

EXPLORING INTERSECTIONS: FOOD ACCESS, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, AND TRANSPORTATION



Dickinson

Dickinson College, Department of Environmental Studies
Food Studies Certificate Program

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INTRODUCTION

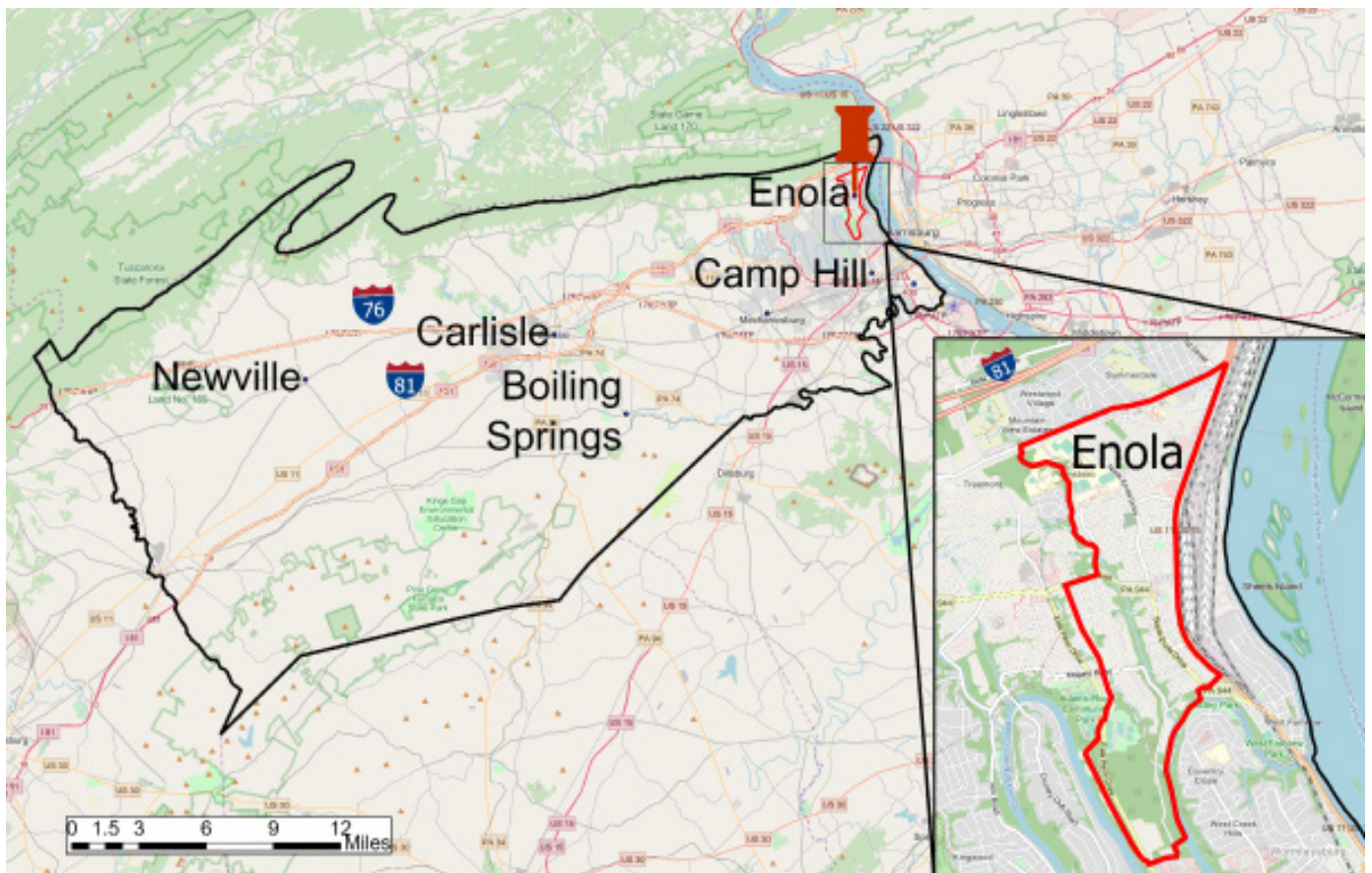
Dickinson College students completed the Cumberland County Food Assessment and online story map in 2018. The assessment identified workforce training as critically connected to food and poverty challenges in the county. If structural poverty and inequality concerns are not addressed in the county, food access will remain a persistent issue. While food pantries provide vital temporary solutions for residents without access to sufficient food, emerging initiatives in Cumberland County seek to address some of the root poverty challenges that ultimately limit people's access to food and health. New Hope Ministries (New Hope), a social service agency based in the county, takes a multi-faceted approach to expand their food pantries (both permanent and mobile) to workforce training for in-demand careers in the region. New Hope helps over 22,000 people in Adams, Cumberland, and York Counties by helping them to obtain basic needs and equipping them to change their lives.

On behalf of New Hope, Dickinson College's Environment and Society class conducted research in 2019. New Hope asked students to explore the opportunities and barriers to accessing healthy food, transportation, and workforce training in Enola, which is an area West of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. New Hope currently operates a well-attended monthly mobile food pantry in Enola. Pending the availability of funding, New Hope is considering a permanent food pantry and workforce training site in Enola. New Hope asked the students to interview their mobile food pantry guests. The goal was to assess the need for the food pantry and workforce training center in Enola, and to identify convenient locations for the potential center. This report attempts to contextualize linkages across food, workforce training, and transportation, with a specific emphasis on the needs of Enola and the broader region.

