

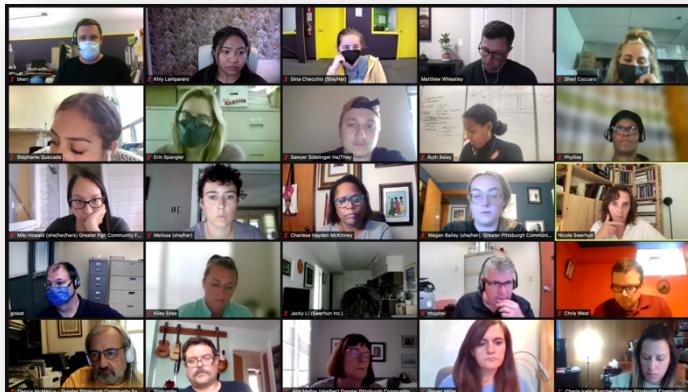
Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank



Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI)

Part 2 Integrated Summary Report

January 2022



We want to hear from YOU!

Help us build the Food Bank of the future.

Take the survey online:
pittsburghfoodbank.org/feedback

Scan the QR code to take the survey on your phone:



Take the survey by mail. Call Erin at 412-460-3663 ext.498. Leave a message with your name and address, and the survey will be mailed to you.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank has launched a three- Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) to engage diverse stakeholders in a discussion about how we can make our work even more effective.

During Part 1 of the SEI process, over 1,200+ participants shared a range of perspectives and insights that have informed Part 2. Our focus in Part 2 is to test 10 ideas on how the Food Bank can work with local communities, partners and other actors to explore what changes we can make to serve people in new and better ways.

There are two ways to share your thoughts:

1. Online at pittsburghfoodbank.org/feedback
2. By completing the survey and mail with attached pre-paid envelope programs

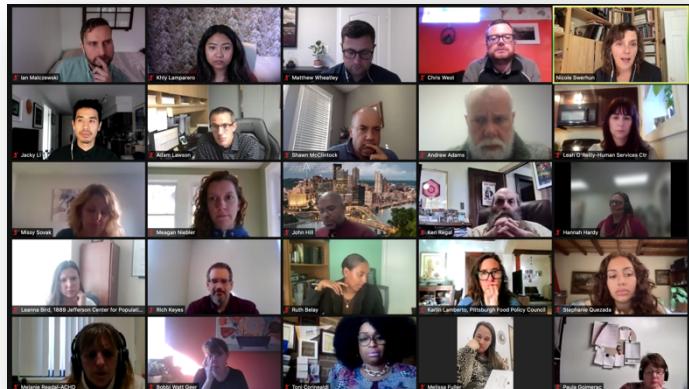
Survey closes on November 12, 2021.

For more information, contact:
Erin Spangler
Engagement Initiative Project Manager
espanbler@pittsburghfoodbank.org
412-460-3663 ext. 498



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PART 2 QUICK SNAPSHOT

OVERVIEW

Part 2 of the Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) focused on testing ideas on how the Food Bank can be even more effective – all of which were directly informed by the feedback received in [Part 1](#) and ongoing internal discussions at the Food Bank. These ideas were grouped into the three “buckets” shown below, including how to provide more choice (in food type and access), how to best collaborate with the network and communities, and how to best work towards eliminating hunger.

How to provide MORE CHOICE (in food type & access)	How to best collaborate with THE NETWORK & COMMUNITIES	How best to work towards ELIMINATING HUNGER
IDEA 1: Food Type Food Bank creates different types of pre-packed boxes and/or backpack kits	IDEA 5: Food Bank builds capacity of the network	IDEA 8: Food Bank strengthens connections to other services
IDEA 2: Food Type Food Bank supports pantries in offering more food choice	IDEA 6: Food Bank deepens its relationships with the network and communities	IDEA 9: Food Bank shows leadership in its operations
IDEA 3: Food Access Food Bank provides more support to pantries to be open more often	IDEA 7: Food Bank has a more active role in the community	IDEA 10: Food Bank expands its advocacy efforts
IDEA 4: Food Access Food Bank increases its direct service delivery across its service area		

