

ATTACHMENT A: SEI Part 1 Survey Summary

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Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank

Stakeholder Engagement Initiative Part 1 Survey

Summary

July 2021

Introduction

Between May 12 and June 30, 2021, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank hosted an online survey for its Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) Part 1 of 3. A hardcopy of the survey was also distributed to community members at Food Bank distribution sites, partner organizations, and those who requested it by mail.

The survey included the following questions:

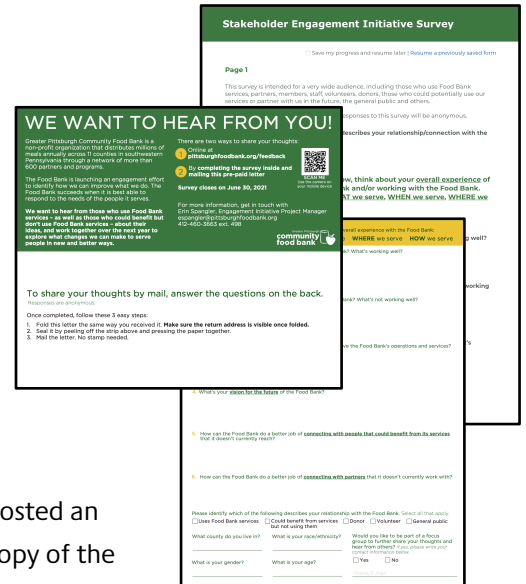
Survey questions:

1. What do you like about your experience with the Food Bank? What's working well?
2. What don't you like about your experience with the Food Bank? What's not working well?
3. What suggestions do you have to help strengthen or improve the Food Bank's operations and services?
4. What's your vision for the future of the Food Bank?
5. How can the Food Bank do a better job of connecting with people that could benefit from its services that it doesn't currently reach?
6. How can the Food Bank do a better job of connecting with partners that it doesn't currently work with?

Demographics questions:

1. Identify which of the following best describes your relationship/connection with the Food Bank.
2. What county do you live in?
3. What best describes your race/ethnicity?
4. What is your gender?
5. What is your age?
6. Would you be interested in participating in a focus group to further share your thoughts and hear from others?
7. Would you like to stay informed as we continue with this Stakeholder Engagement Initiative process?

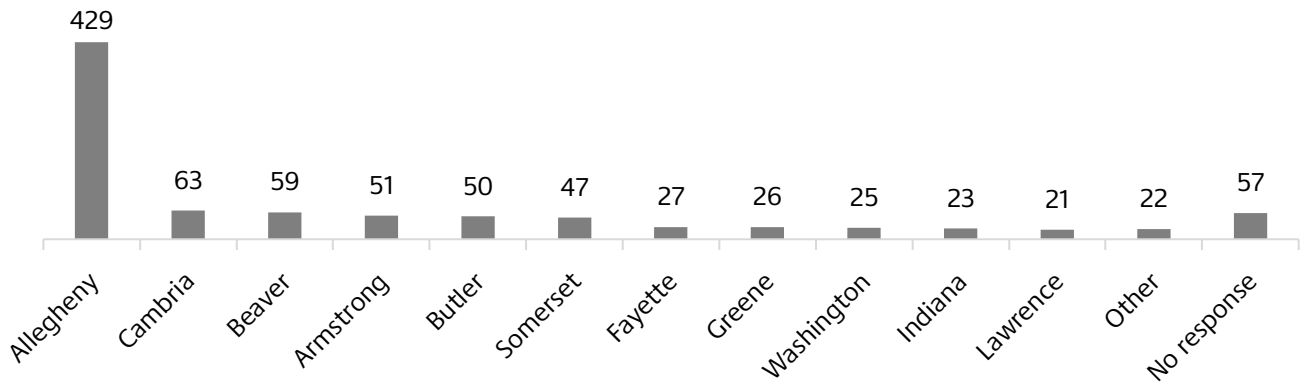
The survey collected a total of 900 responses, including 711 online responses and 189 hard copy responses. On average, respondents spent approximately 14 minutes on the online survey. Approximately half of all survey



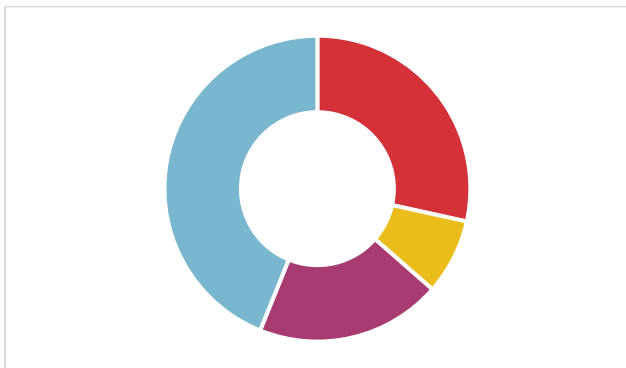
Online and hardcopy surveys

respondents are from Allegheny County. See the following page for a breakdown of respondents' location by county.