“Low income residents may have difficulty affording transportation costs to the supermarket located outside of their immediate vicinity, thereby limiting access to food options” (Walker 2010: 878)

“Infant mortality, health problems associated with aging, the ability of children to learn in school, and the job readiness of workers are directly related to proper nutrition” (Pennsylvania Governor Wolf Executive Order: 2015-12)

“Although unemployment in America is at a near-historic low, the wealth gap keeps growing. It seems that even though many people have jobs, their jobs simply aren’t giving them what they need in terms of long-term financial security, good benefits, and potential for growth” (Rivera-Silverstein 2019)

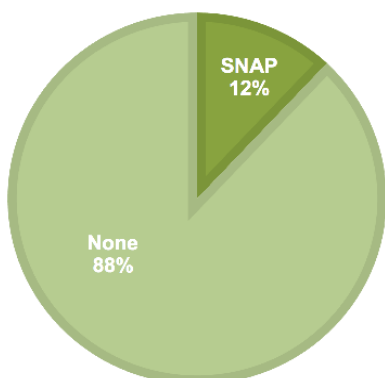




FOOD ACCESS

Food access– the stable access to resources or acquiring appropriate foods for a nutritious diet– is a national issue that requires close investigation. 12.5% of United States residents are food insecure. As of August 2019, approximately 36.4 million U.S. citizens use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)¹ and approximately 30 million children receive federally subsidized school lunches.²

FOOD ASSISTANCE



Food deserts, areas without a supermarket or access to healthy food, exacerbate food insecurity.³ Those who have limited access to healthy and fresh food rely on whatever is available such as local gas stations and corner stores which have insufficient, unhealthy food.⁴ Approximately 23.5 million people in the United States live in low-income areas that are more than one mile from a supermarket, characteristic of a food desert.⁵ These statistics demonstrate that food access is interrelated with income, and therefore it is necessary to provide structural solutions to address food insecurity. It is also vital to explore solutions that consider healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for populations struggling with food insecurity.

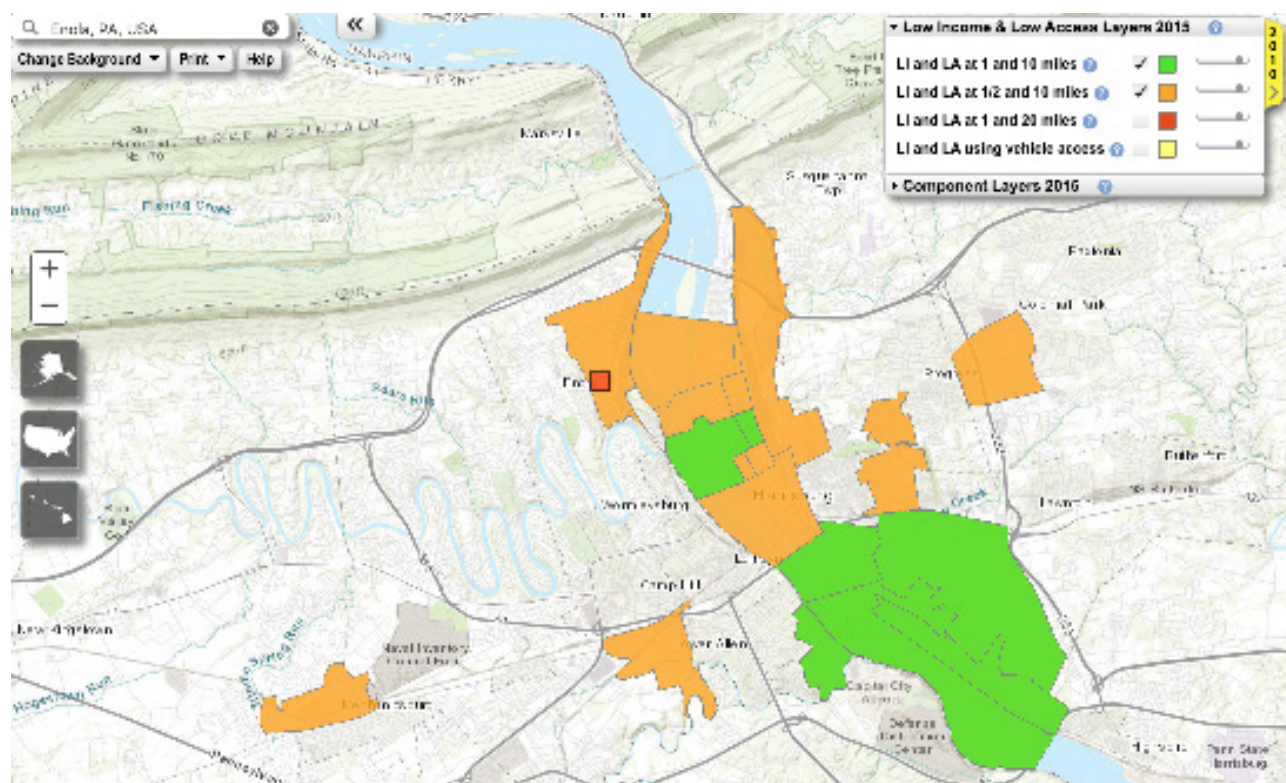
Similar to the national averages, 12% of Pennsylvanians are food insecure.⁶ The parallel between state and national statistics holds true among children under the age of 18. Nationally, 17% of children under the age of 18 are considered to be food insecure, similar to 16.4% of children in Pennsylvania.⁷ While the state falls almost directly in line with the nation in terms of food insecurity among children and adults, the state is more insecure than the national average among some vulnerable populations. Pennsylvania ranks 37th out of 50 (50 considered the most food insecure) for food insecurity among seniors (age 60 and older).⁸

Although food access is a national issue, federal approaches can miss particular vulnerabilities in communities.⁹ Local governance and organizations, who are in closer proximity to affected communities, play an important role and possess the tools to respond to specific local food access concerns.¹⁰ In Enola, Pennsylvania, New Hope exemplifies how local efforts approach complex food access concerns and related structural poverty.

