

ATTACHMENT B: SEI Part 3 Meeting Summaries



Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) – Part 3 **PDOs, Members and Partners Session** **Meeting Summary**

Tuesday, January 25th, 2022, 12:30 to 2:00 pm

The purpose of the meeting was to share and seek feedback on the proposed path forward below for the Food Bank, based on the results of the Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) to date:

On Tuesday, January 25, 2022, representatives from a diverse range of partner organizations participated in Part 3 of Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI). 29 representatives from a variety of organizations across southwestern Pennsylvania participated (see attachment B for a list of participating organizations). The meeting was held online using Zoom video conferencing software.

The meeting included a presentation from Chris West, Nicole Swerhun and Erin Spangler, facilitated small group discussions, and a plenary discussion between all participants.

The meeting was facilitated by Third Party Public (formerly Swerhun Inc.), who also wrote this summary. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of this project, the intent is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussion, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. This summary does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

The summary was subject to participant review prior to being finalized. 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 (also available on [SEI webpage](#)).

Feedback during Part 3 was also collected through an online feedback form shared with all invitees and participants. The Food Bank will be considering all feedback received through the SEI in their 2022 strategic planning process.

Focusing on collaboration

to make our work more effective, and to help advance choice and eliminate hunger



Respecting each stakeholder's strengths

to find where gaps can be filled and efforts combined without duplicating efforts



Ongoing learning

To share information, maintain flexibility and responsiveness, and create permanent feedback loops

Questions posed to participants by the Food Bank included:

- 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?**

This summary captures feedback shared during the meeting.

OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Feedback shared during the four small group discussions and the plenary discussion is summarized below, organized by the questions asked. Detailed summaries of the small group discussions are included as *Attachment A*.

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

- **Prioritizes mutually beneficial partnerships with shared objectives.** Language around collaboration is important for emphasizing the importance of mutually beneficial relationships.
- **Builds trust with current and future partners.** Trust takes time to develop and can help foster honesty, stronger connection, and collaboration opportunities. Transparency helps build trust. A collaboration is successful when partners feel comfortable sharing information, strengths, and areas for improvement. It's also successful when collaborators develop specific, measurable, and realistic goals.
- **Be a good listener.** Good and early communication results in clarity on needs and resources, including understanding what/where needs exist, who has the resources to meet those needs, and who the resources are available to.
- **Leverages the strengths of partners.** A strength-based approach can help partners set aside pre-conceived notions and/or a focus on deficits. Good teamwork allows the network to focus on both the present (meeting immediate needs) and the future (setting goals and aspirations to achieve in the longer-term). This also includes developing a shared understanding of the processes necessary to achieve the goals and identifying new opportunities to creatively collaborate with different actors.
- **Responsive to the needs of others.** Flexibility is important to be able to respond to the needs of clients and the partners who serve them. Responsiveness and timely turnaround time are important for both acknowledging requests and making sure partners and community members are being heard.
- **Supports stronger connections within the network.** A collaboration is successful when the network is considered an asset and there are ongoing opportunities for partners to build their capacity, and therefore the capacity of the entire network.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Share information with the network.** Partners would like to see more opportunities to share information, resources, and network with other partner organizations. Partners would also like more information on Food Bank processes and navigating the different Food Bank departments.

Sharing information will also help strengthen understanding. There was a suggestion that partners would benefit from having regularly updated organizational charts with contact information.

- **Continue to coordinate connections within the network.** Identify if there are opportunities for partners to address a gap or needs together such as nutrition education or transportation. The Food Bank can leverage its standing and gravitas to help bring resources and people together to fill the gaps/needs identified in communities. Everyone could benefit from a resource (coordinated by the Food Bank) that identifies community needs, including where they exist, the resources available to address those needs, and where there are gaps that could be filled by the Food Bank and/or its partners. For example, Adagio Health can offer nutrition education classes at any pantry. The Food Bank can continue to assist in helping make these connections through the return of the annual conference, partner meetings (virtual or in-person) and other means of regular updates.
- **Continue engagement with the network and community members.** The Stakeholder Engagement Initiative is a great opportunity for connecting with the Food Bank and other partners. The Food Bank should consider continuing to host meetings or conduct open-ended surveys.