Location of all respondents: 900 responses (online and hardcopy)



This survey summary organizes feedback by respondents' relationship and connection with the Food Bank into four audience groups: 879 responses (online and hardcopy)



Group 1: Donors & Vendors, Page 3
(256 responses, 28%)

- Food Bank donors
- Product donors/vendors

Group 2: Food Bank Volunteers, Page 7
(72 responses, 8%)

Group 3: Partner Organizations, Page 12
(177 responses, 20%)

- Community-Based distribution sites (CPO/emergency food box provider)
- Food Bank partners
- Member agencies
- Partner Distribution Organizations (PDO)
- Potential Food Bank partners

Group 4: Community & Individuals, Page 17
(395 responses, 44%)

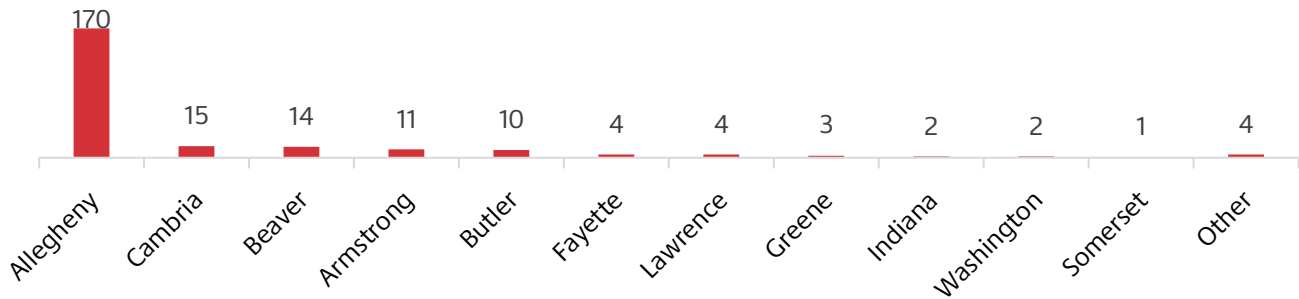
- Could benefit from Food Bank services but not using them
- General public
- Government Official
- Uses Food Bank services
- Others & those who did not identify audience group
- Hardcopy responses

The breakdown of respondents' location within each audience group can be found within their respective summary sections.

Group 1: Donor & Vendor Feedback

Overview

This group includes those who identified as Food Bank donors (231 responses) or product donors/vendors (25 responses) in the survey. There was a total of 256 respondents in this group. Approximately 70% said they are from Allegheny County, and the remaining responses were from other counties or did not have a location specified.



Feedback from both donor and vendor groups were generally consistent. The overall theme of the responses was that additional resources should be allocated to the deployment of more targeted use of resources through volunteer efforts and locations where the Food Bank operates. There was also support for the work currently being done by the Food Bank.

Respondents were enthusiastic about increasing the scale of the Food Bank's work, including opening smaller, targeted Food Bank pop-ups to serve communities facing food insecurity, and doing more to deliver food to vulnerable groups without access to transportation.

Donors were split regarding the eventual future of the Food Bank as the crisis of food insecurity is resolved – however, they agreed that it is a long way away, and that the Food Bank should continue to deploy resources in an efficient manner.

What is Working Well

- **Strong support from the donors and vendors for the overall quality of Food Bank programming and services.** Generally, the responses were overwhelmingly positive about the mission of the Food Bank and the Food Bank's ability to deliver results. One donor said that the Food Bank "does a phenomenal job of satisfying a huge need. I trust them to put my donation to good use to support the local community."
- **Donors appreciate the ease of use of the website and how simple it is to make donations.** Donors particularly shared enthusiasm for the automatic payment method when contributing funds to the Food Bank on a monthly or on-going basis.
- **Donors were pleased with the Food Bank's efficient organizational structure and volunteer efforts.** A donor said: "I like that most of my donations go directly to buying food rather than a lot of overhead." This

underscores the feedback received that suggests the organization is effective at delivering on its mission to feed those facing food insecurity.

- **Donors and vendors are seeing results in their local community from their contributions and praised the Food Bank's ability to respond in times of crisis.** Many donors shared empathy for people impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic downturn and felt that the Food Bank was adept at being able to “fill in the gaps” when users needed it most. One donor said: “I trust the food bank to use my donations in the best way to help people in need in our community.”
- **Respondents feel that their donation is making a difference.** One donor said that they liked that “You always sent an acknowledgement of my donation,” which underscores the good feeling that donors experience from this simple act of acknowledgement and gratitude.
- **Donors and vendors shared their sincere thanks and have a strong level of trust in the work of the Food Bank and its volunteers.**

What is Not Working Well

- **Too many solicitations for donations, or that there was too much use of paper in the solicitation material.** Respondents prefer a greener approach with less paper waste as well as a reduced frequency of times donors were solicited to provide additional contributions.
- **Access to Food Bank services for those without transportation.** Some respondents said that users without vehicles have difficulty getting food and that additional delivery mechanisms might benefit those in difficult situations.
- **More clarity on spending.** Respondents said that they would like a more comprehensive breakdown of how their donations were being used to ensure that dollars are allocated efficiently and effectively.
- **Everything is going well - no need to fix what isn't broken.** Many respondents didn't have an answer for what isn't working well. Many said they simply didn't have insight into areas in need of improvement or they saw no need for fixing the Food Bank's operations.

Suggestions to Improve Operations & Services

- **More locations to access food.** Some respondents suggested the Food Bank “set up operations at different locations or deliver food to areas that need it and may not be able to make it to the Food Bank” and “provide more pick-up locations” to make operations more accessible to all in need. Some suggested that new smaller food distribution locations be identified/created to meet the needs of food insecure community members without access to transportation.
- **Provide a diverse mix of produce and other healthy options.** For example, one respondent said, “I personally believe food banks should try as much as possible to focus on nutrition and steer away from nutrient

deficient products like processed foods. I know it's hard to provide nutritious foods when demand for processed foods is high.” Another said, “For the good of the animals, the good of the clients, and the good of the planet, stop distributing meat and substitute healthy plant-based alternatives.”