Context of study site (Enola, PA)

While national and state statistics can provide an overview of food access, reviewing Enola in detail highlights the unique barriers and particular needs of this community. With a population of 6,200 people, 10.9% of the population in Enola lives in poverty, according to federal poverty classifications.¹¹ In comparison, Cumberland County, where Enola is situated, has a 9.4% level of poverty. These statistics demonstrate that Enola's population experiences a higher level of economic instability than surrounding communities in the county.¹²

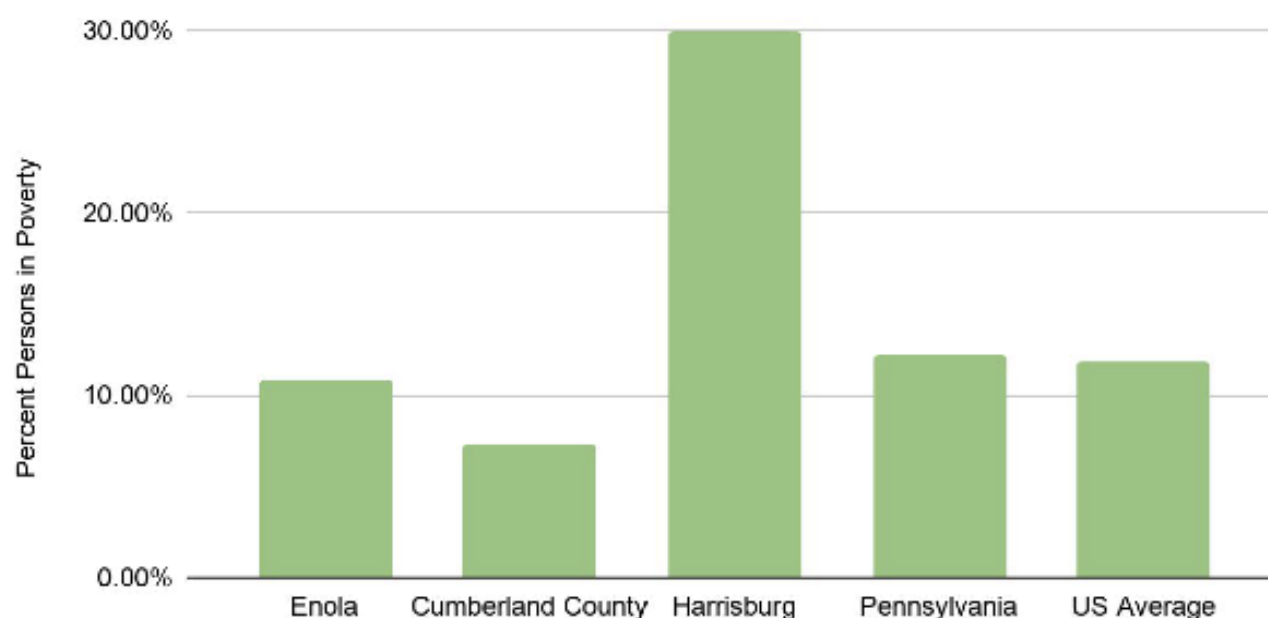
Low Income and Low Access to Food, Enola (USDA 2015)



The US Census compares family income thresholds to a family's total income to determine whether or not a household falls below the poverty line.¹³ The Census Bureau's definition of poverty may not encompass the total percentage of the Enola population who experience food insecurity and economic instability. For example, organizations have begun to calculate Asset limited income constrained employed (ALICE) people to gain a more specific picture of residents in need of support to meet their daily food needs. Estimates indicate that 24% of Cumberland county residents are in the ALICE category.

Percent Persons in Poverty

Poverty in Enola compared to Harrisburg, the county, Pennsylvania and the US



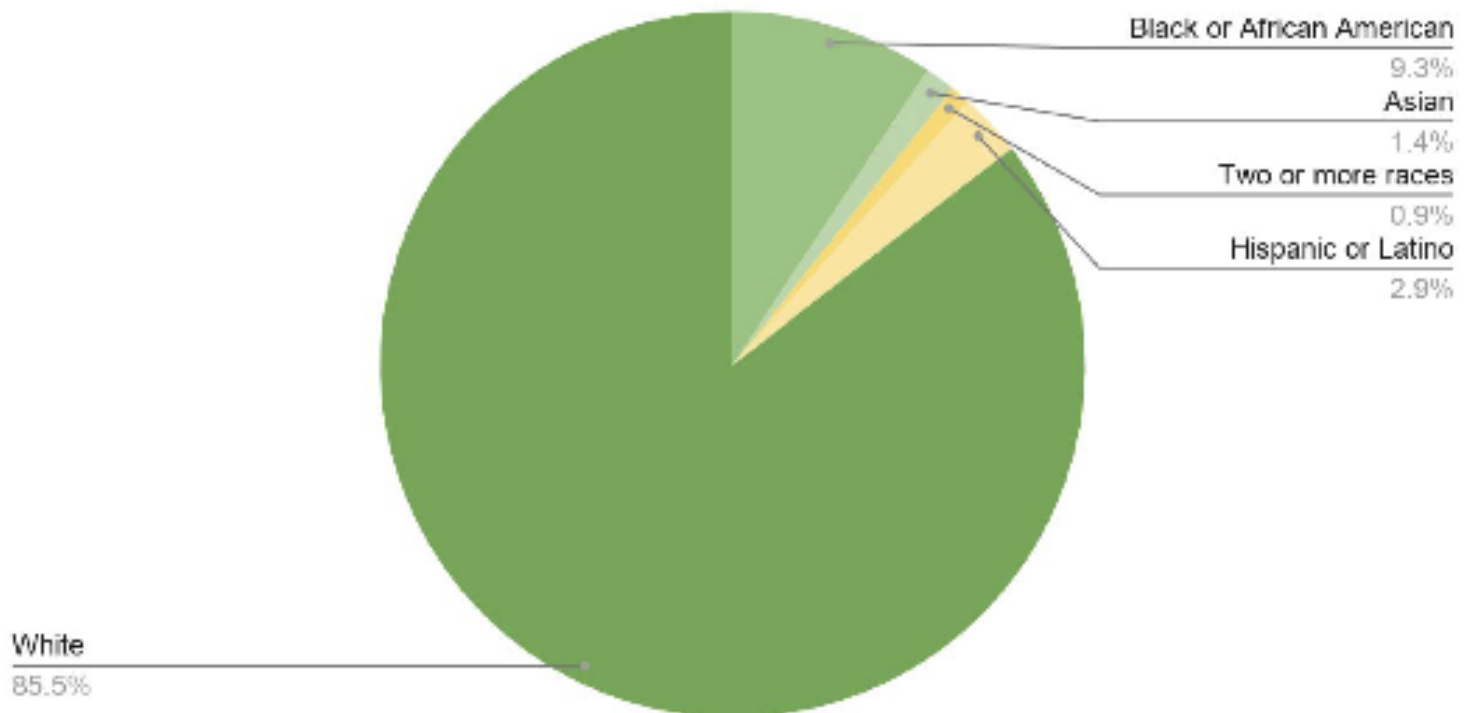
Research Methods

To understand these issues in the Enola context, Dickinson College students interviewed guests at the New Hope Mobile Pantry, held at the River of God Church once a month in Enola. The Institutional Review Board at Dickinson College reviewed and approved the research methods, including the interview questions. Students completed training in research methods and ethics, and practiced interview techniques in class. Students visited the Enola mobile food pantry in September 2019. While guests waited to select their food from the food pantry (due to space constraints, the mobile pantry can accommodate a fixed number of guests), students requested if they would like to participate in the research project