What network partners can do:

- **Contribute experience and expertise.** With the Food Bank focusing on coordinating resources and services, partners can inform this coordination by sharing their experiences and expertise in their communities. Partners can help the Food Bank identify where there are needs and gaps and who in the community has the resources to fill those gaps. Partners can also contribute innovative ideas to solving problems based on their experience. For example, sharing ideas about transportation that have worked in other areas and could be used elsewhere to connect people to food assistance.
- **Build connections within the network.** The network is a resource for connecting with other organizations to learn best practices, troubleshoot and develop collaboration opportunities.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take?

- **Continue to engage the network.** The Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) has been a good opportunity to meet with the Food Bank and discuss a vision for future. The SEI process and the Food Bank's other efforts have shown ongoing commitment. The Food Bank should consider regular meetings (e.g. quarterly, twice a year, and restart the annual conference). Another suggestion was to look for ways to visit regions and areas to improve the Food Bank's understanding of different local communities.

- **Honor the expertise of subject matter experts when collaborating.** This is important because partners know their own limitations– whether legal, financial, or regulatory requirements. Also the Food Bank should make sure that end users are involved in discussions when collaborating with partners to find solutions. Sometimes pilots are developed which take a lot of time and energy, only to fail because they don't work for end users.
- **Share more information on Food Bank processes and the rationale for decision-making.** Pantries would like to have a better understanding of how and why the Food Bank sources the food it does and if there are any limitations. This would inform a pantry's ordering process. The Food Bank could organize regular meetings for people who do the ordering at pantries with the Food Bank sourcing team.
- **Prioritize strengthening communication.** The Food Bank is big and has so many programs and partners. The Food Bank could consider creating a "cheat sheet" for partners serving different audiences of community members. For example, "if you're serving seniors, here are the programs available." Give each pantry a dedicated contact or phone number to call for the Food Bank. There could also be a monthly reminder or update about food sourcing or programs to help pantries connect the dots.
- **Putting words into action.** Talking with partners is a great first step, but real commitment is demonstrated by follow-through. This might look like the Food Bank identifying actions and plans to achieve specific goals and then visibly following through.
- **Be responsive to questions and requests.** Partners have connections to local communities and knowledge of emerging concerns and needs. For example, some partners have seen a real dietary need and are making requests for more meat, in addition to fruits and vegetables. A response from the Food Bank to these types of requests shows commitment. Responsiveness doesn't always have to be filling the request, it can also come by communicating if/when a request cannot be met and why.

ATTACHMENT A - PDOs (Partner Distribution Organizations), MEMBERS, PARTNERS SESSION BREAKOUT ROOMS

Overview of groups

Group 1 included 6 organizations who represented pantries, community health organizations, transportation, and social services.

Group 2 included 5 organizations that provide a variety of community and social services (including career services), and organizations that focus on community development and supporting employees working in service industries.

Group 3 included 6 participants representing pantries and local family centers, non-profit organizations, and a local diabetes organization.

Group 4 included 8 participants from pantries, non-profit organizations, community development organizations, and a local children's hospital.

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

Discussion in each group focused on a combination of ideas related to characteristics of a good partner and strategies for approaching collaborations, including:

Group 1

- **Center partnerships in a joint effort.** Use the word “partner” instead of “collaborator” because collaborate often is framed as “what can I get from this?” and “partner” is based on asking “how can I help someone else?”. In that way collaboration becomes selfless.
- **It needs specific, realistic, and measurable goals. It also needs trust.**
- **Meaningful feedback is provided both ways.**
- **Focus on a strength-based approach.** Pre-conceived notions are set aside and a strength-based approach is taken, as opposed to a weakness-based approach.
- **It's like a marriage, it's ok to disagree sometimes.** Honesty goes a long way to establishing trust.
- **Adaptable to partners' needs** – just like partners need to be able to respond to clients' needs.

Group 2

- **Good communication.** Good communication provides clarity on needs and resources, including understanding what/where needs exist, who has the resources to meet those needs and to whom resources are available. A key part of good communication is being a good listener.
- **Teamwork.** This includes developing a shared understanding of goals and the process to achieve the goals. Good teamwork also allows the team/partners to focus on both the present (meeting current/immediate needs) and the future (setting goals and aspirations to achieve in the longer-term).