- **Provide more nutritious food alternatives that come directly from local farms.** A few participants suggested the Food Bank provide more services in rural areas and work with area farmers to bring fresh produce to low-income households in those areas so that local supply is feeding local people.
- **More information on ways people could volunteer or donate that may not fit the standard template.** Many respondents said they are eager to contribute more, both in terms of volunteering more often and the ways in which they can donate their resources, be it skills, financial donations, or time. Some suggested they could donate their software engineering and/or food delivery services. Some also said that they would like to volunteer more, and that they had seen things short-staffed but said they had not seen postings looking for volunteers. Some suggested that the Food Bank could leverage its networks to find new opportunities to partner with schools and other organizations for new volunteer opportunities.
- **Offer lessons in cooking and nutritious food preparation to community members that use the Food Bank.** A few participants suggested the idea of more teaching aspects, such as including recipes, providing cooking lessons and/or teaching healthy eating habits as a means of improving the nutrition of those using the Food Bank services.
- **Engage in operations that would make the Food Bank increasingly unnecessary.** Some participants suggested that the Food Bank could support efforts to get the city and/or county to mandate a living wage and a meaningful right to food, as well as support community gardens and other neighborhood-based forms of food production.

Vision for the Future

- **Challenging the need for private donations entirely - food should be a basic human right.** Some suggested that while the Food Bank was critical for helping those in need, the resources should not come from private individuals but rather from the government, viewing food as a basic human right. A few suggested there could be free-food markets or stores that do not charge, which allow individuals to access food, potentially with SNAP funds, in more locations with greater ease.
- **Scale down operations as the needs of food insecure people are met.** Some felt that the operations of the Food Bank would diminish as the food insecurity problem is solved. Some donors said they are aware of how far away this vision is from being realized.
- **Scale up operations to tackle other life stabilization issues.** Some felt the Food Bank should expand its footprint and extend services to other social needs (i.e., expansion of efforts directed to advocating for a living wage or affordable housing).

- **Improve the basic level of food security before any operations are scaled back.** While some respondents were equally split between focused on scaling up life stabilization operations and other respondents focused on scaling down operations as food insecurity is alleviated, many respondents were also content with the current level of service provided to the community and suggested services remain unchanged.
- **Enhanced partnerships with governments, farms or other organizations.** Many respondents shared their thoughts on increasing the scale of partnership with governments or other food providers. It is also important to improve access to food and make the food distribution more accessible for Food Bank staff and volunteers who donate their time/labor and require food assistance.

Connecting with People Not Currently Reached

- **Different methods of advertising about Food Bank services.** Respondents suggested: online via social media, on public transit, at local community groups, shelters, mental health facilities, schools, at more localized distribution points, pop-up locations/food trucks, and other outreach campaigns. Other ways of reaching other potential users could be through partnerships with food delivery vendors, like DoorDash, UberEats, etc., or at local farmer's markets. The Food Bank could also use their network of partners for more word-of-mouth opportunities.
- **Provide more clarity on who is eligible to use Food Bank services and destigmatizing the need to access those services.** Respondents suggested outreach campaigns to accomplish this.

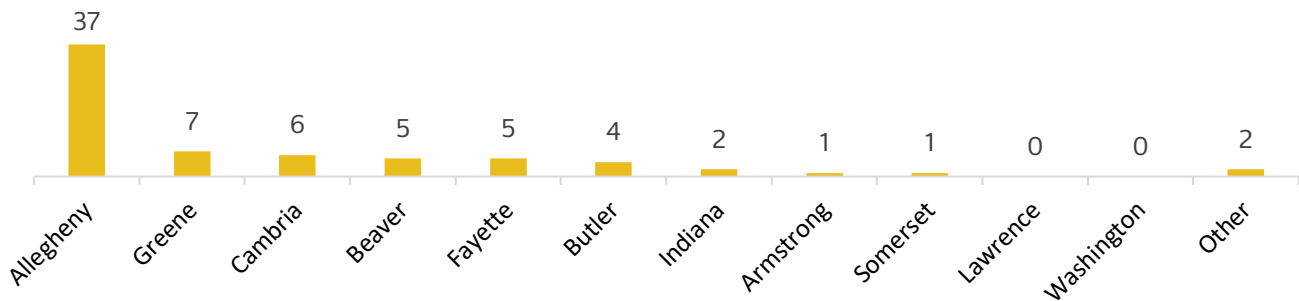
Connecting with New Partners

- **The Food Bank should initiate conversations at the local and regional level about other urgent needs in our region.** Some respondents suggested that the Food Bank's reputation is strong enough to challenge the status quo on a national level and that there's an opportunity to be more proactive in supporting the community on larger-scale issues. Examples of causes to advocate for include government-guaranteed right to food, living wages, non-profit community-based food production, and food-growing skills in school.
- **Enhance partnerships with Pittsburgh businesses and organizations,** including sports franchises, media, Boys and Girls' clubs, hospitals and banks. Respondents suggested enhancing partnerships with local Pittsburgh businesses and organizations with a broad reach to get the word out about food insecurity with local campaigns. This could also be mutually beneficial for both parties, where the Food Bank can spread its message, and the companies and organizations get to advertise too. There were also several respondents who advocated the use of traditional media to broadcast the mission of the Food Bank and garner support.
- **Establish ongoing matched-donation programs with corporate partners.** This includes partnerships that might increase sales for "for-profit" entities, like grocery stores and restaurants. It could take the form of advertising campaigns detailing "percent of profits" directed at the Food Bank from shoppers' bills.

Group 2: Food Bank Volunteer Feedback

Overview

This group includes feedback from those who identified as Food Bank volunteers (72 responses). Approximately half of respondents said they are from Allegheny County, and the remaining responses were from other counties or did not specify a location.



