

Downtown Food Summit

October 6, 2005

Many thanks to all of you who attended the food summit!

This exciting and successful event could not have happened without the participation of our downtown providers. We enjoyed meeting all of you. **To those who were not able to attend**, we appreciate your participation and feedback thus far, as well as your feedback regarding the issues discussed in the summit and your involvement in the upcoming activities.

Coming Soon

In order to fully assess the food demand downtown, we are in the process of surveying the agencies that were not able to attend the summit. When all surveys are complete we will send the results via email. If you are a provider and could not make it to last week's summit, please note that we will be contacting you soon. Any questions or email address updates may be directed to Meg Poag at meg.poag@co.travis.tx.us.

Don't Forget!

The Food Committee meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 10:30 at our various agency locations. Our next meeting will be on October 19th at Palm Square (100 N. IH 35) on the main floor in meeting room 2307. We would love for any and all providers to attend! No need to RSVP.

Food Summit Summary Results

The break out sessions included discussions of the challenges faced by agencies in their provision of food and the possible collaborative solutions to address those challenges. The following is the prioritized challenges and potential solutions reported back by each group.

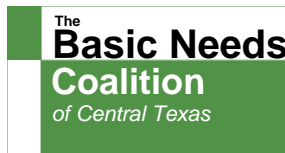
GROUPS 1 & 2 - PANTRIES

Challenges

Both food pantry breakout sessions agreed that current demand far exceeds available supply. Former annual food drives, which helped to sustain the downtown pantries, are no longer taking place. Pantry Group 1 felt that the food coming in is unpredictable, both in quantity and type of food. Group 1 also felt that they were not adequately stocked to provide enough food and a wide variety of food to families with many children, especially teenagers who tend to consume the most food. Pantry Group 2 found that it is difficult to always provide nutritious food, and it is also hard to make that food attractive to clients. Group 2 found that it is also challenging to obtain food from The Capital Area Food Bank, in both navigating the website to order food and submitting the order in a timely manner to get the most desirable food. Both pantry groups agreed that while demand continues to increase, there seems to be a lower public interest in food pantries than hot meal services.

Possibilities

Group 1 decided that a large community food drive for all of the pantries would help supply. Group 1 would also like to increase public awareness of the pantries that are in Austin, as well as advocate the need for more pantries. Group 2 thought it would benefit clients to have one large consolidated pantry on a bus route, a type of one-stop shop that would also offer social services such as case management to help clients access services



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such as food stamps. Group 2 felt that educating clients about food choice and meal preparation would increase overall client nutrition.

GROUP 3 - HOT MEAL PROVIDERS

Challenges

The hot meal providers found that there is a lack of mental health and criminal justice services for their clients. This group felt that there is a fragmentation among hot meal providers, limiting overall service delivery options. Trying to not waste food can sometimes be difficult, as it tends to be feast or famine, and it is often hard to make meals out of the in-stock ingredients. Also, those with mass-access to supply, like grocery stores, do not collaborate enough with hot meal providers.

Possibilities

The hot meal providers decided it would be beneficial to collaborate, pool supplies and labor, and communicate more with one another. They discussed the possibility of working together to provide a daily salad bar, and working with suppliers and grocery stores to get more equipment, space and food. They felt that it would help to form a group of hot meal providers, and then as a group approach large vendors and those with purchasing power for assistance.

GROUP 4 – OTHER SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

Group 4 discussed the overall purpose of the food assessment and collaborative efforts being initiated by the Basic Needs Coalition around food services community wide. The group discussed the need for additional assessment information about hunger; where it is and how great it is. The group discussed that the main goal of this process is to revamp food service delivery community-wide, so that food service provision met the real need of the community.

Food Summit Full Report

Following are the detailed notes from the breakout sessions.

GROUP 1 – PANTRY

Challenges

- Food brought to centers in unpredictable
- Increase in need for pantry food for families
- Caritas lost Amelia Bullock food drive resulting in loss of food resources
- Running out food in pantries
- Increase in international refugees
- Lower public interest in pantries than in prepared meals
- The “ARCH” traffic flow has created an increased need in Caritas pantry
- The “ARC” turns away 2-3 families per week due to tighter criteria

- Stock in pantries is not diverse enough to meet family needs
- Large families with teens require more than pantries are able to give.

Possibilities

- Need large community food drives for pantries
- Increase public awareness of need for pantries as well as focusing on pantries themselves.