If guests agreed to participate, students shared further information about their rights and responsibilities as research participants and the guests gave their verbal consent to participate. Following this, students asked the guests a set of questions to understand their impressions of the food pantry. Following the interviews, students collated and analyzed the interview findings. Students further conducted research on Enola demographics and best practices to increase access to food, workforce training services, and transportation. A student with Geographic Information Systems training made the maps featured in this report.

In total, eight guests agreed to be interviewed for this research. It is important to note that the number of guests interviewed represents a small sample of the Enola population. While their responses are relevant, the data collected may not represent the whole population. Additionally, through the research it became apparent that the mobile food pantry operates on a day without public transportation (the bus only operates on Saturday). As a result, there may be skewed results, as residents without transportation would not be able to reach the Saturday food pantry.

Demographics of Enola



Food Access Findings and Implications

Finding: Guests like the organized and consistent nature of the mobile food pantry, and particularly appreciate the compassionate atmosphere.

Is there anything you would change about the mobile food pantry?

"The selection. Healthier and more organic produce and more options"

"More good choice such as gluten-free food"

"Walking down that ramp"

What do you like about the mobile food pantry?

"Helpful, helpful to my needs"

"There is a feeling of compassion and love here. People take care of each other"

"It's all in one spot"

"It is always here, consistent"

"Nice, easy, and convenient. More organized and more well stocked than other pantries"

"The people are nice. You meet nice people"

"I am very grateful for New Hope and how it has touched many lives. Hope it keeps going"

Finding: The mobile food pantry may provide mobility challenges for guests who cannot walk or may require assistance.

Finding: The majority of interviewed guests are not enrolled in food benefit programs.

The mobile food pantry cannot provide its guests with sufficient food for the entire month, but New Hope can direct efforts to other avenues of food access. Seven out of eight people interviewed are not using food assistance programs, even though they may meet the eligibility requirements. Of the 246,338 residents in Cumberland County, 54,574 qualify for SNAP benefits.¹⁴ Of those 54,547, only 18,809 residents use SNAP. Overall, 7.6 percent of residents in Cumberland County uses SNAP assistance.¹⁵ This disparity may lie in the complicated process associated with applying for SNAP benefits.

"I used SNAP in the past, but I lost benefits due to change in job. Now I pay cash out of pocket at local grocer, not always possible"

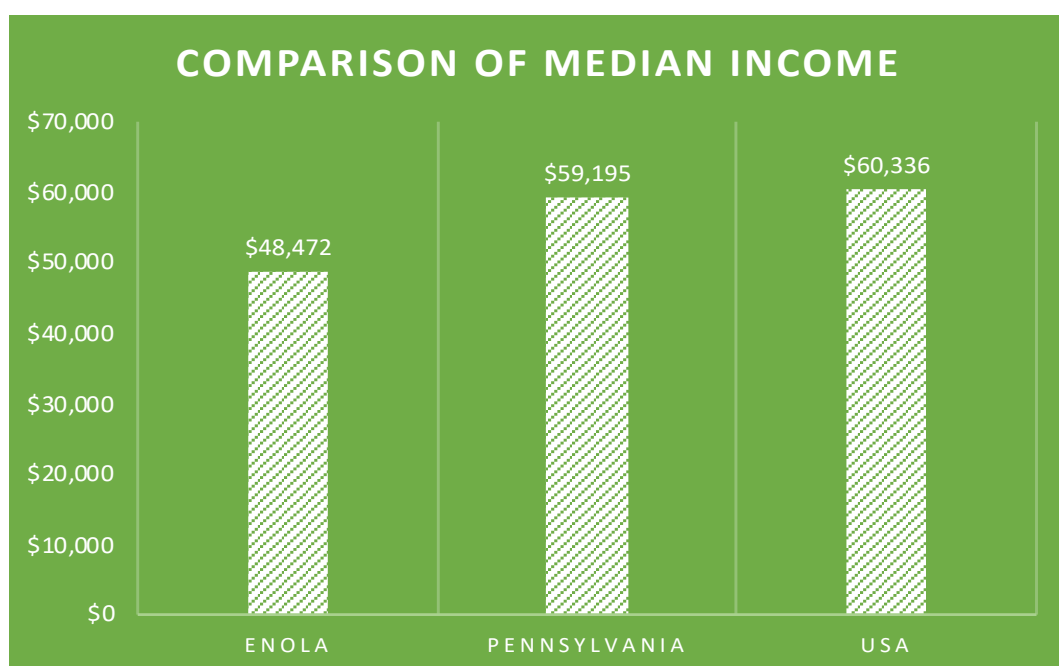
One guest noted that, "It is easy to go online and see if you qualify for food assistance, but otherwise, it is difficult to apply and actually receive any benefits from the food assistance programs." The SNAP application is available online and in a paper version, but its lengthy language with legal jargon is not accessible to understand. The online application is not consistently updated and the website was down in December 2019. To amend such concerns, New Hope volunteers and staff help guests navigate the application process. This research suggests that while New Hope has identified this as a key area of focus, there are still barriers for guests seeking access to federal food programs. Furthermore, in late 2019 the Trump Administration tightened the eligibility rules for federal benefits.¹⁶ As a result, it is predicted that least 700,000 individuals will lose their food benefits.¹⁷ Therefore, New Hope can consider ways to make food benefits more accessible to those who qualify.