In general, feedback from inside and outside Allegheny County was similar and there were no key distinctions between geographic regions. Respondents commonly shared feedback on three key themes: Food Bank operations and organization, volunteer experience, and community impact. While there were several comments about each of these themes by themselves, it's important to note that they were often interwoven or interdependent of one another (i.e. a very smooth operation is a strong contributor to a positive volunteer experience).

Volunteers were keenly aware of the Food Bank's current importance and were concerned with reaching difficult-to-reach groups, such as people experiencing homelessness or people lacking internet. They also saw their own networks, as well as community networks, as being key to reaching new people and partners.

What is Working Well

- **The Food Bank – particularly the distributions – are well planned and organized.** This predictability makes the volunteer experience positive and allows volunteers to feel like they can accomplish their work in a timely fashion while connecting with Food Bank recipients.
- **Staff communicate often with volunteers and volunteers feel like their work is appreciated.** Staff are prepared for, and supportive of, volunteers and they have confidence in the volunteers' ability to do their tasks.
- **Volunteers really enjoy interacting with one another and with those using Food Bank services.** Volunteers referred to the Food Bank as supportive and friendly environmental and characterized their experience volunteering as uplifting and inspiring. Importantly, several volunteers felt that staff and those receiving services were genuinely appreciative of their work, which proved to be a motivator.
- **Volunteers emphasized the importance of the services provided in the community and the need to take care of people facing food insecurity cannot be overstated.** Nearly every comment from volunteers

referenced the importance of the Food Bank's work. One respondent said, "I'm retired from compensated work...compensation as a volunteer is knowing that I'm helping those who need it!" This sums up the sentiment that was made clear by all volunteers.

- **There was recognition that the Food Bank appears to be able to stick to its mission.** There was also acknowledgement that the Food Bank had the appearance of being open and accessible to all.

What is Not Working Well

- **Volunteers would like to receive (more) regular communications from the Food Bank.** This includes regular, periodic information as well as event-specific follow-ups. Respondents referenced a desire to be informed about upcoming volunteer opportunities as well as updates about construction progress.
- **New volunteers could use extra guidance from Food Bank staff and more seasoned volunteers.** In the fast-paced environment where a few seasoned staff and volunteers know exactly what they're doing, new volunteers have found that their tasks and expectations were not clearly communicated, and it can be difficult to figure it out without assistance. Since the tasks are different each shift, this can be the case for the first few shifts for new volunteers. There was a recognition that staff's time is precious so it was suggested that more seasoned volunteers could be paired up with new ones for their first few shifts.
- **The volunteer experience could be better streamlined to be more efficient.** A few volunteers did not like having too much down time while in the warehouse; others found the sign-up process to be repetitive and cumbersome. To solve this issue, respondents recommended that return volunteers could have a pre-populated option that saved them the time required to input their information with each sign-up.
- **There isn't always a clear or cohesive mechanism for reporting practical issues.** Respondents were unsure whether their feedback on operational issues was making it to the right person since they found that the issues, they raised remained unresolved. For example, if you indicated a cart was damaged or not functional, it was likely that the cart remained damaged next month.
- **The operations don't always accommodate or reflect certain realities of those using Food Bank services.** Cars are often a requirement for people using Food Bank services to be able to transport the cumbersome box of food home, especially for elderly and home-bound populations.
- **There is a desire for healthier options and increased food safety.** While specific dietary requirements were not mentioned, some volunteers were concerned about providing healthier options to families using the Food Bank. Some respondents were also concerned that produce is not in good condition by the time it reaches distribution and that there may be food-related health and safety concerns, as well as food safety concerns.
- **Negative social implications.** A few respondents shared concerns that free food would lead to unruly behavior or social chaos. There was also concern that the system provides an opportunity for 'freeloaders' to take advantage of it.

- **The Food Bank is generally working well.** Some respondents believe everything is already working well. In this section, those respondents wrote something to the effect of "in my opinion, there is nothing that is not working well."

Suggestions to Improve Operations & Services

- **Clarity on COVID-19 guidance (as it becomes available) is desired.** Several respondents found COVID to negatively impact their volunteer efforts in some way. Multiple comments related to interest in masking policies as well as restriction-related challenges. Volunteers appreciated that this guidance is new and evolving but would like clarity moving forward.
- **More advanced planning could make a significant impact on the Food Bank's operations as well as the volunteer experience.** Operational ideas to help volunteers included spending two days prepping for distribution and better consistency in determining how much food is available to distribute (this was supported by an example that some nights, volunteers are told to provide 1-2 of something and other nights they are asked to give people 12 squashes). Also, there was a desire to have updated SNAP income guidelines and requirements be shared in a timelier way.
- **More advanced planning could also help troubleshoot issues experienced by those using Food Bank services.** Mobility and transportation difficulties were identified as key issues of concern. The Food Bank could consider continuing Doorstep Delivery for elderly recipients and consider providing fold-out or rolling carts to help people get food home from the local distribution center. Also, cooking classes were identified as a valuable service for those who may not know how to properly prepare fresh produce. Volunteers expressed a willingness to call people as a form of outreach, especially to those who don't have internet.
- **Strengthen services by expanding reach into communities & creatively combatting stigma.** Several volunteers were interested in how to expand the Food Bank's reach to more people that could potentially either volunteer and/or use Food Bank services. These channels included advertising and expanded food distribution locations, as well as more neighborhood-based distribution to reach the elderly and homebound - the need for more "feet on the street" or local outreach was clear. There was also a suggestion for partnerships to be expanded to include shippers, packers and growers as well as government agencies. One respondent believed that bundling food distribution with other relevant services would help people feel less singled out as being "needy" through co-locating with other service providers (i.e. health, schools and daycares).
- **Improving food quality can help reduce food waste.** Improved food handling of produce by the Food Bank would automatically help to improve freshness as well as reduce food waste.