Here are some other key takeaways from Part 2 (with more details in the body of this report):

- Participants appreciated the opportunity to continue the conversation. Regardless of who replied or which county they were replying from, overall, participants were generally receptive to all of the ideas.
- Choice in food type and access (Ideas 1-4) resonated strongly with all participants and those were the highest priorities for all participants (in-person and online).
- Collaboration was identified as the way to provide more choice and to best work towards eliminating hunger. The Food Bank needs to leverage, not duplicate or take over, the efforts of others.
- There was a strong desire for collaborative and flexible partnerships that leverage the expertise and strengths of local communities, partners, and other organizations.
- Efforts to eliminate hunger need to be driven by the social determinants of health.
- Implementation of ideas needs to start with the Food Bank’s internal systems before trying to make external changes, followed by a quick implementation of the ideas externally.
- Action in the most underserved areas should be prioritized and quick implementation.
- Stakeholders want to know what the next steps are following this process, including what decisions were influenced as a result of this feedback and how changes will be made to better serve communities.

MORE DETAILED SUMMARY

During Part 2, information was shared and feedback was sought from a wide range of audiences using many different engagement mechanisms. Virtual meetings were held, and an online feedback survey was promoted on pre-packaged boxes, through Facebook ads/social media promotions, and with partner organizations across the Food Bank's eleven-county service area. Intercept surveys were also conducted in-person at drive-up distributions and pantry distributions. Over 900 new and returning participants attended a virtual meeting and/or completed a survey (see attachments for more detailed information).

Location of Part 2 Participants

The majority of the 814 participants in Part 2 of the SEI process were located in Allegheny County (61%), followed by Cambria and Washington (each with approximately 6% of participants), and Beaver and Butler (each with approximately 4% of participants). Participants had the opportunity to participate in an online survey, virtual meetings, by participating in intercept surveys, and/or completing a hard copy of the survey.



*Participants in the internal meetings held with the Food Bank staff and Board are not included in the graph above (84 staff and 19 board and committee members participated which brings total participation to 917).

The following questions guided the Food Bank's engagement with different stakeholder groups:

1. How effective are each of the 10 ideas?
2. Which 2 or 3 of these ideas do you think best help the Food Bank be even more effective in its work? Why?
3. Are there other ideas not included in these 10 that you would like to see the Food Bank explore? If so, what are they?
4. Do you have any other advice?

DETAILED FEEDBACK ON THE THREE “BUCKETS” AND TEN IDEAS

Participants shared a range of feedback via virtual meetings and/or a survey. Included below is a summary of feedback on the three “buckets” and the ten ideas that emerged across all stakeholder groups and engagement activities. Unless otherwise noted, the summary reflects the common ground in the feedback received from all participants.

How to Provide More Choice (in Food Type and Access)

The need for more choice was a recurring theme that continues to be a priority for many stakeholders. Choice (in both food type and access) was the primary focus of discussion for community members and some partner organizations at the virtual meetings, and all audiences in the survey (community members, donors, volunteers, Food Bank staff and Board members, and member agency and partners) acknowledged the importance of providing choice. They also said that ideas in this "bucket" are actionable ideas that would fill a need that Food Bank clients have expressed many times to partner organizations. Participants said that flexibility in both food type and access is important to meet the needs of diverse communities and service delivery partners. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the ability for the Food Bank and other partners to provide choice because of the need to respond to the increased demand, and at the same time comply with public health guidelines. There was strong support for more choice in food type and access that accommodates the need for flexible and responsive approaches. More detailed feedback on each idea is attached below.