Finding: Affordable groceries are not accessible in the Enola area, and transportation and gas play a major role in accessibility.

Two primary grocery stores exist in Enola- Giant and Weiss. Other than the grocery stores, few "mom and pop" shop options exist in the community, thus limiting choices as to where people are able to shop. While there is a farmer's market in Enola, it is only open one day a week from May through October. Apart from the Giant and Weiss, residents of Enola have the option of shopping at variety stores including CVS and Dollar Tree which typically accept federal food benefits, including SNAP. However, choices are limited in these stores, particularly in relation to fresh fruits and vegetables. Outside of Enola, more cultural options are in Harrisburg and low- price options such as the Walmart supercenter are located near Camp Hill. The interviews indicated that participants' access to food is restricted by money and whether they had transportation. Ultimately, improving transportation access and providing more jobs through workforce development will help Enola ameliorate food access issues.

"I used to go to a grocery store but it closed, so I go to Giant or Dollar Tree"

"I have a car but I do not always have the money to get both gas and groceries."





WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Food Access and Workforce Development

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that increases in the unemployment rate, inflation and food prices are associated with increases in food insecurity. Low income households are less able to purchase healthy, culturally appropriate food. Having a secure job with adequate income is an important component of food security.

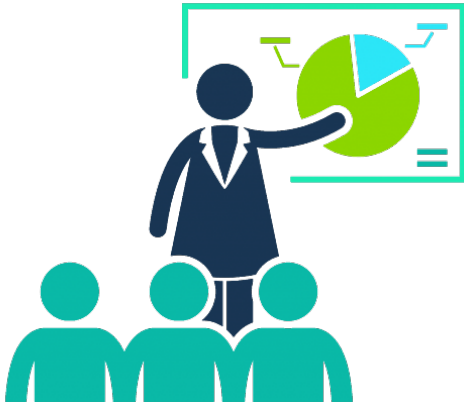
Workforce development training provides the skills needed to secure higher paying jobs with more financial security and benefits, and consequently can reduce risks of food insecurity.

Populations Facing Barriers to Employment:

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act defines the term “Individual with a barrier to employment” to mean a member of one or more of the following populations:

- Displaced homemakers
- Low-income individuals
- Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians, as such terms are defined
- Individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities
- Older individuals

- Ex-offenders
- Homeless individuals
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system
- Individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- Single parents (including single pregnant women)



While there is some legislation in place to address these barriers and provide federal food assistance, a livable income or benefits is not guaranteed.¹⁸ Occupational training offered by state and local programs provide options to meet the specific needs of a community. This includes targeting vulnerable groups that are more prevalent in a community and offering workforce training that is relevant to the area. Unlike the federal government, non-profits are able to focus in on local issues and provide aid that addresses poverty and unemployment in a site-specific manner. New Hope's workforce development training programs exemplify the ability of non-profits to target community needs.

Living Wage Calculator

Families and individuals in low-income jobs lack the resources to meet their basic needs. The online Living Wage Calculator tool estimates the overall cost of living in a region or city. The calculation is based on data related to health care, child-care, food, housing, transportation, and other development requirements. The tool helps to establish what the living wage is for different places.¹⁹

Finding: Many guests are not aware of New Hope's existing workforce training programs.

Social Media Marketing Practices:

During the interviews, it became clear that many guests were not aware of New Hope's workforce training programs or that they are free. While New Hope has a social media presence, continuing to expand their use of advertising through social media may expand awareness of their workforce training programs. Research indicates that Facebook is the most effective social media platform for advertising.²⁰ Since Facebook offers statistics based on what tactics are performing the best, advertisers waste less money on ineffective practices. In addition, Facebook's socio-demographic targeting could make advertisements more specific for underrepresented populations in Enola, as it offers options for targeting based on location, age, gender, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, relationship status, education, workplace and/or occupation.²¹ While New Hope already serves a significant portion of the Enola community in need, expanding social media advertising through Facebook has the potential to increase awareness of New Hope's offerings.

Finding: There is a need for workforce training targeted at the needs of the Enola population.

New Hope has many successful workforce development programs at their permanent locations, and should consider Enola's specific needs for potential future programs. According to the census, 2.5% of Enola citizens are foreign born and 5.1% of households speak a language other than English at home.²² These amounts may not be accurate as the census may not include undocumented immigrants, who may be among New Hope's guests. For these individuals, potential barriers include proficiency with the English language, cultural barriers, and visas or residence status.²³ In order to best accommodate the needs of the foreign-born population and/or households who speak a language other than English at home, New Hope may consider programs such as tax preparation assistance, English as a Second Language classes, and other training that would assist in overcoming cultural differences.



Finding: Lack of education is a challenge in Enola.

Education level is a barrier in Enola, as individuals who do not possess a high school diploma or a college degree are less likely to be employed.²⁴ In Enola 90.3% of individuals²⁵ and older are high school graduates or higher. Only 13.4% of Enola residents have a bachelor's degree or higher.²⁵ New Hope's scholarship program, GED training, and job fairs are needed in Enola to help guests secure higher paying jobs.

13% of Enola residents have a bachelor's degree or higher-level education.

Finding: 12% of Enola residents lack computer access.

As 12% of households in Enola not having computers, it could be a useful service to provide computer and internet access at the proposed Enola center.²⁶

Finding: There is a need for workforce training oriented towards Seniors.

Old age is identified as a barrier to employment. According to the census approximately 17% of the population of Enola is over the age of 65.²⁷ Workforce training programs tailored for the elderly population are important to ensure their access to employment. New Hope's Soft Skills and Computer Class programs could support Enola's senior population. It may also be beneficial for New Hope to launch specialized programs for the elderly or target advertisements of existing programs to the senior population.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a potential option for providing senior workforce training and jobs in Enola. Currently, there are four SCSEP program offices near Enola – three in Harrisburg and one in Carlisle.²⁸ SCSEP could provide the unemployed senior population in Enola with a bridge to employment opportunities. New Hope might consider encouraging seniors to participate in SCSEP. The United Way in Twin Cities, Minnesota also offers a model senior volunteer program, where trained volunteers connect seniors to health and financial benefits.²⁹ The AARP Foundation is also working to increase senior employment and financial stability by offering skills and job training programs, which New Hope can promote to help senior job seekers in Enola.

