

**ATTACHMENT A: Integrated Summary of
County-Specific Meetings with Local Partners
and Community Leaders**

Integrated Summary of County-Specific Meetings with Local Partners and Community Leaders

January 31 and February 1, 2022

OVERVIEW

In Part 1, we engaged stakeholders in virtual meetings and focus groups, connected with stakeholders online through social media and through a digital survey on our website, and distributed thousands of paper surveys to community members through our network of food pantries and partner organizations. In Part 2, we continued hosting virtual meetings and focus groups, hosted an online survey, and conducted intercept surveys with community members at food distributions across southwestern Pennsylvania.

However, collaboration is only successful when diverse voices are represented in the process. For Part 3, we decided to take a different approach by identifying local partners and community leaders in areas with lower participation rates in Parts 1 and 2. The Food Bank's Programs Department identified local partners and community leaders representing Armstrong, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, and Lawrence Counties were invited to attend county-specific meetings. These county-specific meetings followed the same format as virtual meetings with other stakeholder groups hosted in Part 3. Meetings were held on January 31, February 1 and 2, 2022.

Local partners and community leaders from the five counties were asked to provide feedback on the following proposed path forward:



The discussion focused on the following questions:

1. **What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?**
2. **How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives? What would the Food Bank do? What would the network partners and community members do?**
3. **What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration?**
4. **How would you like to be involved, going forward? Do you have any other advice?**

Chris West and Erin Spangler from the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank facilitated the meetings and wrote this integrated summary. This summary captures the feedback shared at the meetings, which have been organized by the questions asked. Detailed summaries of the five county-specific discussions are also attached. These summaries were subject to participant review prior to being finalized.

What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?

- **Communication is key.** It provides information and context. Consistent communication means that information is shared when it is needed, not after the fact. We need to continue the collaboration that happened out of necessity during the pandemic. The Food Bank has access to resources, while other partners may have capacity in specific regions or communities. This means supporting each other by acknowledging each other's strengths. Collaboration means being willing to be responsive to each other's needs.
- **Information sharing about what other actors are doing at the local and regional level fosters collaboration.** If partners knew what everyone else was doing, then collaboration would be more likely to happen.
- **Shared goals.** Collaboration works when partners have shared goals, then everyone involved is achieving their own objectives and furthering their mission as well as supporting others.
- **Bringing the right people to the table.** Partners can work together to generate solutions and meet the complex needs of clients. However, partners may need to be reinvigorated or re-invited to the table to pull more resources and people together.
- **Building relationships, which takes time, is why collaboration works well in many communities.** Sharing the burden of community needs and connecting with other partners that can help address community needs. This means that people are more likely to receive all the different benefits available to them. It is beneficial when there is constant communication between service providers and their partners.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

- Roles in a collaborative process depend on what you are trying to achieve- defining roles and shared objectives is critical. Who leads and who follows may be based on who has expertise and experience.
- Successful collaboration happens when all participants develop a clear action plan- identify the problem, define a shared focus, bring in other partners, continue ongoing dialogue, and then evaluation. There needs to be an emphasis on how well the collaborative process worked, not just if the outcome was successful or not successful.

What the Food Bank could do

- **Presence.** If the Food Bank facilitates, then things are more likely to happen. The Food Bank can invite people to the table. Also, the Food Bank needs to get a better foothold with initiatives at the county-level.
- **Facilitate discussions.** The Food Bank can support partners by facilitating discussions at the county level. For example, hosting regional meetings or trainings because not everyone can make it to Duquesne. Regular meetings could be virtual or in-person, at the county or community level.
- **Share information about the network.** The Food Bank can support partners by sharing its extensive contact list and knowledge of existing organizations to help partners connect and share ideas that work in their area. Collaboration can spark when people learn about what others are doing. Sharing information on a regular basis would help keep everyone aware of what is happening, reducing duplication of services and making better referrals.
- **Share resources.** The Food Bank can support partners by sharing information about grants and other opportunities, but also by communicating with partners on a regular basis. Funding is a significant issue. Partners don't lack inspiration or dedication; it is a lack of funding that gets in the way of making things happen.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration?

- **Move beyond transactional relationships.** Many Food Bank relationships are transactional, but there needs to be regular opportunity for dialogue- at the county level and/or among similar groups of partners or at the individual level. The Food Bank needs to move “beyond transactional interactions with partners.”
- **Advisory councils are a great tool to check in and see what is working well and not working well on an ongoing basis.** Regular meetings with different partner groups or bringing local players to the table.
- **Continue these kinds of conversations.** Communicate what happened as a result of this engagement initiative and as a result of collaborations in the future. Relationship building takes time, so the Food Bank needs to set aside the time to allow for good communication and to build stronger relationships. This means including all stakeholders in the conversation, sharing the plan and making sure to follow up.

LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Adagio Health Power Up
Adagio Health WIC
Armstrong County Community Action Agency
Armstrong School District
Blueprints, formerly Community Action Southwest
Brownsville Area School District
Chevy Chase Community Center
Community Foundation of Greene County
East End United Community Center
Fayette County Community Action Agency
Flenniken Public Library
Food 911 Indiana County
Greene County Department of Human Services
Housing Authority of Indiana County
Indiana County Community Action Program Inc.
Indiana County Department of Human Services
Jubilee Ministries International
New Beaver Food Pantry
Salvation Army New Castle
Uniontown Area School District

ATTACHMENTS

1. Lawrence County Meeting Summary – January 31, 2022
2. Armstrong County Meeting Summary – January 31, 2022
3. Indiana County Meeting Summary – February 1, 2022
4. Fayette County Meeting Summary – February 2, 2022
5. Greene County Meeting Summary – February 1, 2022

Lawrence County Meeting Summary

Monday, January 31, 2022

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?

- Make sure that everyone's needs are being met and that what you are trying to create and do is the same- shared goals/objectives, good match, what you can give them is what you want. Make sure you are on the same page.
- A lot of communication, open, honest AND a lot of planning.
- Collaboration allows small organizations to extend their footprint, to reach new people and services. Capitalize on collaborations that help you do your work.
- Communication is key. Outreach can help you find new partners and resources to make sure that people can get the food they need (delivery, working with other organizations who can offer a hand).
- Collaboration strengthens referrals.
- The Food Bank should share its extensive contact list to spread the word about new ideas or new distributions or even just what the current resources are. Meetings with partners at the county level would be helpful.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

- The Food Bank is always willing to help. To make sure that distributions at smaller organizations are ready to happen and problem solve.
- Communication is important. Strong connections with Food Bank staff make these easier for partners.
- We currently collaborate at the county level to reach summer feeding programs during the summer, but it needs to happen all year. If there is one good person, that makes all the difference. A coordinator from the Food Bank worked with Adagio Health to make sure that nutrition education happened during the summer, but this could be happening all the time. Turnover at the Food Bank can make it difficult, when individuals do different things.
- Restrictions on some federal nutrition programs make it difficult. The Food Bank needs to do a better job of explaining why things happen the way they do or why some solutions can't or don't work.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration?

- Open communication. Including all stakeholders in discussion, share plan moving forward and make sure to follow up. What happened because of the discussion(s) that we had with stakeholders? Good communication takes time, so you need to take time.

- Letting stakeholders know the results of these discussions.
- Partners might benefit from information about their impact in the county. How much food is distributed, how many people are served. The Food Bank could help by sharing this kind of information. If partners know their impact that might incentivize them to keep working and work as a network.
 - “This is the difference that you made in Lawrence County.” It would be helpful to receive that information.
- Partners need to talk to each other in Lawrence County. County councils may be helpful. How many/which people work together to address hunger in Lawrence County? What is their collective impact together?
- Share information about grants and other opportunities outside of food. Also, for additional food sources. Grants for other services offered by partners. Funding is a challenge, so the Food Bank could share information about other funding, food sources. This could help to cut through red tape to better serve people.

How would you like to be involved, going forward?

- It would be helpful for partners to share information about resources and make connections. It would be great if there were more opportunities to keep people in the know – what is happening in the community and facilitate local partnerships.

Participants

Adagio Health WIC

Adagio Health Power Up

Jubilee Ministries International: NOW Project

New Beaver Food Pantry

Salvation Army New Castle

Armstrong County Meeting Summary

Monday, January 31, 2022

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?

- Communication is key, but also providing more information and context is helpful too. For example, why are some items on inventory available to some agencies, but not others (particularly produce) The Food Bank can communicate that to its partners, but partners can also share this information with their networks (like the pantries ACCAP works with in Armstrong).
- A heads-up is also good- if there is a change in staff contact person at the Food Bank or if there is a change to delivery time or for weather-related issues, it is better for the partner to know about it ahead of time.
- Consistent communication means that information is shared when it is needed, not after the fact.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

- The Food Bank can help facilitate discussions at the county level. This could help partners and their volunteers (at Child Nutrition or pantry sites) to understand the bigger picture.
- The Food Bank could host regional meetings or trainings. Not everyone can make it to Pittsburgh and it doesn't need to be all together. It could be virtual. The Food Bank could share information, but also help partners connect and share ideas that work in their area. Collaboration can spark when they hear what others are doing.
- The Food Bank can collaborate by sharing information about grants and other opportunities, but also by communicating with partners on a regular basis.
- The spring trainings that the Child Nutrition team hosts are helpful. This kind of training would also be helpful for site volunteers, so they know why completing paperwork for federal nutrition programs is so important. Information gets to the primary agency (i.e. ACCAP or school district) contact, but it would be helpful if information could be shared with volunteers at pantries/sites in the agency's network.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration?

