

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Part 2 (of 3), Fall 2021



Exploring ideas for the future

In May and June of 2021, Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank launched Part 1 of the three-part Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) to engage diverse stakeholders in a discussion about how we can make our work even more effective. We connected with over 1,200 people (in virtual meetings and through online and hard copy surveys) about what's working well with the Food Bank today, what's not working as well, and about their suggestions for the future. Here are a few highlights:

- **What's working well?** People said that the Food Bank responded well to the pandemic and they trust us. The Food Bank provides critical supports in the community and our staff are responsive and reliable.
- **Where did people share mixed opinions?** Some people said that they're happy with the variety and quality of the food they receive from the Food Bank, while others said they would like to have more choice in the types of foods and that they sometimes have issues with the quality of meats and produce.
- **What's not working as well?** Some people said that it can be difficult to know who to get in touch with at the Food Bank and how to contact them. Many talked about challenges they face with transportation and that the limited hours and locations of our services can be barriers to accessing food. Some told us that there's still a stigma associated with using the Food Bank and that is also a barrier to service.

For more details, check out the Part 1 feedback summary on our website at:

www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/feedback

So what's happening in Part 2?

Our focus in Part 2 is to test 10 ideas on how the Food Bank can be even more effective – all of which have been directly informed by (and inspired by!) the feedback received in Part 1 and ongoing internal discussions with the Food Bank staff and Executive Team.

Let us know what you think of these ideas, and then we'll be coming back at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 to share what we learned and suggest a path forward.



As you answer the questions below, think about your overall experience with the Food Bank:

WHO we serve WHAT we serve WHEN we serve WHERE we serve HOW we serve

- What do you like about your experience with the Food Bank? What's working well?
SINCE I've GOT my GRANDKIDS this has been A GOD SEND!
- What don't you like about your experience with the Food Bank? What's not working well?
I think this system works GREAT
- What suggestions do you have to help strengthen or improve the Food Bank's operations and services?
NONE
- What's your vision for the future of the Food Bank?
Hopefully people help with DONATION'S
- 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?
?
- How can the Food Bank do a better job of connecting with partners that it doesn't currently work with?
T.V ADS ?

Please identify which of the following describes your relationship with the Food Bank. Select all that apply.

☒ Uses Food Bank services ☐ Could benefit from services but not using them ☐ Donor ☐ Volunteer ☐ General public

What county do you live in?
Allegheny

What is your race/ethnicity?
white

What is your gender?
Female

What is your age?
65

Would you like to be part of a focus group to further share your thoughts and hear from others? If yes, please write your contact information below.
☐ Yes ☒ No

What is your gender?
female

What is your age?
66

hear from others? If yes, please contact information below.
☐ Yes ☒ No

Ongoing evolution of the Food Bank

Food banking started in the 1960s and has changed a lot over time. The table below highlights a few of the ways food banking has evolved in response to changing community needs across southwestern Pennsylvania. This evolution continues, and we learned in Part I that there are many ideas about how the Food Bank can continue to evolve to best respond to the needs of the many communities we serve.

	Where food banking started (in the 1960s and sometimes through to much later)	Where it has evolved to (recently, and through to today)
Amount of salvaged food	High (most food was shelf-stable)	Sharp decline
Amount of produce	Very small percentage (less refrigeration was available)	Goal = 50% (today at 30%)
Awareness of connection between food and health	Lower	Higher (social determinants of health)
Nutritional quality	Lower	Higher
Who relied on food bank	Those in emergency situations	Those in emergency situations <i>and</i> working people, seniors, those living with chronic conditions and disabilities, households with children, etc.
Cost of living & wages	Minimum wage \$3.10 -\$7.25/hr	Minimum wage has not kept pace with cost of living
Distribution	All through network	Majority through network, large growth in non-traditional outlets/partners
Technology	Phone, fax	Internet, smart phones, social media



Initiatives already underway

There are a number of initiatives already underway at the Food Bank that will help us better serve the community. Here's what we've been working on:



- In July 2020, the Food Bank created the Life Stabilization Team and we have expanded our Call Center to ensure that people can access the food assistance resources they need.
- In the coming months, we will be opening a new food pantry at our headquarters in Duquesne called The Market. This pantry will be open six days a week to ensure that more people in our area can access our services, including evening and weekend hours.
- We are piloting refrigerated storage lockers, so people can pick up their food at a time that works for their schedule.
- We are also piloting an Order Ahead option, so people can choose the types of food that are right for them and then pick up their food curbside.
- We are creating maps to identify where areas with low food access are in our service area, so we can respond and provide better service. We've also been working on strengthening our social media presence.