Group 3

- **Develop shared objectives and understanding of mutually desired outcomes.** One participant shared that their organization has tried to build connections with partners by meeting them at their location and by increasing visibility of their organization with partners. Overtime, these relationships have grown and partners feel more comfortable to reach out.
- **Being responsive.** Responsiveness is important for acknowledging requests and for making sure partners are being heard. Rapid turnaround is an important part of collaboration.
- **Support strengthening within the network.** The network is an asset and continuing to have opportunities for partners builds capacity of networks.
- **Look for new ideas and opportunities for collaboration.** Collaboration requires partners to be open to new ideas and opportunities.

Group 4

- **Good communication that is set up at the beginning of a collaborative process.** All parties should be open to being transparent about their timetables.
- **A common goal should be set up at the beginning.** Specifically with the Food Bank, these common goals can be organized geographically.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

Group 1

What the Food Bank can do:

- **There would be information shared among the network on the resources available, whether that be from the Food Bank or others in the network.** For example, Adagio Health has nutrition educators available to come to any pantry. Note added after the meeting: Learning this was very frustrating for one of the participants who had been searching for access to a nutrition resource for some time and was told by their Food Bank contact that they were unaware of any resources like this available. Having a mechanism for members of the network to share information with each other, and/or the Food Bank playing a role in that by being aware of what resources are available in its network, could have avoided this frustration.
- **Strengthen understanding between those involved.**

Group 2

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Focus on coordination.** If/where partners agree on specific gaps/needs, the Food Bank can leverage its standing and gravitas to bring resources together to fill the gaps/needs identified. Everyone could benefit from a resource (coordinated by the Food Bank) that identifies community needs, including where they exist, the resources available to address the needs and where there are gaps that could be filled by the Food Bank and/or its partners. A specific need, experienced by many, is transportation. The Food Bank could connect with transportation service

providers to coordinate resources and services (e.g., vehicles and drivers) to help partners provide to people in need, including getting food to people and getting people to food.

What network partners can do:

- **Contribute experience and expertise.** With the Food Bank focusing on coordinating resources and services, partners can inform this coordination by sharing their experiences and expertise. Partners can help the Food Bank identify where there are needs and gaps in service, and who in the community has the resources to fill those gaps. Partners can also contribute innovative ideas to solving problems based on their experience. For example, sharing ideas about transportation that have worked in other areas that could be applied to getting to people to/from food distributions.

Group 3

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Help partners easily access and navigate the Food Bank.** Participants had mixed sentiments about challenges they have had navigating the Food Bank. Some participants indicated that it can be difficult with staff turnover to know who to approach. Other participants shared that the Food Bank is responsive, and it was not difficult to find support. There was a suggestion that partners would benefit from having regularly updated organizational charts with contact information.
- **Continue to engage with network and community members.** The Stakeholder Engagement Initiative is a great opportunity to connect with the Food Bank and other partners. The Food Bank should consider continuing to host meetings or conduct open-ended surveys. Open-ended surveys are a quick and easy mechanism for asking for feedback and opportunities for improvement. Several partners shared their desire for regular partner meetings with the Food Bank to recommence (preferably in-person but virtual would suffice). These sessions were great opportunities to share information and to network.

Group 4

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Be the coordination that partners need.** The Food Bank has a wide network that they work with and could help connect organizations to each other.
- **Create a directory of other pantries and partner organizations on their website for members to use as a resource when looking for a service.** It can be organized by region and statewide.
- **Help set up regular network meetings (that used to happen) for members to gather and share their resources, knowledge, troubleshoot ideas, best practices etc.** Better regular communication can help reach a broader range of people and not duplicate services in one region. It also helps band together local groups who are unaware of each other.

What network partners can do:

- **Hold townhalls among pantries.** This would help each other understand what resources each member has and what can be shared amongst each other. It would help pantries see what other groups are doing to then share best practices.

- **Have collaborative feedback loops so members who run into issues have other people to connect with and develop solutions with.** There may be issues everyone is experiencing and by sharing that knowledge, it can create a sense of comradery and help solve the issues.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take?