- If the Food Bank facilitates, then things are more likely to happen. The Food Bank can invite people to the table.

Participants

Armstrong County Community Action Program

Armstrong School District

Indiana County Meeting Summary

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?

- Indiana does collaboration very well.
- Transportation issues are always a problem in rural areas. You are only as good as your volunteers. A solution for limited hours in Indiana County has been to set up food outside of some locations like the Salvation Army- they have been putting food outside the Salvation Army so people can pick it up when it is convenient.
- The Food Bank has been more present in county-level meetings.
 - Volunteers are critical. The need to retain volunteers. Volunteers deliver food in Indiana County. A huge issue is getting food to people where they are in a rural county- it is a significant challenge. Pop-ups may be a solution, or a mobile pantry. Pantries aren't open when it is convenient. Hours are short and pantries are rarely accessible to people who work. Public transportation is nearly nonexistent.
 - Volunteers do deliveries on their own dime. If they could be reimbursed or if they received a stipend, then people might be more likely to continue volunteering.
- ICCAP is growing and will be able to have more variety in the food they can offer with more refrigeration and freezers. There are lots of good examples of collaboration in Indiana County for how to cook with foods that people receive from the Food Bank. Education is helpful and a way for partners to collaborate. There is great collaboration potential with DHS's Project Share, which is a shared tracking program to share information about clients (what programs/support they are receiving at other partners).
- There might be some issues with rules about food distribution in Indiana County. Clients are forced to take everything, or you get no food at one particular site. Lots of food waste. People throw away what they can't use or don't want. This is an issue that occurred in Mac Park that needs to be solved related to collaboration. Clarity about rules and practices are needed.
- Building relationships, which takes time, is why collaboration works well in Indiana County. Sharing the burden of the need and connecting with others that can help address someone's need. That way people are more likely to receive all the different benefits available to people in the county. It is beneficial when there is constant communication between providers and partners.
- Funding is a significant issue. Partners don't lack inspiration or dedication; it is a lack of funding to make things happen.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

- Education about hunger and other social issues. If more volunteers understand what issues people face, so they have a better understanding of the bigger picture. The Food Bank could provide education to help volunteers understand the complexities of people's lives.
 - If there was a better understanding of the issue, then more volunteers might be willing to help. It might bring more people to the table to come up with creative solutions to address food, but also other critical needs (SDOH).
 - The Food Bank could also help recruit volunteers for needs that specific organizations have, such as providing food delivery.
- The Food Bank and ICCAP have a good relationship.
- The Food Bank needs to get a better foothold with initiatives in Indiana County. When Food Bank staff participate, partners in Indiana County see that and are more likely to collaborate.
- All stakeholders need to recognize and acknowledge shared values. When people feel connected to the mission and vision of the Food Bank or other partner organizations, they are more likely to continue to volunteer.
- Collaboration between/among agencies may be helpful. For example, if churches worked more closely together and pooled resources, perhaps more people could be reached in more ways and there would be less duplication of services. Perhaps a campaign could be undertaken to foster this kind of collaboration.

Participants

Chevy Chase Community Center

ICCAP and other groups; Food 911 Indiana County

Housing Authority of Indiana County

Indiana County Department of Human Services

Fayette County Meeting Summary

Tuesday, February 2, 2022

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?

- Communication. Supporting and promoting the work that we do separately and together. Sharing information- who is working on what, what resources are available, who can do what.
- Communications and transparency. We need to continue the collaboration that happened out of necessity during the pandemic. The Food Bank has access to resources, while other partners may have capacity in specific areas. Supporting each other by acknowledging each other's strengths. Foundation donations are focused in Allegheny County and Pittsburgh, so the Food Bank can help divert or direct funds outside of those areas to other places that have a great need, such as in Fayette.
- FCCAP is very accommodating to pantries in their network. They have been willing to make changes to better serve their partners. Collaboration means being willing to be responsive to each other's needs.
- Information sharing within Fayette County- More information sharing about what is going on in the county will foster collaboration. Raising awareness about services provided by different players can foster collaboration.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

- Roles in collaboration depend on what you are trying to achieve- defining roles and shared objectives is critical. Who leads and who follows may be based on who has expertise and experience.
- Having an initial meeting and agreeing on an action plan. Follow up is important. Check in on progress. Clear plan and shared focus.
- Planning process. Identifying problem. Ongoing dialogue. Bringing in other partners. And then evaluation. Emphasis on how well the collaboration worked, not just if collaboration was successful or not successful.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration?

- Continuing group conversations so that stakeholders can share what they are doing and learn what partners and local groups are doing.
- Clear guidelines or benchmarks for member agencies of the Food Bank. People newer to the network do not always have a clear understanding of what they need to do or even what is possible/available.