IDEA 1: Food Bank creates different types of pre-packed boxes and/or backpack kits

- There were different perspectives on providing more choice through pre-packed**

boxes. Some participants think it's a good idea because offering a choice of pre-packed boxes supports the need to provide more culturally relevant and diet appropriate options (especially for communities that are increasingly becoming more diverse), the boxes are easy to distribute (especially for partners with limited space) and easy for community members to pick up. Many highlighted the importance of providing a variety of food options so people do not receive the same types of food again and again. Others said that while the boxes were useful during COVID, and they prefer being able to select their own food rather than receiving pre-packed boxes.

- Many participants emphasized that every community has different needs, so flexibility is a high priority because there is no one-size-fits-all solution.** Knowing why people need certain types of food is important to make informed decisions and better serve communities and help reduce food waste. It was also suggested that pre-packaged boxes include educational resources like recipe cards relevant to the content of each box, so people know how to use the food they receive.

IDEA 2: Food Bank supports pantries in offering more food choice

- There were many participants who said that choice is intrinsically tied with dignity and a commitment to dignified processes.** Many participants said that they're looking for flexibility in how the Food Bank supports more choice to help empower people in being able to choose the food they need and know how to prepare it. Others said that supporting pantries in offering more food choice works because pantries know the needs of their clients best. Others said that providing more choice and variety of food would help people feel more welcome and eager to use Food Bank services if they see foods that are familiar to them.

IDEA 3: Food Bank provides more support to pantries to be open more often

- Participants said that access is critical in helping pantries meet the need in their local communities.** Participants highlighted that some pantries, and the Food Bank itself, operate during hours or days that are not convenient to those who use Food Bank services. By staying open later or connecting people to other service providers that are open later, it would be easier for people to access food when it's convenient for them. Being open more often would also help distribute more fresh food and produce, avoid distributing old food, and help reduce food waste. Many liked the idea of the Food Bank providing refrigerated lockers to pantries which would allow 24/7 access for those needing assistance. Participants also like Idea 3 because it would help pantries be more sustainable if they receive financial support from the Food Bank to help with their operation, staffing, rent, and equipment. Getting more support in increasing volunteers would also help reduce volunteer burnout. Finally, Food Bank support for more paid staff or more volunteers could allow a pantry to be open more hours or longer hours to serve the community in more flexible ways.

IDEA 4: Food Bank increases its direct service delivery across its service area

- Many participants were interested in direct service delivery as an option to continue post-pandemic.** There was support for the Food Bank's direct service delivery, particularly offering more home delivery and offering drive-up distributions where gaps in service were found in the region. Many participants said home delivery would be helpful as transportation is a big barrier to accessing Food Bank services. Offering more home delivery works well for families with newborns and children, those busy working, those working late

and can't go to stores or to pantries during the hours they are open, those who are homebound, and those that have difficulty accessing or affording transportation. Others said that having a permanent Food Bank-operated pantry in every county, that was open more/longer hours and offered choice like The Market will do, could help reach more people and have a greater impact.

- Other participants emphasized the importance of not duplicating existing direct service delivery efforts of partners.** There have been several pantries that have pivoted to include direct service delivery in their mandate, for example, implementing home deliveries. The Food Bank could look for ways to support these pantries in their existing efforts rather than providing direct service itself. Pantries already have connections to local communities and could take less time to implement new service delivery efforts, instead of bringing something new to the community which could take more time.

How to Best Collaborate with The Network & Communities

Participants agreed that collaboration and strengthening the capacity of the network is important for building partnerships and innovation. Collaboration is an overarching theme that is an important mechanism for both providing more choice and eliminating hunger, which are only possible through collaboration. Stakeholders agreed that the Food Bank needs to leverage, not duplicate, or take over efforts of other partners and organizations. There was significant support from community members, partners, and other organizations to continue to collaborate with the Food Bank and forge a path forward in collaboration.

IDEA 5: Food Bank builds capacity of the network

- Participants said that the Food Bank network includes many organizations that have**

expertise in delivering a wide range of services that cover many different critical needs. The Food Bank should focus its efforts on supporting these organizations and building stronger connections in the network. The Food Bank can support the network by coordinating referrals and sharing clear / accessible information (e.g., pamphlets) with those that use Food Bank services about available services addressing different critical needs. The Food Bank should also continue to connect with and listen to the network to understand how best to collaborate.