Finding: Guests expressed concern about barriers to workforce training programs.

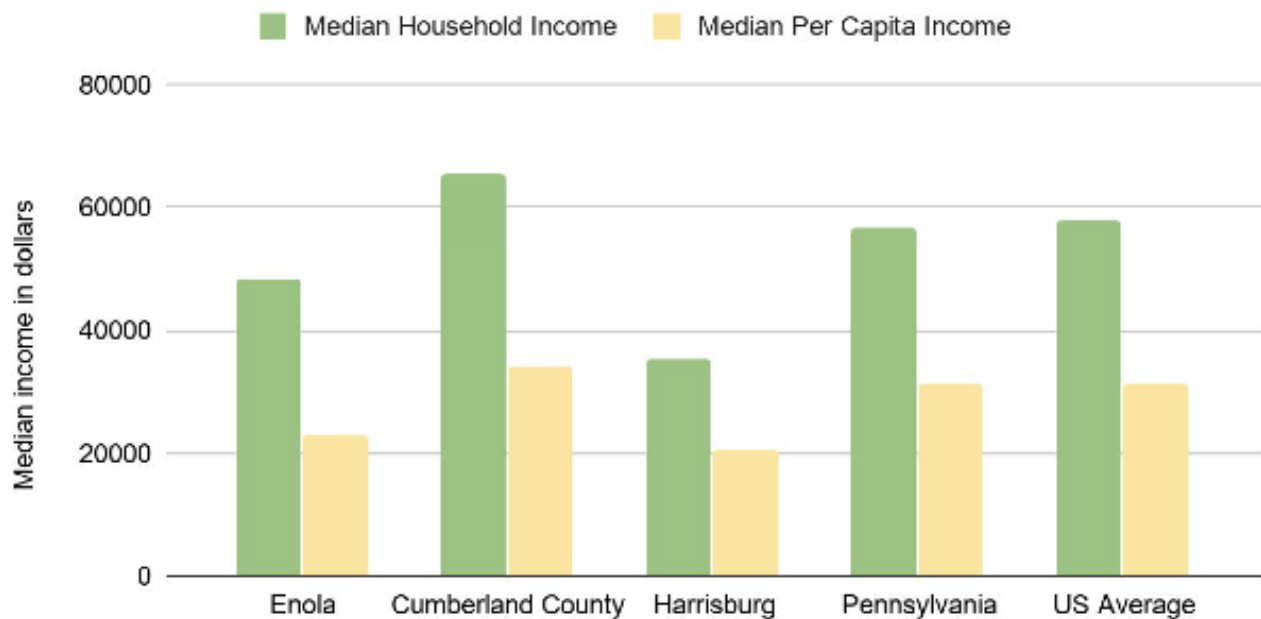
Potential barriers might prevent guests from utilizing workforce training programs. Major barriers expressed by guests include: concerns about the costs, transportation, and time requirements.

Finding: Guests expressed interest in the following training opportunities: computer classes, welding, forklift training, and nurse aid training.

New Hope has useful and successful workforce development programs already established, which may be tailored to meet the specific needs of the Enola population.

Median Income

Enola's median incomes compared to Harrisburg, the county, Pennsylvania and the US



SCSEP Older Worker Programs near Enola, PA

Name	Location
AARP Foundation - Harrisburg, PA	2101 North Front Street Building 3, Suite 100 Harrisburg, PA 17110
Pennsylvania - Department of Aging	555 Walnut Street 5th floor Harrisburg, PA 17101
NOWCC/AARP	4109 Derry Street Lower Level Harrisburg, PA 17111
Associates for Training and Development Carlisle	1 Alexandra Court Cumberland County Careerlink Carlisle, PA 17015



TRANSPORTATION

Transportation intersectionally impacts both food insecurity and workforce training. Transportation is a major barrier for low-income households to travel to supermarkets and access healthy food. Lack of transportation also prevents people from accessing food assistance programs, workforce training, or jobs. 2.1 million households in U.S. do not own a vehicle and are more than one mile from a supermarket.³⁰ In many of the locations where these populations are concentrated, there is also a lack of easily accessible public transportation.³¹

Local governments play an important role in solving transportation issue, because they can identify the neighborhoods in a “food desert” and implement specific policies.³²

Finding: There are no grocery stores in walking distance of the Enola Food Pantry.

For those guests who are within walking distance of the Enola food pantry, there is a CVS pharmacy and the East Pennsboro Kindercare daycare, but there are no food stores. The closest stores, such as Giant Food Store, Weis Market, and Dollar Tree, lie closer to the two-mile boundary. Walking a distance of 2 miles when shopping for grocery becomes an extremely challenging task which further highlights the importance of transportation for food access.

Finding: There is no public transit available to reach the mobile food pantry on Saturdays.

The only advertised public transit in Enola, the F transit route of the CAT bus, operates only on weekdays. The bus fare averages around \$2.50. However, this bus only runs on weekdays and since the food pantry is open only on Saturdays, guests who might use this bus are unable to do so.

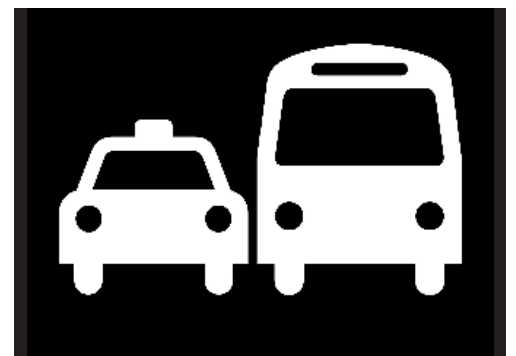
Mobile Food Pantry in Enola: Bus Routes and Landmarks



- ★ Mobile Food Pantry
- Food Stores
- ▲ Daycare
- ✚ pharmacy
- Cat Transit Route F
- 2 mile radius