- FCCAP has an advisory council meeting once a month- clients, pantry coordinators, community partners. This keeps people informed and collaboration can happen when people are at the same table.
- A lot of collaboration is transactional- for example, ordering food, or “something came up and I need help with this one thing.” Increased engagement with PDOs might be beneficial. Many food bank relationships are transactional, but there really needs to be regular opportunity for dialogue- at the county level or among similar groups of partners. “Moving beyond transactional communication/interactions.”
- Regular meetings with different partner groups or bringing local players to the table. Sharing information on a regular basis would help keep everyone aware of what is happening. Reducing duplication of services and making better referrals.
- Advisory councils are a great tool to check in and see what is working well and not working well on an ongoing basis.
- Information sharing via email or on the Food Bank website would help unique partners get the information they need, especially for those that may not have as much time to meet.

How would you like to be involved, going forward?

- The strategic plan may be a great opportunity to engage partners and communities in collaboration or to demonstrate the Food Bank’s commitment to collaboration. “Does the Food Bank ever involve partners, and folks from other counties, in its strategic plan?”

Do you have any other advice?

- Fayette County Community Action Food Bank partnered with the Westmoreland/Fayette Workforce Investment Board to provide transitional employment opportunities to those who may be in transition in a job search or to those who need additional competencies in his/her skillset. They were able to work with 5 transitional employees in our Food Bank. They received training in inventory systems, packing food boxes, loading/unloading trucks, driving commercial trucks and forklift training. FCCAP has hired 2 transitional employees after they completed the program.
- FCCAA also partners with the Workforce Investment Board in the “Experience WORKS” program. They have students work in our warehouse or in our Food Bank office for approximately 250 hours.
- FCCAA Food Bank provides a monthly newsletter that discusses healthy eating, recipes, etc. FCCAA also has a Nutrition Educator that will visit the pantries and do tastings and cooking demonstrations.

Participants

Adagio Health Power Up
 Brownsville Area School District
 Steve Strange, East End United Community Center
 Fayette County Community Action Program
 Uniontown Area School District

Greene County Meeting Summary

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

What does it mean to be a good collaborator? What would you look for? What makes a collaboration successful?

- Collaboration works when people have shared goals, but that each player is achieving their own objectives and furthering their mission.
- Making a Great Impact Collectively (MAGIC) involves the Greene County Food Partnership, which also includes the Department of Human Services. Collaboration works in Greene County. When there is a need that needs to be met, people come to the table in Greene County. Bringing partners together can help generate solutions and meet the complex needs of clients. However, partners may need to be reinvigorated or re-invited to the table to pull more resources and people together.
- Partners come up with solutions. Flenniken Library has a box where people can pick up food, which works well in the summer, but not in the winter months. They are also starting a community garden, so people can access food that is grown.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

- Some partners aren't aware of all the services that the Food Bank and/or Corner Cupboard has to offer in Greene County. If they had more information, partners could make referrals to address basic needs. Sharing information about what each partner has to offer might be helpful for all involved. And since Corner Cupboard is short-staffed, perhaps the Food Bank could share their information and services throughout the county.
- It's all about communication. If partners knew what everyone else was doing, then collaboration would be more likely to happen. For example: these are all the players, this is what they are doing.
- Greene County plans to host a hunger summit in Spring 2022, which has turned into a collaboration with Department of Human Services. The Food Bank could be involved in this effort.
- Churches need to be more involved because they are aware of what's going on at the grassroots level. Can the Food Bank and its partners help churches pool their resources- volunteers, funds, expertise?

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take to demonstrate its commitment to collaboration?

- More communication between the Food Bank and other partners to ensure that local partners can refer to Food Bank services. The Food Bank needs to ensure that Corner Cupboard is involved and engaged in this discussion.

- Partners want to make referrals, but they do not know where to go. Sharing information about distributions, and what is the process to get connected to food. Partners normally make things work, but sometimes that is out of their own pockets.
 - There is a need for resources when people are in immediate need. When people need food now, there is not a current solution.
- It is hard to find information about food pantries in Greene County. The Food Bank could share information since Corner Cupboard is short-staffed.

How would you like to be involved, going forward?

- The Food Bank should engage with MAGIC, a Greene County partnership. This partnership reaches all entities serving people in the county. The Food Bank can support existing partnerships- to share information and resources.
- Adagio Health Power Up can help further some of the topics that people raised in Parts 1 & 2 related to increasing healthy options and educating the community about making healthy food choices.

Do you have any other advice?

- Everyone is busy. Keep the communication coming and outline next steps, schedule meetings ahead of time, so things continue happening.

Participants

Adagio Health Power Up

Community Foundation of Greene County

Flenniken Public Library

Greene County Human Services/Greene County Food Partnership

My Blueprints WIC