Group 1

- **Meetings like this are a good start.** Consider regular meetings like this, for example, or like the ones that the Food Bank used to host twice each year or quarterly. We can work together to think about how to tackle barriers. This is an important place to share best practices and where pantries learn from each other.
- **Honor the expertise of subject matter experts when collaborating.** This is important because partners know their own limitations- whether legal, financial or regulatory requirements. Also make sure that the Food Bank involves end users in discussions when working with partners to find solutions. Sometimes pilots are developed (which take a lot of time and energy), only to fail because they don't work for end users.
- **If pantries better understood how the Food Bank sources its food, then they would be able to order food more appropriately.** It's unclear to partners how food is sourced. For example: "if I've been looking for a specific item and it becomes available, then I'll order more than I need because I don't know when they may come back again. If I knew that the item was regularly available, I would make more frequent smaller orders." There was also a time when an item took 2-3 months to arrive. If we had known this ahead of time, we may have used resources differently. The Food Bank could have a meeting like the SEI meetings, but only with the people who do the food sourcing at the Food Bank.
- **Strengthen communications.** One participant only learned about the senior box program when visiting the Food Bank and seeing it first-hand. The Food Bank is so big and has so many programs, consider creating a "cheat sheet." For example, "if you're serving seniors, here are these are the programs available." Give each pantry a dedicated contact at the food bank and/or a phone number. There could also be a monthly reminder or update about food sourcing or programs to help pantries connect the dots.
- **Identify partners' needs and strengths and contributing to addressing gaps.**

Group 2

- **This engagement process and the Food Bank's ongoing work shows commitment.** Connecting with us multiple times to get our feedback and then reporting back on what the Food Bank has heard and what it is planning to do shows us their commitment.
- **Putting words into action transparently.** Talking with us is great. Real commitment is shown when there are actionable goals identified and then partners see that steps are put in place to achieve those goals.
- **Being responsive to questions and requests.** For example, some pantries have seen a real dietary need and are making requests for more meat (in addition to fruits and vegetables). Responding to these types of requests shows commitment. Responsiveness doesn't always have to be filling

the request, it can also come in the form of communicating if/when a request cannot be met and why.

Group 3

- **Restart annual member agency conference.** Partners recommended that the Food Bank look into ways that the annual conference could return. One suggestion was having less people attend by hosting two annual sessions to allow for social distancing.
- **Look for ways to maintain flexibility in programs and in pre-packaged boxes.** Partners have seen an influx of delivery requests and requests that are outside of their scope. One example was seniors asking for the pantry to deliver food instead of the Food Bank because they preferred the boxes from their organization. Participant shared that they do steer seniors to the Food Bank but not sure how many actually call and follow up for services. Another participant suggested that there could be different sized boxes (small and large box). Seniors tend to not eat as much, and pantries are being called every week to collect unused or unwanted items. Currently prepackaged produce boxes are about 22 or 25 lbs and that can be difficult for seniors to consume large amounts of produce. There have also been more requests for Halal options.
- **More clarity when ordering pre-packaged boxes.** Partners shared that they would appreciate more clarity when ordering pre-packaged boxes: what comes in the prepacked boxes, what is the availability of different items (for example, meat) and how can the ordering system be made more user-friendly?

Group 4

- **Visit the neighborhoods and regions.** The Food Bank should have a better understanding of community needs to better connect with available resources.
- **Continue to engage stakeholders.** This initiative is a good step to start collaborating (for example, participants in the small groups shared resources amongst each other).
- **Reach out to other life stabilization organizations.** The Food Bank should be willing to reach out to broader organizations that help with issues beyond food in the community as a way to build the network and create new collaboration opportunities.
- **Make information regarding collaboration more accessible.** An action step the Food Bank can take is to have information on how to collaborate with other partners on food delivery, such as information on the process and how to get people signed up, as there is a need for food to be delivered in the Mon Valley specifically (Participants shared local resources with the member who brought up this point.).

ATTACHMENT B – LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- ACCESS Transportation Systems
- Adagio Health/Power Up
- CareerLink Pittsburgh
- Ciss House of Hope Ministries
- Conemaugh Health System
- East End Cooperative Ministry
- Focus On Renewal
- Sto-Rox Neighborhood Corporation
- Grant Associates, Inc.
- Lawrence County Community Action Partnership
- Ma's Pantry
- Mon Valley Initiative
- Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
- Network of Hope Allison Park
- Northside Common Ministries
- PGH Restaurant Workers Aid
- Pittsburgh Mercy
- Project Destiny Pittsburgh
- Salvation Army
- St Winifred Catholic Church
- Take Action Mon Valley
- UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh
- Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh



Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) – Part 3 **Regional Leaders and Potential Partners Session Meeting Summary**

Thursday, January 27th, 2022, 3:00 to 4:30 pm

The purpose of the meeting was to share and seek feedback on the following proposed path forward for the Food Bank, based on the results of the Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) to date:



The questions posed to participants by the Food Bank included:

- 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?**

This summary captures feedback received at the meeting.