Vision for the Future

- **Continue to serve the community directly and increase access to Food Bank services.** Overwhelmingly, responses centered on the desire to see the Food Bank maintain its role in the community and, in some cases, increase access to groups who need these services but may struggle to access them. Key groups identified

include people without transportation or internet, people experiencing homelessness and people living in food deserts.

- **Expand services and programming for people that use the Food Bank.** Suggestions largely focused on meal prep demonstrations and cooking classes. Providing healthy options was core to these ideas. Respondents also identified an opportunity to broaden community programming, either independently or in partnership with social service agencies.

Connecting with People Not Currently Reached

- **Social media & email can reach a lot of people quickly and inexpensively.** A couple of respondents identified the vast reach of Facebook and its multifunctionality (ie. closed Facebook groups). Upfront collection of email addresses upon client registration or in-take at food distributions could help.
- **Rely on community and personal networks to help reach more people.** There was significant emphasis on flyer campaigns, announcements and general partnerships with the following: places of worship, schools, PCP medical offices, grocery stores, thrift shops, dollar stores and community gatherings.
- **Look to advertise and/or partner with local agencies.** Connecting with partners that potential Food Bank clients may visit, like housing and employment services locations, could help reach people who don't have cars or computers but are accessing other services.
- **TV advertising could reach a number of people.** This could range from full TV advertising to a ticker at the bottom of the news.

Connecting with New Partners

- **Provide on-site opportunities to see the work in action.** Several respondents believed that inviting people to see the Food Bank's work firsthand would make a big impact. Ideas included: inviting potential business partners to lunch at the Food Bank; inviting current and future partners to an opening ceremony or ribbon cutting at the expanded facility; providing potential partners with volunteering opportunities or inviting them to see the work in action.
- **Online presence and outreach can help connect with new partners and institutions.** A few participants suggested reaching out to philanthropy divisions of larger organizations could be productive. Improving the Food Bank's website by adding more specific information would help ensure people who are proactively interested in partnering know what the Food Bank is about. The respondent who identified this said it is tricky because the Food Bank is vast and involved with a lot of different activities, but "I feel like the website is hard to glean information from."
- **Word of mouth and existing networks can uncover new partnership leads.** If asked, volunteers may be able to provide specific recommendations. Similarly, social networks of current volunteers may have ideas. Professional organizations may be willing to provide member lists (ie. PGH Technology Council). The Food Bank

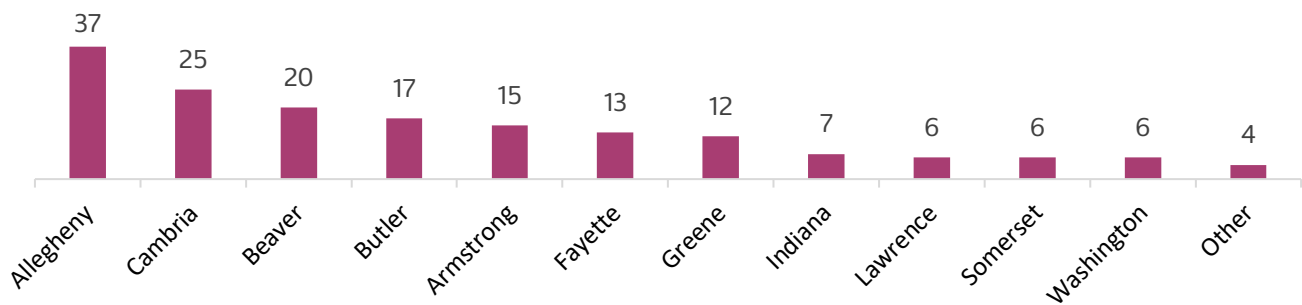
could also create an association of like-minded groups to better coordinate activities and provide strategic advice to strengthen the Food Bank.

- **Traditional media & flyers could reach new audiences.** A general approach to increase publicity through a flyer/ mailing campaign or television ads could reach a large swath of potential partners.
- **Dedicate specific resources to this objective.** Dedicated resources could look like having a person assigned to fundraising or creating a task force to look into obtaining new partners.

Group 3: Partner Organization Feedback

Overview

This group includes feedback from those who identified as Community-Based Distribution Sites (CPO/emergency food box providers), Food Bank Partners, Member Agencies, Partner Distribution Organizations (PDO), and Potential Food Bank Partners. There was a total of 177 respondents in this group. There was greater representation across the Food Bank’s eleven-county service area, with 22% from Allegheny, 15% from Cambria, 12% from Beaver, and the remaining from other counties (with a few who did not specify their location).



An analysis of feedback received by county shows that partners in Allegheny County shared feedback that was mostly about transportation-related issues and possible Food Bank responses, such as delivery options. Most of the feedback that focused on county-specific initiatives, such as outreach to local stakeholders outside of the existing partner network, were from counties outside of Allegheny.

Overall, many partners feel the relationship is working well but could be improved with some specific solutions to communications, operations and services. Ultimately, partners shared several ideas to leverage their own networks to help further the work of the Food Bank. Two key themes emerged from respondents’ feedback: partners want to see the Food Bank’s current services continue and expand to even more communities and many partners want to see the Food Bank’s mission expand to include advocacy, more integrated networks that address the complex life stabilization needs that some Food Bank clients have and/or increased government support.