Testing ideas for the Future

As we think about how the Food Bank can continue to evolve, we want to protect the things that participants in Part 1 told us that we do well, while maintaining the flexibility and responsiveness that the Food Bank exhibited during the pandemic. There are a total of 10 ideas organized into three “buckets” that we will explore during Part 2, including: how to provide more choice in the types of food we provide and how that food can be accessed, how best to collaborate with the network and the community, and how best to work towards eliminating hunger. We want your thoughts on how effective these ideas are and whether there are other ideas you think the Food Bank should consider.

**How to provide
MORE CHOICE
(in food type & access)**

**How to best
collaborate with
THE NETWORK &
COMMUNITIES**

**How to best work
towards
ELIMINATING HUNGER**

Why is providing **MORE CHOICE** in food type & access important?

Choice is important because community members have told us that it makes their Food Bank experience better – it’s more welcoming and more dignified. Choice is important when considering individual dietary, health, and cultural needs. We also learned that offering more choice may lead to *more* food being distributed.

There are a number of things the Food Bank considers when thinking about choice. For example:

- The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to reduce choice in the type of food offered in order to follow safety and sanitation guidelines;
- Some government programs prescribe choice (like Senior Boxes);
- People choose different ways to obtain food from the Food Bank (a walk-up model can be a more social experience, while the Drive-Up Distribution option is good for people who may have mobility issues).

We are testing 4 ideas related to Choice – 2 related to how the Food Bank could provide more choice in the type of food available, and 2 related to how the Food Bank could provide more choice in how food is accessed. Review the 4 ideas below and think about how effective you think these ideas would be in providing more choice.

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

What this could look like:

Diet and culturally appropriate options, ready-to-eat food options, choice of: shelf-stable only, fresh food only, combination of shelf-stable and fresh food, etc.

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

What this could look like:

Focus on supporting all interested pantries in offering more client choice (e.g. provide fridges to pantries interested in offering fresh food, etc.)





IDEA 3: Food Access

Food Bank provides more support to pantries to be open more often

What this could look like:

Provide assistance recruiting volunteers for pantries, provide financial support for full-time coordinators for pantries, offer Food Bank staff to help with fundraising, etc.

IDEA 4: Food Access

Food Bank increases its direct service delivery across its service area

What this could look like:

Food Bank opens a pantry in each county that's open regularly & has choice (like *The Market*), host more Drive-up Distributions, mobile markets or pop-up pantries, offer more home delivery, refrigerated lockers, etc.

Why is it important to COLLABORATE WITH THE NETWORK & COMMUNITIES?

Collaboration is important because the Food Bank, its network, and the many communities we work in and serve have different strengths and capacities. Working together makes everyone stronger, including the Food Bank. It also means that better services can be provided and resources are used more effectively.

There are a number of things the Food Bank considers when thinking about collaboration. For example:

- The Food Bank was originally designed as a warehouse, relying on the network for distribution;
- Duquesne is not easy to access from the 11 counties we serve, and it's important that food assistance be available as close as possible to the people who need it;
- Some areas have more points of service than others, which means that some pantries are close together in some places and there are bigger gaps in other places; and
- The vast majority of the Food Bank's food is distributed by independent organizations that partner with the Food Bank.

We are testing 3 ideas related to collaboration. Review the 3 ideas below and think about how effective you think these different ideas would be in best supporting strong collaboration.

IDEA 5:

Food Bank builds capacity of the network

What this could look like:

Support network in attracting more volunteers, succession planning, use Food Bank resources (especially in fundraising and IT) to support smaller partners, etc.