On Thursday, January 27, 2022, representatives from a diverse range of region-wide and life stabilization organizations participated in Part 3 of Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank's Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI). 21 representatives from a variety of organizations, municipal actors and staff of elected representatives participated (see Attachment B). The meeting was held online using Zoom video conferencing software.

The meeting included a presentation from Chris West, Nicole Swerhun and Erin Spangler, facilitated small group discussions and a plenary discussion among all participants.

The meeting was facilitated by Third Party Public (formerly Swerhun Inc.), who also wrote this summary. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of this project, the intent is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussion, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. This summary does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

The summary was subject to participant review prior to being finalized. 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 (also available on [SEI webpage](#)).

OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

Feedback shared during the small group discussions and the plenary discussion is summarized below, organized by the questions asked. Detailed summaries of each of the small group discussions is included as *Attachment A*.

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

- **Shared mission and purpose.** Partnering organizations should build collaboration on shared mission and purpose. Each partner’s approach may be different, but the values should align with each other. Collaboration should also bring community members into the process and connect with local needs.
- **Engage partners early and ensure opportunities for influence on the process.** Good collaboration should start early. Being able to influence and participate in the decision-making process is important for meaningful collaboration. A participant shared their experience working with the Food Bank, noting that many of the decisions had already been made with little space for partners to influence the approach.
- **Acknowledge the difference in strengths and priorities of partners.** All partners have a unique and important role. Working in collaboration, both the Food Bank and other smaller organizations can achieve their mission - there doesn’t need to be one organization that does it all. The Food Bank should make space for smaller organizations and other partners to do what they do best.
- **Develop the conditions for collaboration.** Good communication is foundational for effective and meaningful collaboration. Good communication also means being responsive to inquiries and radical listening, which involves coming to a conversation or process with an open mind and really listening to what is and is not being said; not having a pre-set agenda. The “Free Tax Campaign” is a very good example of collaboration.
- **Start with a “win-win” mentality and take one step at a time.** Being a good collaborator often means being willing to set aside your organization’s individual goals to achieve the greater good. Partners are willing to lift one another up and magnify the message of their partners to their own networks, where appropriate. Starting small can help build the trust required for larger partnerships.
- **Take the time to build meaningful relationships.** Building meaningful relationships can be constrained by timeline requirements of funders to achieve outcomes in a certain period. Meaningful relationship-building should occur on more organic timelines that align with the priorities of each party.

- **Acknowledge different approaches to collaboration.** There are two types of collaboration that partners and the Food Bank can explore. The first type of collaboration advances the Food Bank’s projects. The second type of collaboration starts with identifying issues and then working together to address those issues. Collaboration can also be a mechanism for addressing issues related to hunger and other social determinants of health.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Work collaboratively with partners.** The Food Bank is a larger organization that is better resourced and able to make connections to broader resources. The Food Bank should continue to prioritize working with partners and build on their different strengths to better engage local communities. The Food Bank should also remain flexible and make it as easy as possible for smaller or new organizations to partner with the Food Bank.
- **Share information with partners and local communities.** Partners and community members need to know the different services and programs that the Food Bank offers. Smaller organizations need to know that it is less expensive for them to get food from the Food Bank than from large grocery stores. Reduce barriers by eliminating as many bureaucratic requirements as possible. The Food Bank should also be providing education about food insecurity to volunteers, partners, and the community. Finally, the Food Bank should connect with partners and local communities in a strategic way to share what resources are available and how/where to access them, but make sure that there is not too much information or confusing information that is provided.
- **Acknowledge that resources are finite.** Everyone struggles with capacity and there should be opportunities for larger organizations, like the Food Bank, to have staff that cross organizational boundaries and help build capacity of partners.
- **Improve emergency services coordination between partners and the Food Bank.** It can be difficult for partners to deliver food or access emergency food supplies. There needs to be better coordination between different actors who do delivery, especially in rural areas, and food pantries or other services for emergency requests.

What network partners can do:

- **Strong lines of communications are key, including the “ask” of what partners need from the Food Bank.** Partners should feel comfortable asking the Food Bank for what they need to better serve their communities. Without transparent and trusted lines of communication, the Food Bank won’t be aware of the needs of partners and local communities.

What are the 2 or 3 most important steps that the Food Bank can take?

