer at their location and makes monthly runs on the ferry to pick up food at NWH and deliver it. The trucking company donates their time and costs for these runs.

Checklist of things to think about:

- Scheduling
- Truck (with or without lift gate)
- Maintenance and repair costs
- Equipment for loading and unloading, such as a pallet jack or fork lift
- Roadside assistance
- Qualified driver
- Role of lead agency Insurance for the vehicle
- Cost sharing system

Tips from the Pros:

- Make sure you have a skilled, reliable driver with a good driving record and the customer service and interpersonal skills to deal well with a changing array of volunteers and a variety of loading situations. They may need a Commercial Driver's License depending on the size of the truck, and should prioritize safety.
- In developing your budget, make sure to establish a maintenance reserve fund to cover repairs and upkeep costs for your truck. Research your insurance needs as well.
- Consider leasing a truck. The rental company may offer roadside assistance and insurance options, and you won't have to deal with repairs.
- Think through what additional equipment you may need, such as a lift gate and pallet jack. SKCFC keeps their pallet jack in the truck at all times. They can't load as many pallets, but the pallet jack can be used at each location.
- Grants and government funding are likely sources of capital to purchase the truck, but these donors will want to see your plan to sustain the project over time.
- Develop a cost-sharing plan that is affordable for participating food banks, and get their commitment to participate in advance. Consider inviting meal programs to participate, too.

Organizational Strength & Capacity

Organizational strength and capacity building has a number of aspects. This section highlights effective operations, nonprofit infrastructure, and management of people.

Operations

Nonprofit organizations need to develop appropriate policies and procedures to run their programs smoothly. The size and complexity of the organization should reflect the scope of programs, and an outside reviewer should express confidence that the organization is stewarding and using community resources effectively. General best practices in the operations arena include:

- Having written policies and procedures that are up-to-date and accessible.
- Sound financial management, including accurate and complete record keeping, annual budgeting and oversight of finances by the board of directors.
- Accurate tracking and reporting of program statistics.
- Records of all donations made to the organization, and donor contact information to cultivate future support and provide acknowledgement.
- Choosing an organizational structure and nonprofit status appropriate to meet the mission.
- Engaging in strategic planning to set goals for the organization, including adapting to a changing operating environment and preparing for disaster.

Infrastructure: Facilities, Equipment & Technology

Recognition is growing that emergency food providers need infrastructure in order to consistently provide effective programs. Well-designed facilities, appropriate equipment, and adequate hardware and software to meet information technology needs are all critical success factors for nonprofits. At the same time, nonprofits are usually under-resourced and have trouble raising capital to invest in adequate infrastructure. The best practices in this section illustrate the power of investing in these areas. General best practices in the area of facilities, equipment and technology include:

- Designing or laying out food bank space in a way that maintains customer and worker dignity – inside waiting areas, space to allow for customer choice, and a pleasant work environment for volunteers and staff.
- Safe working conditions, with appropriate equipment to perform key tasks without strain.
- Computers and software that allow for accurate, secure management of customer data and easy reporting to funding partners and donors.
- Telephone and internet access to support information and referral for customers.
- Refrigeration, sanitary areas for repacking food, and any other necessary facilities to ensure food safety and freshness.

Leadership & Human Resources: Boards & Volunteers

Nonprofit organizations are nothing without people who care, and this is particularly true for anti-hunger organizations. Food programs are heavily reliant on volunteers to perform most tasks, from food sorting to fundraising, governance to taking out the trash. In the nonprofit sector as a whole, there is a trend toward increasing reliance on paid professional staff, but the emergency food industry remains primarily volunteer-driven, making it particularly important for them to effectively manage volunteers and establish working governance structures. General best practices in the area of leadership and volunteer management include:

- Establish an active board of directors who understand the range of nonprofit board responsibilities
- Draw volunteers from different sectors of the community, including groups and individuals, people of all ages and professions, and people who reflect the cultural and language groups represented in your customer base.
- Mentor and encourage the development of the next generation of leaders. Develop a leadership succession plan to reduce reliance on a single founder or a small group of volunteer leaders and ensure that the organization can continue

after these individuals retire from active service.

- Supervise staff effectively: set clear expectations, evaluate performance annually, and offer support and opportunities for professional growth.

Joining Forces: Merger

Spokane Valley Partners - Spokane Valley



A few years ago, Spokane Valley Food Bank and Spokane Valley Community Center resolved to merge their services under one umbrella, Spokane Valley Partners, for the benefit of the community they serve. Although co-located for many years, the organizations had different organizational cultures, so the merger took time and effort on both sides. In order for the organizations to come together, both boards had to agree that this was in their organization's best interest to meet their missions, and the boards had to come together philosophically. The merger was compelling because it allowed them to operate more efficiently, increase their capacity for service, and gain more clout as a larger organization. "We are stronger financially, programmatically. Our programs complement each other," comments Ken Briggs, CEO. The food bank gained infrastructure such as better technology, information management systems, professional fundraising staff and better benefits for staff. The trust building process took time, both before and after the merger took place. The two organization's boards were very different — hands-on for the food bank, and policy-making for the community center. As part of starting fresh, the merged organization adopted a new name and agreed to hire a new CEO to oversee the new, larger organization. The executive director of the food bank stayed on as program director. Board members from both organizations were invited to join the new board.