GROUP 2 – PANTRY

Challenges

- Space limitation, would increase services if had more food and more space to put that food
- Quality of the food is not great—not nutritious—too much processed, fatty, sugary or salty food
- quality of donations and what's given to the client—the criteria used for choosing what to give to each client is based more on what's at hand—easy to get to, rather than what may be at the bottom of the pile—which may be better or more suited to that client's needs.
- Coordinating training for volunteers – seem to always be training new volunteers
- Lack of availability of staff hours to provide service on weekends
- Competition for the best food - good quality food is available early in the a.m. on Thursdays, set alarm to get up, get on website for the Capital Area Food Bank in order to get order in prior to everyone else to get the good food
- Capital Area Food Bank – rules are to comply with in emergency situations
- Capital Area Food Bank – process for ordering food – the system is not customer-friendly (can choose food online but order has to be faxed (another participant said that that was not the case, that you can order it after putting food in the shopping cart by checking out, but the web page does not explain process on ordering on-line)
- Capital Area Food Bank system for ordering food needs to be tweaked with needs of the agencies in mind.
- Capital Area Food Bank has unusual food items that clients won't know how to cook or what the food is
- The quality of the food that comes from the Capital Area Food Bank is below generic quality.
- Size of packages or cans hinders portability – not beneficial to the clients
- Pantries don't have space to re-pack
- Long-term connection to system for obtaining food (like food stamps) for the client versus always having to resort to emergency assistance
- Inconsistent in availability of meat for clients (Capital Area Food Bank)
- Not allowed to purchase “purchased food” with the Food Bank
- Shortage of household cleaning items and of storage (baggies) and disposal (trash bags) items to give to clients.

Possibilities

- Agencies serving hot meals should receive large packaged food items like #10 cans
- Making nutritious food appealing by marketing it to the clients
- Educating clients about which items are nutritious by guiding their choices
- Nutritional content education for providers about the products that are ordering from Food Bank
- Collaborate with Food Bank to get better food and in greater amount
- Provide recipes, cooking classes from the food in the pantry to the clients
- Employ services of Agricultural Extension to help clients learn how to prepare foods.
- Universal training for pantry volunteers.
- Food bank assess problems and find solutions by collecting and evaluating data
- Refrigerated locale open and available during weekends that could be shared by various agencies.
- Consolidation of food pantries to increase the quality of the food, on bus route, offer services other than food to same client (one-stop food and services shop).
- Consolidation of resources in one stop

GROUP 3- HOT MEALS

Challenges

- Lack of mental health services for clients
- Lack of social/criminal justice for clients who we serve
- Limited ability and capacity of providers to help many clients
- Determining need in the area is difficult
- There is duplication of services amongst providers, and a lack of adequate social services for clients
- Lack of food choice and options
- Those with mass-access to food, the vendors, do not collaborate/attend events like these with us
- Addressing one problem can lead to another. For example, having adequate or extra food can increase trash in the area
- It's difficult to not always waste food
- Need more fresh produce, this year there is not enough
- There are fewer donors, causing us to dip further into our small budgets
- We need better quality ingredients/food, nutritional options are limited
- It's easier for donors to throw away food than wait for us to find transportation/means to pick the food up.
- It's easier to get money donated; not many want to donate food like we need.
- Feast or famine
- Time frame for getting, storing and using fresh food is small
- Fragmentation among us limits our options
- Limited storage for both perishables and non-perishables
- Limited capacity/equipment to prepare food

Possibilities

- Pooling resources
- Collaboration/organization (for a daily salad bar, for example)
- Dividing up prep work between agencies
- Sharing transportation and storage
- Tapping into larger supply, those with purchasing power, as a group (asking HEB for donation as a group, for example)
- Utilize the unused kitchen and dining rooms during certain meals; share space
- Work together to create more options

GROUP 4 – OTHER PARTICIPANTS

The main work of this group is to “revamp” the way food is distributed in Austin and outlying areas

- Are people and areas underserved/over-served etc?
- Where else do we need to coordinate?

Food Bank Report from Karla Canto:

- A lot of food was designated for disaster relief, hurting a lot of pantries
- Things are settling down but they are still seeing some influx of people
- Pantries hit hardest are being restocked
- The shopping list fluctuates constantly but it's at 5 pages now
- Software program is being implemented- enabling a live inventory, and quicker/accurate service
- The amount of food distributed is increasing

To see any difference in Austin and surrounding- a BIG coordination is needed

Need to assess underserved areas of community using zip code data:

- Output reports of CAFB partners reporting the zip codes of clients served
- 2-1-1 tracks who is seeking food and from where
- Number of families eligible for free and reduced lunches

Identify where hot meals are

- Someone will need to map out areas and analyze the data (research and planning?)

One point stressed throughout the meeting was that there is not nearly enough in terms of hours, coordinating, collaborating, and concentration of clients.

An e-mail list is being formed/needs to be formed regarding a partner agency reporting households served, individuals served etc.