IDEA 6:

Food Bank deepens its relationships with the network & communities

What this could look like:

Collect feedback through surveys, share what we're doing through events with others, co-create programs & services, create Community Councils throughout our service area to help inform Food Bank decision-making, build digital relationships and communication paths with the network & neighbors, etc.

IDEA 7:

Food Bank has a more active role in the community

What this could look like:

Food Bank plays a more central role in forming new coalitions to end hunger in communities through programs and/or advocacy work, hire Community Specialists who live and work in each county, etc.

Why is it important to work towards **ELIMINATING HUNGER?**

Working to eliminate hunger is an important part of the Food Bank's mission to feed people in need and mobilize our community to eliminate hunger. We heard from many participants during Part I that it is critical for the Food Bank to feed people in need, and at the same time, think about how to reduce the need for food assistance in the first place. We also know that people experiencing food insecurity may have other critical needs.

There are a number of things the Food Bank considers when thinking about how best to direct our efforts to eliminate hunger. For example:

- We know that the Food Bank is one of many organizations working to stabilize people's lives; and
- The Food Bank and its partners interact with so many people every single day – there's an opportunity to help people with other needs they might have during these interactions.

We are testing 3 ideas related to eliminating hunger. Review the 3 ideas below and think about how effective you think these different ideas would be for the Food Bank to explore further.

IDEA 8:

Food Bank strengthens connections to other services

What this could look like:

Have more resources at pantries & online, feature other partners in communications, strengthen internal Food Bank systems to support direct referrals to other resources, co-locate with other services, offer case management, etc.

IDEA 9:

Food Bank shows leadership in its operations

What this could look like:

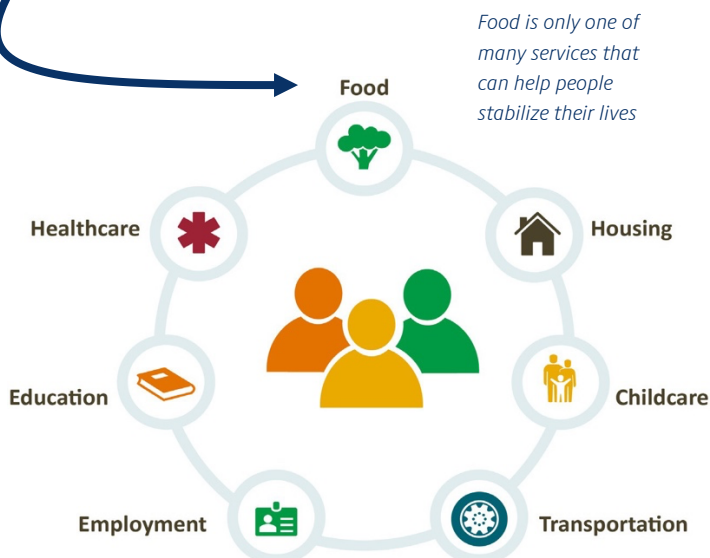
Create a purchasing policy to work with more minority- and women-owned businesses, Food Bank team more closely reflects local communities, offer workforce development training programs at the Food Bank, etc.

IDEA 10:

Food Bank expands its advocacy efforts

What this could look like:

Align advocacy efforts with organizations in other critical needs sectors such as employment and housing, support community members in their advocacy efforts (including those with lived experience), etc.



Food is only one of many services that can help people stabilize their lives



QUESTIONS FOR YOU

The graphic below includes all 10 ideas that the Food Bank is testing during Part 2 of the Stakeholder Engagement Initiative process. Please review them and help us understand:

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

And of course, if you have any other feedback or advice for us, please let us know! Share your thoughts with us through the online feedback form at www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/feedback and/or through online meetings, “pop-up” conversations at pantries and food distribution events, or contact us directly (see email and phone information below).

Summary of all 10 Ideas to Test

How to provide MORE CHOICE (in food type & access)	How to best collaborate with THE NETWORK & COMMUNITIES	How to best 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 & 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	Questions? Contact Erin Spangler, Engagement Initiative Project Manager 412-460-3663 ext. 498 or espangler@pittsburghfoodbank.org	