- **Be clear about intentions.** Work with partners to practice shared intention-setting. This can apply to existing relationships (for example United Way or Pittsburgh Food Policy Council) where collaboration with the Food Bank happens in multiple ways, however it could be stronger if there was an intentional approach to the organization-to-organization collaboration.
- **Continue engagement processes like the Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI).** The SEI engagement process is a demonstration of the Food Bank's commitment to collaboration. There is a desire to have more virtual gatherings and opportunities to bring people together, introducing partners to one another.
- **Consider identifying the different missions and scopes of partners.** To support collaboration or as an initial first step, the Food Bank should begin to identify the missions and scopes of partners and potential partners to highlight opportunities for collaboration.
- **Publicly share the Food Banks' commitment to collaboration.** This increases visibility for new partners and the local communities.
- **Connect with elected officials and their staff.** Elected officials and their offices would appreciate more opportunities to see hands-on what the Food Bank does. The Food Bank could consider providing monthly updates with needs, sending brochures, and letting elected officials know about opportunities to volunteer. Every legislative office staff needs a chance to see it first-hand.
- **Be considerate of what you are asking from partners.** The Food Bank should be clear on specific asks from partners and thoughtful about organizations' capacity.

NEXT STEPS

Chris West thanked participants for sharing their ideas, suggestions and feedback, and shared that feedback will be part of the Food Bank's strategic planning process and an update will be provided to all stakeholders in late 2022. More information and meeting summaries are available at www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/feedback.

ATTACHMENT A – REGION-WIDE AND LIFE STABILIZATION ORGANIZATIONS BREAKOUT ROOMS

Overview of groups

Group 1 included 6 organizations who represented local government, a non-profit charitable organization and representatives from elected officials' offices.

Group 2 included 5 organizations who represented endowment organizations, representatives from elected officials' offices, a local university and a non-profit charitable organization.

Group 3 included 4 participants representing a local hospital, a community health services provider and a local municipality.

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

Discussion in each group focused on a combination of ideas related to the characteristics of a good partner and strategies for approaching collaborations, including:

Group 1

- **Shared mission and purpose.** When organizations that collaborate share your mission and purpose, activities may be different, but you share in what you're trying to accomplish.
- **Understand different strengths.** Understand where objectives and priorities are shared, and where they diverge.
- **Develop the conditions for collaboration.** When groups communicate effectively, are flexible and work with each other, there's some give and take, and the collaboration is mutually beneficial for each partner. The "Free Tax Campaign" is a very good example of collaboration.
- **Magnify the work of others.** Partners are willing to lift one another up and magnify the message of their partners to their networks, where appropriate.
- **Learning and sharing together.**

Group 2

- **Start with a "win-win" mentality.** Being a good collaborator often means being willing to set aside your organization's individual goals to achieve the greater good.
- **Focus on good communication.** Developing and maintaining good lines of communication includes being responsive to phone calls and emails, setting clear expectations and practicing "radical listening." Radical listening involves coming to a conversation/process with an open mind and really listening to what is and is not being said, without having a pre-set agenda.
- **Larger organizations need to support smaller ones.** Larger organizations, such as the Food Bank, can support smaller ones by helping them navigate their systems and being flexible with its own systems, i.e., not letting bureaucracy be a barrier for smaller organizations to become partners of the Food Bank and/or getting the resources they need to do their work.

Group 3

- **Forming mutually beneficially partnerships.** Collaboration needs to be clear and align with each organization's mission. Starting with a shared goal or issue is important. It should also bring community members into the process and align with local needs. A participant provided an example that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizations saw a need to support the community and leverage the interest of members of the organization to volunteer by connecting them to partners. As the process evolved the organization continued to connect with partners and volunteers to see how to best deploy volunteers and shift partnerships to help partners increase capacity to do more.
- **Start early.** Good collaboration should start early and provide partners the opportunity to influence and work collaboratively. One participant shared an example of working with the Food Bank and many of the decisions had already been made with little space for partners to influence.
- **Start small and allow relationship to develop.** Building strong relationships can start from one-off or small collaborations that can then grow into more fruitful collaborations.
- **Take the time to build meaningful relationships.** Building meaningful relationships can be constrained by timeline requirements of funders to achieve outcomes in certain period. Meaningful relationship building should occur on more organic timelines that align with the priorities of each party.
- **Honor that everyone provides a unique and important piece of the puzzle.** Participants affirmed that it has been a good experience to collaborate with the Food Bank.
- **Acknowledge different types of collaborations.** A participant shared two types of collaboration. The first type of collaboration advances the Food Bank's projects while the second type of collaboration starts from identifying joint issues and collaborating to address those issues. Collaboration can also be a mechanism for addressing issues related to hunger and other social determinates of health.
- **Leverage different strengths and stay consistent to mission.** There are several organizations that have different missions and pieces of the work. It can be difficult for smaller organizations to get funding or to fully achieve their goals when they are competing for funding with larger organizations. The Food Bank should make space for smaller organizations and other partners to do what they do best.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