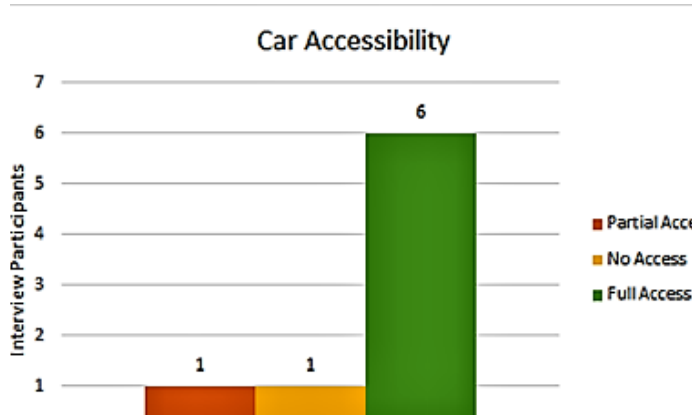
0 0.38 0.75 1.5 2.25 3 Miles

Cat Transit Route F Bus Stops	
Stop No.	Location
1	Market Square Transfer Center
2	Commonwealth & North
3	Enola Drive & Columbla Avenue
4	Shady Lane Olympic Skating Park & Ride
5	College Hill Road & B Street
6	Salt Road / E. Penn Dr. & Wertzville Road
7	Giant Food Store
8	West Shore Hospital



Finding: Guests using the Saturday mobile food pantry have access to shared or personal cars.

Six participants had complete access to a car. One participant had partial access to a car and mentioned how purchasing gas is an issue. One participant had no access to any form of transportation and relied on walking to and from the food pantry.



“Sometimes gas is a problem”
Transportation is the biggest barrier to sustaining employment. The inability to sustain employment can also affect one’s ability to maintain enough savings to ensure access to proper nutrition and have personal transportation to get to and from a grocery store.

Finding: Guests are not aware of New Hope’s pre-paid gas card program or subsidized car sharing services.

For guests who have cars, gas is not always affordable to them. While New Hope does offer a pre-paid gas card program and subsidized Lyft or Uber rides for guests in need, interviewed guests were not aware of these programs.

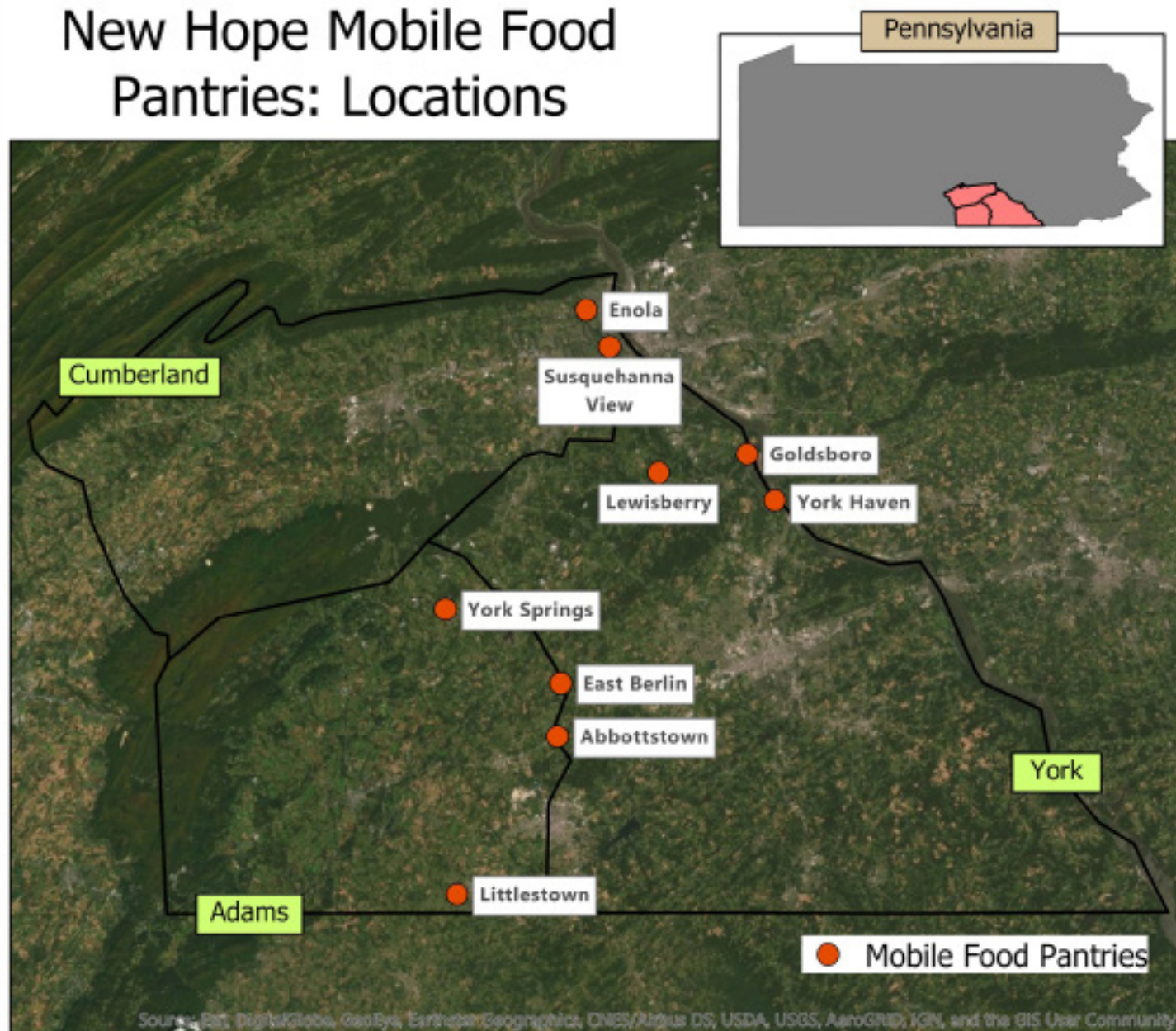
BlueLA Electric Vehicle Car Sharing for Low-Income Residents



With a \$3 million grant from the California Air Resources Board, Los Angeles began an electric vehicle car sharing program for low-income residents in 2018. Residents benefited from over 12,000 trips in 80 electric vehicles, with 260 metric tons of carbon dioxide avoided pollution in one year. While such a program is costly, in the future New Hope could consider partnering with other regional organizations for Commonwealth funding for such a program.