- **There are pantries that would benefit from having the infusion of more financial and technical supports from the Food Bank.** The Food Bank can assist with providing additional support including helping pantries find spaces to operate, equipment (refrigerators, shelves, etc.), staffing, IT, fundraising, succession planning, volunteer management and sponsor learning collaboratives.
- **There were participants who recognized that the pandemic and the urgency to meet local needs has led to the Food Bank establishing new simplified processes for community partners, which they thought were great.** They also said that the Food Bank has only just scratched the surface of those potential collaborations and that others could be found. Co-location was suggested as an option for meeting multiple community needs at one location with partners (e.g., daycares, schools, and health providers).

IDEA 6: Food Bank deepens its relationships with the network and communities

- **Many participants said that an important mechanism for the Food Bank to deepen its relationships with the network and communities is directing resources to the areas and people most in need.** Lack of access

and equity is still a critical issue. Not all areas and people are served equally, and high population density does not automatically equal more need. The Food Bank should explore and expand partnerships with organizations that are working to reduce inequities to food access and other needs.

- **There were participants who said that the Food Bank should prioritize building more strategic partnerships and focus on deepening connections with key partners to help better achieve shared priorities.** The Food Bank can also be thoughtful about how to manage the power dynamic with partners, provide room for unique roles in the hub and spoke model, and recognize the special abilities and critical roles that different partners can play.

IDEA 7: Food Bank has a more active role in the community

- **There was broad agreement that the Food Bank should focus efforts on strengthening connections and improving communication to, and between, its partners - without duplicating services and efforts.** This can help the Food Bank and others avoid duplicating services and direct efforts to where they are most needed. It could also help inform Food Bank decision-making around the sourcing and purchasing of food products. Participants also said that it is important for the Food Bank to improve its communication with partners. This could be done by assigning dedicated liaisons to regularly check in with partners and by providing up-to-date contact information, so there is consistency in the event of job or role transitions among Food Bank staff.
- **The Food Bank can benefit immensely from connecting with community members and having better communication of Food Bank information and services.** There was support for

establishing Community Councils, hosting seminars, and holding community sessions for the community to share their local expertise with the Food Bank, including identifying who needs food, what services are working well and what needs to be improved.

How Best To Work Towards Eliminating Hunger

There was strong support from member agencies and partners, community members, Food Bank staff and board members that eliminating hunger requires collaboration across networks and communities.

IDEA 8: Food Bank strengthens connections to other services

- **Many participants said that the social determinants of health is a useful lens for building an interconnected and engaged network of resources.** Strengthening the Food Bank's connection to other services acknowledges the systemic connection between food insecurity, community, education, gainful employment, and other social determinants of health.
- **Communication and information sharing is something the Food Bank should improve on to support strengthened collaboration.** Helping strengthen communication between different organizations can help the network understand what services and resources are available, and thus know where to focus individual or collective efforts and not duplicate services. The Food Bank can be a convenor of various networks (such as partners and community members) to share information and help community members in need know what services are available to them.
- **Through prioritizing services and access for children,** the Food Bank and partners can better

support the future generation and be better connected with their families as well.

IDEA 9: Food Bank shows leadership in its operations

- **There were participants who supported the Food Bank showing leadership** in its operations by hiring locally so Food Bank staff reflects local communities and offering workforce development programs for community members to help them find good jobs. Participants also said that working with women- and minority-owned businesses would help the Food Bank better serve and support diverse populations, as well as help business owners who are at a greater risk for poverty due to their race/gender.