Group 1

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Build on partners' strengths.** Identify what the Food Bank is really good at and what community partners are really good at and build from there. Don't do things outside of what you're good at.
- **Prioritize clear communication with the Food Bank's network of partners.** The Food Bank is a large, well-resourced organization with a lot of good strategic thinking. The Food Bank looks at the information and data and works hard to identify where the needs are and how to get resources there. It's important to be clear on what roles you want network partners to fill.

- **Convene community members with partners.** Food Bank partners should also be part of convening the community to build better capacity. They can talk to their neighbors and say “We’re really making a difference for 50 families, but 100 need our help.”

What network partners can do:

- **Strong communications are key, including the “ask”.** You won’t get what you want if you don’t ask for it.

Group 2

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Provide education.** The Food Bank should be educating partner organizations, especially smaller volunteer organizations, about the resources the Food Bank provides and how to access these resources. Smaller organizations need to know that it is less expensive for them to get food from the Food Bank than it is from large grocery stores. The Food Bank should also be providing education about food insecurity to volunteers, partners, and the community.
- **Be flexible and make it easy for new organizations to partner with the Food Bank.** There should be one direct line/phone number new organizations can call to get information about partnering with the Food Bank and the resources they offer. It’s great that existing partners have a key contact but there needs to be an easier way for new organizations to establish a partnership with the Food Bank.

Group 3

What the Food Bank can do:

- **Sharing information on resources.** The Food Bank can continue to help other organizations connect and share information with the people the Food Bank serves about other support programs and initiatives (for example volunteer opportunities). It can be tricky to not inundate people with too much information, but the Food Bank should look for a way to share information in a strategic way. It was suggested that technology would be the best way for sharing information.
- **Acknowledging that resources are finite.** Everyone struggles with capacity and there should be opportunities for larger organizations, like the Food Bank, to have staff that cross organizational boundaries and help build capacity of partners.
- **Supporting better collaboration and partnerships.** It can be difficult for partners to deliver food or access emergency food supplies. There needs to be better coordination between different actors who do delivery, especially in rural areas, and food pantries or other services for emergency food requests.

On Wednesday, February 2, 2022, six individuals participated in a meeting of community members to review and discuss Part 3 of the Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI). Participants were residents from southwestern Pennsylvania, including Allegheny and Butler counties, who have used the Food Bank's services. Some participants participated in Part 1 and/or Part 2 of the SEI process. The meeting was held online using Zoom video conferencing software. The meeting included a presentation from Chris West and Khly Lamparero, and a facilitated plenary discussion.

The meeting was facilitated by Third Party Public (formerly Swerhun Inc.), who also wrote this summary. As facilitators that are not advocating for any particular outcome of this project, the intent is to capture the perspectives shared during the discussion, not to assess the merit or accuracy of any of these perspectives. This summary does not indicate an endorsement of any of these perspectives on the part of Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank.

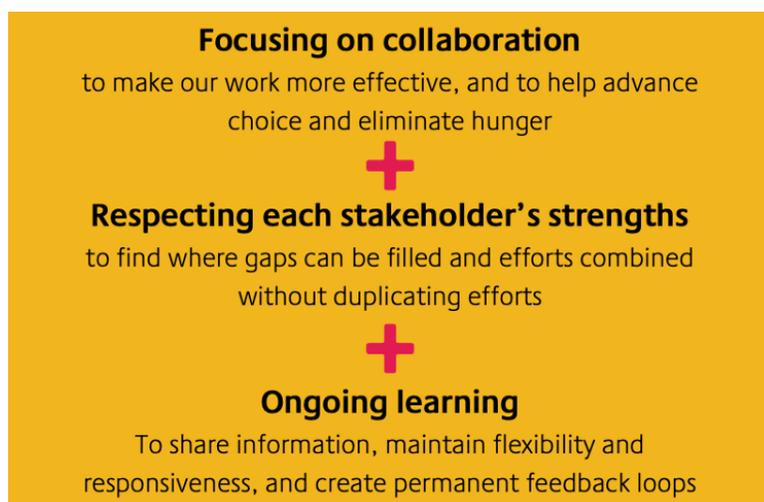
The summary was subject to participant review prior to being finalized. If you have questions about what's here, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the SEI Project Team through Erin Spangler, Engagement Initiative Project Manager, 412-460-3663 ext. 498 or espangler@pittsburghfoodbank.org (also available on [SEI webpage](#)).