“The BlueLA EV Carshare program has helped protect Angelenos from harmful pollutants, build healthier communities across our city, and bring new transportation options to neighborhoods on the front lines of climate change” (LA Mayor Eric Garcetti).

New Hope Mobile Food Pantries: Locations



Mobile Food Pantry	Location
Abbottstown	St. John's Lutheran Church located at 100 Water St. Abbottstown
East Berlin	Trinity Lutheran Church located at 117 W. King St. East Berlin
Enola	River of God Church located at 474 Wertzville Rd. Enola
Goldsboro	53 North York Street, Etters (community building)
Lewisberry	Lewisberry United Methodist Church, 309 Market Street, Lewisberry
Littlestown	1113 Frederick Pike, Littlestown, PA
Susquehanna View	Susquehanna View Apartments, 208 Senate Avenue, Camp Hill
York Haven	Vibrant Church located at 37 Pennsylvania Avenue in York Haven
York Springs	York Springs United Methodist Church located at 840 Trolley Road, York Springs

DC LYFT PROGRAM

For the people in and around Enola without a car, ride-share apps, such as Lyft and Uber, are often the easiest way to get to a grocery store or food pantry that may be far away from a bus stop. In Washington D.C., Lyft piloted a program to give discounted rides to families without reliable transportation. The program started with 300 families, who paid \$2.50 each way, and 50 senior citizens, who paid \$1.50 each way. Rides that would have cost \$12- \$15 each way became much more accessible while saving the families 17 minutes on their grocery store commute. Although the Lyft Grocery Access program was piloted in Washington D.C., a similar program is feasible in the Enola area in order to help guests get to New Hope food pantries and other grocery stores.

**lyft grocery
access**





CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

Dickinson College students appreciated the opportunity to learn about the intersectional links between food access, workforce training, and transportation in Enola and beyond. The below includes a review of the key findings noted above, with big and small ideas for addressing the findings from students (once I receive them from the students). I will add more text here on the concluding ideas from students (once I receive them from the students). I will add more text here on the concluding ideas from students (once I receive them from the students).

Findings: Guests like the organized and consistent nature of the mobile food pantry, and particularly appreciate the compassionate atmosphere.

Affordable groceries are not accessible in the Enola area, and transportation and gas play a major role in accessibility.

There are no grocery stores in walking distance of the Enola Food Pantry.

Ideas:

- There appears to be demonstrated need to justify a permanent New Hope food pantry and workforce training center in Enola.
- If funding is not available to open a new site in Enola, other options could include to:
 - Increase transportation options to New Hope's Mechanicsburg center.
 - Offer the mobile food pantry on a weekday, when the bus route is active.
 - Distribute the map of Mobile Food Pantry locations to partner organizations (shelters, workforce training centers, food pantries, government offices responsible for food benefits, etc.).
- Partner with a local service provider to offer the food pantry in conjunction with their services (focused on target populations).

Finding: Guests suggest an increase in the availability of food to meet dietary restrictions.

Ideas:

- Increase the range of food options to meet dietary restrictions, including gluten free and diabetic friendly options..

Finding: The mobile food pantry may provide mobility challenges for guests who cannot walk or may require assistance.

Ideas:

- A permanent site would not present the same mobility challenges as the mobile food pantry.
- Ensure that guests are aware that volunteers are able to assist them as they descend on the ramp from the mobile food pantry.

Finding: The majority of interviewed guests are not enrolled in food benefit programs.

Ideas:

- Set-up food benefit enrollment pop up clinics in conjunction with the mobile food pantry. Trained volunteers could help enroll interested guests while they wait for their turn in the pantry or following their visit.

Finding: Many guests are not aware of New Hope's existing workforce training programs.

Ideas:

- Expand New Hope's Facebook presence to include specific advertising to potential guests in the region. Research demonstrates that socio-demographic targeting on Facebook is an effective way to reach key groups.

Findings: There is a need for workforce training targeted at the needs of the Enola population.

Lack of higher education is a challenge in Enola.

12% of Enola residents lack computer access.

There is a need for workforce training oriented towards Seniors.

Ideas:

- For guests who are foreign born and/ or speak another language at home: Prioritize training which would help them overcome cultural differences, including: tax Preparation Assistance and English as a Second Language classes.
- For guests without higher degrees: Prioritize sharing information about scholarships, GED training, and job fairs
- For guests without computer access: Potentially create a computer station at mobile food pantries or a permanent site to increase connectivity.

- For senior guests: Partner with the Senior Community Service Employment Program to provide senior workforce training and jobs in Enola.

- Follow the United Way in Twin Cities, Minnesota model to create a senior volunteer program, where trained volunteers connect seniors to health and financial benefits.

- Promote the AARP Foundation's skills and job training programs.

Findings: Guests expressed interest in the following training opportunities: computer classes, welding, forklift training, and nurse aid training.

Guests expressed concern about barriers to workforce training programs.

Ideas:

- Initiate a workforce training program focused on the Enola-specific needs.

- Communicate clearly that the workforce training options offered through New Hope are free and open to all guests. This information could be communicated to guests while they are waiting for their turn to use the mobile food pantry. Volunteers could have a laminated sheet highlighting the various workforce training options available at New Hope's different locations.

Findings: There is no public transit available to reach the mobile food pantry on Saturdays.

Guests using the Saturday mobile food pantry have access to shared or personal cars.

Guests are not aware of New Hope's pre-paid gas card program or subsidized car sharing services.

Ideas:

- While guests wait for the mobile food pantry, trained volunteers could ask them if they would like more information on New Hope's pre-paid gas card or subsidized car sharing program. Volunteers could have a laminated sheet highlighting these services.

- Long-term, New Hope could consider working with partners to secure funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a grant to start an electric vehicle car sharing program (detailed in the example from Los Angeles in this report). This intersectional initiative would address transportation challenges for low-income residents, while reducing air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.



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Dickinson College Department of Environmental Studies and Food Studies Certificate

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