What is Working Well

- **Communication with partners is clear and responsive.** Not only does Food Bank staff’s responsiveness and general approach build trust, but their accessibility throughout the pandemic was also noted. Similarly, staff are helpful and quick to resolve any questions or issues as well as correspond with partners in a very timely fashion.
- **The overall operational experience is very positive; ordering and distribution are particularly efficient.** The online ordering system works well. Service is timely and partners have great experiences accessing the Food Bank’s resources. Respondents appreciated that food collected during food drives is picked up free of charge. Several partners commented about the efficiency and effectiveness of large-scale distributions. Several noted

the usefulness of both Doorstep Delivery and Drive-Up Distributions. Partners reported that picking up food on behalf of clients is seamless.

- **The Food Bank makes it easy for the most vulnerable to get help.** Several partners were keenly aware of the importance of the Food Bank's work in reaching key groups at risk of food insecurity, including children and the elderly. Some people are very private and would not use the Food Bank's services if it meant sharing extensive personal information or documents – so the Food Bank's relatively flexible self-declaration process, during the pandemic, is working well.
- **The Food Bank's advocacy on other food assistance programs beyond emergency food is an important part of fighting hunger.** There was a recognition of the Food Bank's efforts to look beyond the immediate need of emergency food by working to improve school breakfasts and after-school meals, as well as focusing on SNAP outreach and enrollment.

What is Not Working Well

- **The Food Bank's structure may be underserving certain demographics, namely African Americans and people in rural areas.** Some respondents felt that the Food Bank was still not reaching enough African Americans/people of color, in part because of systemic racism and the Food Bank not proactively embracing racial justice. A partner from Cambria felt that things were not working well for people in rural communities, which was a sentiment in other partners' feedback.
- **The pantry system is hard to navigate because it is disjointed, without centralized information.** Finding out which pantries were still operating in the pandemic and what eligibility requirements are is challenging because each pantry is different and has its own system to navigate. If someone isn't directly connected with a pantry coordinator, it's a challenging experience.
- **Some food items are less desirable in quality and variety and other foods can be too expensive for partners to purchase.** Most comments related to this issue were item-specific (list below). However, a general lack of variety of food from the Food Bank was identified. Additionally, some food that's provided isn't conducive for various households that don't have refrigeration and only have a microwave to cook. Negative feedback on specific items included: canned beef, plums, bags of peanuts/walnuts, beans, cereal, mixed canned fruit, as well as the discontinuation of prepared hot meals. Finally, there are certain pricier food items that people may consider staples, but agencies can't necessarily afford to purchase for their pantry like flour and cooking oil (including delivery fees).
- **Useful information is not always easily accessible (possibly due to COVID-19) and paperwork can be hard to turnaround quickly.** People accessing Food Bank services may need additional services, like SNAP, but it's not always easy for partners to find or access pamphlets to give their clients. Timeliness associated with turning around client paperwork can be difficult to meet. This can put strains on program participants and/or result in program participants not getting help in time. Sometimes there is not enough information collected about clients' dietary or cultural needs, or the client feels that the wrong information is being collected.

- **Generally working well.** Some respondents don't have any concerns or dislikes and were generally in the vein of "everything is working well from my perspective."

Suggestions to Improve Operations & Services

- **Expand and refine pantry and distribution services, including home delivery, to reach more people.** Returning to community-based distribution and expanding delivery services would go a long way to reaching elderly and homebound clients, as well as those who are afraid of being seen collecting food and, therefore, won't go to the pantry. Also, the Food Bank could consider partnering with Uber (similar to recent vaccine efforts) as a cost-effective way to deliver food to those who cannot physically access the pantries. Finally, providing emergency food boxes at local pantries would save partners and clients from having to drive far away to get them.
- **Strengthen advocacy and planning by involving more people with lived experience.** Program improvements could be better achieved by widening the in terms of who contributes to and participates in advocacy. This could include everyone from individuals with lived experience who use or have used to food bank to staff, nutrition program providers and administrators. Additionally, a food recipient advisory board could improve planning through more shared decision-making.
- **Diversify food offerings and address dietary requirements.** Partners are seeing more clients with diverse food needs, including diabetes-friendly foods, cultural requirements (ie. Halal), heart-healthy foods, and specific food allergies. Also, partners would like to see an increase in food variety available with specific emphasis on fresh and frozen produce.
- **Bolster online services and communications to make for a smoother experience.** Suggestions to improve online/IT services were largely focused on offering online training and better online information collection. Creating an information collection system that captures specifics, such as changes in numbers of households served, dietary requirements or client information, will help streamline processes. Staff could work across departments to identify gaps in service/data and work with partners to address them.
- **Create diversified revenue streams and pass along profits or savings to Food Bank partners.** In addition to existing community funding, the Food Bank can apply for additional funding or work to find more revenue streams to meet their objectives and support partners through financing. The Food Bank could charge partners less, make some items free or pass the "support" on to partners in other ways (I.e. staff, technology, and equipment).

Vision for the Future

- **Continue serving communities across the region and work with partners to reach even more people.** Many respondents focused on the importance of maintaining the Food Bank's current role in communities and with partners. These partners see the benefit of keeping these services very local to meet client needs in a more personalized and flexible way. Several partners want to see the Food Bank's efforts expanded and some

partners want to see existing services offered more regularly, such as an increased ability to reach and feed children.