What it Takes: Negotiating a merger requires board members who can think strategically and stay focused on their vision for the community, even if painful changes such as cutting staff or leaving one location are required in the short term. Board leaders must have the ability to build relationships and find common ground with the potential merger partner. Once the two boards agree to move forward with a merger, legal advice and/or consulting services to guide the process is helpful. Be patient — adapting to change takes time for everyone involved. Briggs also points out that programs interested in closer partnership can take incremental steps such as co-location, a shared accountant or development director, or a joint operating agreement. A merger doesn't need to be done in one fell swoop.

Eliminating the Guesswork: Operations Manual

Loon Lake Food Pantry & Resource Center - Loon Lake



Several years ago, Loon Lake Food Pantry & Resource Center took a major step toward shared leadership by getting vital information out of Director Sarah Nelson's memory and into a written operations manual. Thanks to a volunteer with great writing skills and an eye for detail who took the lead, they now have an operations manual. The manual covers everything from obtaining the food to storing the food to filling out all the forms required by funders and distribution centers. Lead volunteer Fred Mesch describes the manual as a "guide for the food bank perplexed."

What it Takes: Someone willing to document what you do in writing. Other food banks can benefit from Loon Lake's experience: copies of their manual are available from Washington Food Coalition, and you are encouraged by the author to "take from it mercilessly!"

Washington Food Coalition even has a template form of this resource to make it easy for you to tailor it to your own agency's needs.

Greenwood Food Bank Inventory System

Volunteers of America Western Washington - Seattle, Everett



The Greenwood Food Bank Inventory System was developed to track the flow of food resources through the Food Bank. We have designed an Excel Inventory System spreadsheet and process that can be applied to any food bank desiring an inventory capability. It allows us better organization and visibility of resource inventory for our volunteers and staff. It's as simple as a request and the spreadsheet will be sent! We also have a Power Point available with instructions.

We recognized that we were not able to continuously provide a balanced diet to food bank customers because we often ran out of certain food items. We would have to RE-act to the shortage on the food bank shelves and ask the community for their help with these items. Unfortunately, that would take up to two weeks to engage the community with food drives to obtain the necessary donations to provide our customers with enough choices to satisfy the five food groups. This short fall became an apparent need to serve our customers a nutritionally balanced diet of grains, meat & beans, fruits, vegetables, and dairy. In order to be PRO-active, we needed to know how much food we had available so that we did not experience empty shelves. This information is also helpful when answering donor questions such as 'What do you need?'. Information is power and enables us to fulfill our responsibility to feed our hungry neighbors. It was identified by a community volunteer that an inventory system would strengthen our program's ability to meet the needs for customers and donors.

What it Takes

Step One: To begin setting up the Inventory System, an average item count per box must be established for each Food Category. Then it is entered into the Assumption Sheet and is used to track the item count per food type. The Assumption Sheet should be completed prior to entering information into the Inventory System spreadsheet. Then Daily Tally Sheets and Inventory Box Tags are created (A sample is included in the Inventory System spreadsheet). This is as simple as listing the Food Category (Canned/Dry/Bulk/Meat/Dairy/Produce) and the Food Type under it (Fruit/Vegetables/Soup/etc). The date should also be added to ensure a First In, First Out best practice.

Step Two: A physical count of the current inventory in the food bank should be the starting point for implementation. Inventory Box Tags are dated with today's date and placed on each box. As a box receives a box tag, a tick mark is placed on the Daily Tally Sheet under the appropriate Food Type. Once physical inventory has been completed, the Daily Tally Sheet is used to input the data into the Inventory System spreadsheet by Food Category Type.

Step Three: When a new donation is received and it is time for it to be evaluated, the food is sorted into Food Type. When a box is filled, the correct box tag is selected, dated and the Food Type is circled. A Daily Tally Sheet is ticked under the appropriate Food Type and then the box is moved to inventory storage area.

Step Four: Throughout the day, as volunteers remove boxes from inventory to stock the food bank shelves, the box tags are removed and placed in a designated area. At the end of the day, the tags are collected, counted by Food Type, and then subtracted from the Food Category spreadsheet. The Daily Tally Sheet is also input into the Food Category spreadsheet.

Step Five: Once all information for the day is entered, it will automatically be combined into the Inventory Summary sheet. This can be used regularly to plan healthy meals for food bank customers.

The biggest indicator has been that we are now alerted to what food items we are in need of before we run low. This ensures that our customers receive healthy meals when they come to the food bank. Another indicator has been an improved outreach strategy. We can target specific needs and ask our community partners to step up to the plate and donate so our shelves do not become empty. We have a resource easily available to all the staff so they can communicate the food bank needs at any time.

The inventory system has actually showed us more efficient and effective uses of our agency's resources. Staff time is being used more effectively when deciding what items will be used to stock the shelves for the week because we are able to see at a glance