IDEA 10: Food Bank expands its advocacy efforts

- **Advocacy has a big role to play in making people more food secure, and the Food Bank can be a major voice in that effort.** The Food Bank can support advocacy efforts by collecting relevant data and sharing it with policy makers and other partners. In addition, the Food Bank can strategically promote policy change and governmental change to support life stabilization goals. This advocacy work could be even more successful by working with a wider number and wider range of organizations.
- **Some participants also suggested that the Food Bank should lean more on the network to distribute food so the Food Bank can focus more directly on advocacy work and policy change** related to the social determinants of health and eliminating hunger. This includes like reducing food access disparities and advocacy around increasing employment opportunities. Expanding advocacy efforts could also help improve donations and get more volunteers to help pantries.

OTHER THOUGHTS

What's missing?

Participants shared additional suggestions and observations not explicitly included in the ten ideas, including:

- Communication and sharing of information are critical to accessing services. Prioritize increasing awareness of local services through a variety of mechanisms including a mobile messaging notification system, and maps of other life stabilization services and pantries.
- Support nutrition education for community members and pantries. Education is critical for community members to know how to use and consume food items in ways that meet their own personal nutritional needs. The Food Bank can connect to health care providers (dieticians, nutritionist, and other providers) to support access to nutrition information in all kinds of ways, from recipe cards to videos to cooking demos to having a nutritionist onsite.
- Transportation is a significant barrier for accessing services, especially in rural areas. The Food Bank could work with partners to explore opportunities for co-locating services and offer transportation to pantries (for example free bus tickets).
- Embed dignified processes into the provision of services at all levels of the network. The Food Bank can work with partners to consider the stigma people face when accessing services and look for different opportunities to reduce this stigma.
- Continue to maintain reduced barriers and flexibility for accessing Food Bank services. There are people struggling to access food at different income levels (both low- and middle-income families). The Food Bank should advocate at the state and federal level for adjusting the income

threshold for who's allowed to access Food Bank services.

- Consider opportunities for, and barriers to, technology. Technology (e.g., the Food Bank website and social media) can help people, especially younger people, connect with the Food Bank and other services they need. However, technology should not be a barrier for people who have limited access and/or do not know how to use it.
- Provide a holistic approach to health and wellness. The Food Bank can work with partners to support programs and share information about components of a healthy lifestyle.
- Support and advocate for opportunities for workforce development. The Food Bank should consider looking for ways to offer and advocate for other workforce development opportunities, including for youth.
- The Food Bank can also support more choice through a variety of Food Bank-led and government-led initiatives. The Food Bank has been working towards increasing choice through programs like Produce to People and continuing to support government programs that offer choice like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Implementation Suggestions

Participants also provided guidance for the implementation of ideas which included the following suggestions:

- Evaluate and strengthen the Food Bank's internal systems first before trying to make external changes. Continue to look for ways to modernize and leverage technology to support operations, update policies to hire Food Bank staff that reflect local communities, make sure partners know who

to contact at the Food Bank, reduce/eliminate internal silos, and support local farmers, minority, and women-owned businesses through new policies.

- Prioritize underserved communities that need more support in addressing barriers to accessing Food Bank services. Work with partners and community members to find ways to address gaps in services and connect with underserved communities.
- More choice (in food type & access) may be easier to act on in the short-term, while collaboration and eliminating hunger are likely longer-term processes.

LOOKING AHEAD TO PART 3

The [Stakeholder Engagement Initiative](#) is unfolding over the course of three parts, with information shared and feedback sought from a wide variety of voices representing each of our stakeholder groups every step of the way. The input received in Part 1 and Part 2 of the SEI process will continue to strengthen the Food Bank's efforts to meet the needs of communities across southwestern Pennsylvania. Part 3 will return in Winter 2022 to share and refine a proposed path forward informed by feedback on ideas tested.

This summary was written by Swerhun Inc., an independent third-party facilitation organization. If you have questions about what's here, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the SEI Project Team through Erin Spangler, Engagement Initiative Project Manager, 412-460-3663 ext. 498 or espangler@pittsburghfoodbank.org.

Attachments

- A. SEI Part 2 Survey Summary (attached separately)**
- B. SEI Part 2 Meeting Summaries (attached separately)**