- **Expanded services and programming for Food Bank and partner clients.** A significant number of partners want to see the Food Bank's offerings expanded, either independently or through a partner network. These offerings ranged from shopping/cooking/nutrition classes to partnerships with groups like CONNECT community paramedics, to get people the skills they are interested in as well as better access to other life stabilization services like healthcare, financial help, housing, etc.
- **Focus on greater diversity and representation to inform current work and advocacy efforts.** The Food Bank could focus specific efforts on underserved neighborhoods to expand its reach. More specifically, the Food Bank could expand its focus to better understand how racism and other social barriers affect its clients. From these learnings, the Food Bank could develop an advocacy platform to bring greater attention to these issues and simultaneously, work with various regional partners to pilot programs aimed at addressing these systemic issues that contribute to food insecurity. Improving diversity and representation among Food Bank's leadership would also help.
- **Obtain significantly more government funding through advocacy or other work.** A few Food Bank partners would like to see the Food Bank become more greatly subsidized by the state or federal government, or that food assistance networks/food banks become fully incorporated into the existing safety net system.

Connect with People Not Currently Reached

- **Tap into local networks to reach harder-to-reach people.** A couple of respondents identified the vast reach of Facebook and its multifunctionality (ie. Closed Facebook groups). Hiring people that have used the Food Bank system to access services would allow you to tap into their resources and understanding of how to reach more people. Also, flyer campaigns in churches and schools, along with getting info out through town/county websites and through trusted individuals in communities would help broaden the reach.
- **Try broad and issue- or demographic-specific advertising.** A number of partners identified the value of both traditional (TV and print ads) and social media (Facebook) advertising. A few respondents more specifically identified the usefulness of platforms like WeChat, while others suggested advertising focused on barriers faced by targeted communities.
- **Partner with more agencies and institutions that are strategically aligned with the Food Bank or strategically located.** There may be complementary groups the Food Bank is not connected with, like Meals on Wheels. Building relationships with trusted agencies, such as churches or community groups, in immigrant and limited-English communities could yield significant results.
- **Focus efforts on transporting food to people and people to food.** Food delivery could overcome significant barriers for the homebound or elderly. Offering transportation for people in food deserts would help more people access pantries. There may be creative opportunities to bring food to people or bring people to food (see above Uber suggestion above).

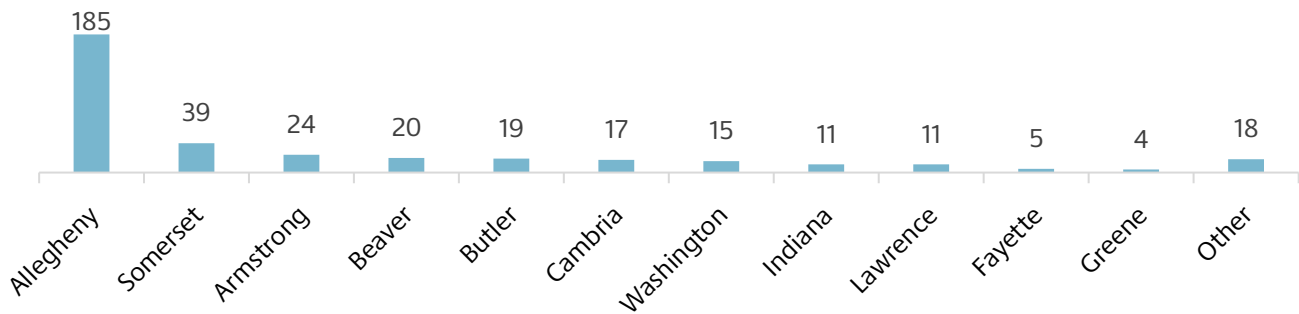
Connecting with New Partners

- **Leverage existing partners' networks and ideas.** The Food Bank could establish a direct referral program with partners to connect community members that access Food Bank services to other life stabilization services providers. The Food Bank could also provide partners with resources (such as pamphlets advertising how to partner with the Food Bank) to distribute as they see fit. The Food Bank could host regular (virtual) stakeholder meetings or networking events for potential partners. Identify and leverage the network of local partner contacts within each county.
- **Reach out to local groups to make new partnerships.** This can be done by surveying and canvassing locations around Pittsburgh to gather evidence about local businesses and potential partners. Chambers of commerce and local politicians could also be a good place to start. The Food Bank could strengthen relationships with case management agencies (ie. Community Paramedic team at Allegheny Health).
- **Attend local events to get the word out.** Setting up a booth at trade shows or farm shows would allow the Food Bank to attract new partners. Making announcements at upcoming conferences and events, such as Man UP, would spread the word far and wide quickly.
- **Personalize communications and advertising.** Communication to partners and potential partners could be better customized which will result in a stronger relationship. Face-to-face meetings or 1:1 telephone calls could go a long way with potential partners. Inviting people to participate in the work of the Food Bank could significantly help build relationships. It may also be worth exploring ways to personalize advertising on Facebook and other social media platforms.

Group 4: Community & Individuals Feedback

Overview

This group includes feedback from those who identified as Could Benefit from Food Bank Services but Not Using Them, General public, Government Officials, Uses Food Bank services and Other, from the online and hardcopy surveys. There was a total of 374 respondents in this group. Approximately half of all respondents said they are from Allegheny County and the other half is distributed across other counties that the Food Bank serves, along with those that did not specify their location.



Approximately three quarters of all respondents were women, three quarters of all respondents were over the age of sixty and one quarter of all respondents were over eighty. Across all counties, many respondents' vision for the future of the Food Bank includes more accessible services for those who lack mobility. Several suggested that finding new partners to make this a reality could be made possible by sharing individuals' stories of how much help the Food Bank has been to them. This could also help fight the stigma that many highlighted as the main barrier to accessing services.