Feedback in Part 3 was also collected through an online feedback form shared with all invitees and participants. The Food Bank will be considering all feedback received through the SEI in their 2022 strategic planning process.

Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank Stakeholder Engagement Initiative (SEI) Part 3 **Meeting with Community Members** **Meeting Summary**

Wednesday, February 2, 2022, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

The purpose of the meeting was to share and seek feedback on the following proposed path forward for the Food Bank, which was based on discussions held in Part 1 and Part 2 of the SEI:



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?**

Feedback shared at the meeting is summarized on the following pages, organized by the questions asked.

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

- **Shares the same interests and objectives.** A successful collaboration requires everyone being on the same page and agreeing on the same goal and coming together to achieve those goals.
- **Able to share, accept, and discuss ideas and possible ways to implement those ideas.** Good collaboration happens when people talk, share ideas, and identify pros and cons and obstacles to overcome, then come up with a path forward that is workable and agreeable with everyone.
- **Passionate about the work and knows what a successful outcome looks like.** A good collaborator is someone who can effectively assess how long it will take to get something done and can manage schedules to deliver on time.
- **Has good communication skills.** A good collaborator is someone who can effectively get feedback from different groups. A good collaborator should also be able to bring the different perspectives from different groups together and put them into action.

How would the collaboration ideally happen to achieve shared objectives?

What the Food Bank can do

- **Get people from the community who are directly affected involved.** Reach out to people in the community and listen to their ideas and input. The Stakeholder Engagement Initiative is a great start in taking ideas from the community.
- **Collaborate with, and share information about other resources that would be useful for, the community.** People usually don't know what services are available to them. Providing resources for other important needs, like employment and education, would be helpful for the community (e.g., listing information on your website, putting flyers in food bags, posting info at all food bank/pantry locations or connecting with people through social media).
- **Reach out to schools to get input from youth.** Kids have a lot to say and usually no one is listening to them. When reaching out to them, make sure that they feel like someone cares about their input, someone wants to help, and that this is a path that could help things be better for their families. To better reach kids, reach out to them in-person on certain school days or using tools that they are comfortable with (e.g., Zoom, social media). To avoid making them feel judged, consider taking their feedback anonymously to motivate them to participate. Also consider offering the time that kids, particularly high school kids, share their input as something they can count towards their community service. Reaching out to kids is also an opportunity to reach out to adults/their parents.
- **Host in-person events at local community destinations where people can mingle and collaborate.** The way community members get their food now is through drive-up distributions which doesn't create a lot of opportunity to mingle. Consider hosting an event at a local library, food joint, or church that media can promote and encourage people to visit the location to discuss opportunities and resources.

What community members can do

- **Share the services and resources the Food Bank provides with the community.** Word of mouth is a good way for community members to learn what resources are available.

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

- **Be consistent and frequently communicate.** Continue having an active presence in the community and increase the frequency of communication with communities. Connecting every 2-3 months is ideal compared to connecting once a year. This frequency is enough to keep everyone in the loop and without overdoing it. When reaching out every 2-3 months, offer two dates to give people options of when to participate. Avoid January, February, July, and December holidays as people are usually busy during these times.
- **Meet people you want to collaborate with in their community.** Go to where people are instead of having them come to you. Consider attending existing events that the community already attends to make it easier for them to participate.
- **Promote and demonstrate active listening in the community.** To truly understand the needs of the community, you need active listening (e.g., listening to learn and observe instead of listening to respond).

How would you like to be involved going forward? Do you have any other advice?

- **Being continuously involved.** A couple of participants said they would like to be continuously involved in meetings to give input on ideas. Going out into the community is not ideal for older participants, but they would be happy to help in other ways so the Food Bank should keep them updated.