The vast majority of responses expressed gratitude for the services they receive, noting that it "helps get them to the end of the month." Many respondents described having positive experiences with staff at the Food Bank and the drivers that brought deliveries. Broadly, there was consensus that spoiled produce was an issue for many, while some items like onions, potatoes, and cabbage were offered frequently in quantities that were too large. In general, respondents wished a better variety of items was offered, as well as non-food items such as paper, hygiene, and cleaning products.

What is Working Well

- **Appreciates the variety and quality of food offered.** Several respondents appreciated the variety of food offered at the Food Bank. Some liked the occasional items that they would otherwise not be able to afford such as salmon, steaks and more expensive bodywash. In general, the staples such as milk, juice, cereal and canned foods were appreciated as well. Respondents also like receiving gift cards when available, so they can choose items they want to buy.

- **Positive experiences with the staff at the Food Bank.** Many respondents describe staff as enthusiastic, friendly, respectful, courteous, and kind. One respondent mentioned that seeing the same faces all the time made the staff “feel like family.” Several participants were happy to receive help from staff loading/unloading heavy boxes.
- **The Food Bank runs efficiently.** Many respondents said that the drive-up service is particularly useful for COVID protocols but has also been nice for those with mobility issues. Some also liked the flexible pick-up times that were available.
- **Likes the delivery services.** Several respondents who were older, were suffering from injuries, and/or who had disabilities said the delivery services were a big benefit for them. In particular, they liked the consistency of delivery times and the friendly delivery people.

What is Not Working Well

- **The produce could be improved.** Many respondents reported receiving produce that was nearly spoiled, or entirely rotten. Others reported receiving a quantity of onions, potatoes or cabbage that they couldn’t reasonably consume. Many would like to receive more produce overall, and in greater variety, if possible.
- **Variety and choice.** Several noted a need for more variety in items such as bread and meat, as well as lower sodium canned goods. Some also noted that it was hard to adjust what they received if they had religious, medical, or other reasons to opt out of certain foods, or if they wanted other specific food. Some respondents expressed a desire for more local products.
- **Operating hours and distribution line-ups.** The logistics of the Food Bank could be improved for some users. Many noted that they would like longer operating hours as well as being able to visit more frequently. Some respondents noted that COVID had made wait times very long at pantries. Some respondents mentioned there should be better control of line-ups before distributions and that some other clients were taking too much food for themselves.

Suggestions to Improve Operations & Services

- **Improving both the quality of items received from the Food Bank and providing more items.** Food items that would be desirable and should be increased, included: meat, fresh produce, sweets, bread, and beverages such as milk, juice, coffee, and tea. Respondents also suggested other non-food items that would be helpful, including gift certificates, vouchers, pet food, stationery/paper products, hygiene products, detergents, soap, and baby items.
- **Improve accessibility.** Respondents said they appreciated the drive-up service and would like to see it continue after COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted as it helps those with mobility issues. Others wanted to be able to reach the Food Bank by phone, instead of online. A few suggested more locations and longer operating hours so they could more easily access services. One respondent suggested running orientation sessions for new clients of the Food Bank.

- **Build new or strengthen existing relationships with the food industry.** Some respondents suggested improving the food offered by partnering with grocery stores, restaurants or catering companies, and accepting their surplus food.

Vision for the Future

- **Maintain or expand the level of service for the future.** Many respondents expressed the wish that the Food Bank continues to operate in their communities. Some appreciated the changes made during COVID-19, such as Drive-Up Distributions, and want those to continue. Others want to see operations expand to more neighborhoods and be more accessible to more people.
- **Explore different modes of communication/accessibility in the future.** Some respondents noted that e-mail alone may not be the best way to reach people and other modes of getting in touch should be considered. Several people suggested an app that would offer some level of self-service or ability to check-in.
- **More consideration for diversity.** As services expand, respondents noted that diversity of users should be considered, as some have religious or medical dietary restrictions, some have language barriers, and some have particular cultural considerations.

Connect with People Not Currently Reached

- **Increase advertising and outreach.** Many respondents suggested that advertising would be a good way of making sure potential Food Bank users knew what services were available. Suggestions included ads in local places such as churches, stores, community centers, local parks, senior buildings and online through Facebook and other social media channels. One respondent specifically suggested reaching out to Allegheny Health Network and UPMC, as well as any mental health service providers whose clients might be in need.
- **Accommodate to the unique needs of users.** Respondents noted that there are many different needs to consider such as advanced age and mobility/disability, and that those users could benefit from more personalized services.
- **Focus on fighting stigma.** Many respondents noted that one of the biggest barriers to using the Food Bank is the stigma attached to it, so connecting with new people would require overcoming this. Suggestions included leveraging word of mouth since people who are already served by the Food Bank can be good advocates. Also, doing more proactive outreach in general in case people were hesitant to call the Food Bank could help encourage people to get the help that they need.
- **Offer new programs and services.** There were several suggestions of new programs that could be offered: a Meals on Wheels type of service for those who are homebound, a shuttle service to bring people to the Food Bank and a calling service that would call to check in on seniors. A few respondents also mentioned that they would make use of clothing donations.

Connecting with New Partners

- **Share the stories of existing clients of the Food Bank.** Several respondents noted that new and prospective partners would benefit from hearing how much their contributions would be needed and/or appreciated, as well as how well the current services at the Food Bank are going, from those that use Food Bank services.
- **Ideas for new partners.** Respondents had many ideas for potential partners including churches, nursing homes, restaurants, grocery stores, fast food chains (possibly receiving vouchers in addition to food donations) and pet stores. Others suggested expanded programs with youth volunteers. Some noted that existing social services and safety net programs, such as Medicaid, could be leveraged to help the Food Bank's mission.