



Rural Remote Food Bank Module 5: Program Development

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Community Needs and Assets Assessment

Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

- Typically, rural communities do not have access to reliable sources of data, especially for the smallest counties. If programs don't do intake, it is difficult to get realistic numbers. Some federal programs (USDA Commodities) do not encourage tracking client data. California data is generally better than national numbers. The best and most reliable data is gathered locally, if possible.
- Rural infrastructure issues and needs such as transportation and availability of stores, are often linked to geography. These issues can prevent a good "fit" to federal funding, which is often designed from an urban perspective. Rural areas may have a higher incidence of tiny, geographically isolated population clusters where there are no local grocery stores with a variety of affordable, healthy foods ("food deserts").

Suggested Standards and Best Practices:

- A Community Needs Assessment needs to take into account: (1) existing assets and systems (of the Food Bank and other community members) that are working well; (2) existing systems that may not be working optimally; and (3) systems/assets that are not currently available in the community. Programs should be refined or newly developed based on that information.
 - Examples:
 - [Humboldt County \(Food For People\)](#)
 - [Kings County \(Kings Community Action Organization\)](#)
- Check local census data, look to community partners for relevant and available surveys, demographic information, etc.
- Do a deeper analysis on available data, there may be other factors at play, such as eligibility issues, or other factors that can mask different community needs.
- Local surveys and interviews focused on Food Bank issues are the most helpful: college

students or other volunteers can be used.

Resources and Contacts:

- [Nourish California](#), formerly CA Food Policy Advocates – general regional data summaries (melds county data together, does not provide true info per county).
- Regional Area Agencies on Aging have good statistics on seniors; contact local offices.
- USDA has [geographic data on eligibility for Free and Reduced lunches](#).
- Census Tract and CBG data are now available through the [FNS Area Eligibility Mapper](#). The Mapper is intended to determine area eligibility in CACFP, SFSP, and SSO. A guide to using this map can be found by clicking on the Circle i graphic and more information about area eligibility and the data can be found below the map.
- CAFB [data links on hunger in CA](#).
- The [Insight Center Family Needs Calculator](#) quantifies the costs of basic needs for California's working families.
- Local health departments and WIC collect data on low-income children, in regards to health and other issues. Local or regional hospitals often do community needs assessments as well.
- Some public health departments are gathering info on food deserts. The UC Nutrition Policy Institute also has some good information.
- Your local/regional UC Extension Office may have useful information.
- Your local USDA rural office may have useful information.
- It may be useful to determine if tribes in your county utilize FDPR - a federal food program that Tribes access, in addition to SNAP. Different types of food are available, and tribal members may use one per month, based on what they are able to access.

Direct Services – Food Distribution

School Based Programs

Targeted to children at schools: After School Snack, Summer Lunch, Backpacks with food for weekend

Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

- It is difficult to reach the children who need these programs when sites are spread out over long distances, making it costly to transport the meals/snacks on a daily or weekly basis.
- It can be more challenging to find a vendor for the lunches who is able to meet the meal component requirements and who can provide the lunches within the allowable reimbursement rate. Lunches must be distributed daily and leftovers discarded after the second day.
- Switches in federal and state funding requirements and funding levels can have a significant negative impact on established service delivery (e.g. After School Snack Program.).
- Locally designed and funded models for feeding children in the summer or

operating a backpack program may be more affordable than trying to meet the requirements of the federal/state funding sources.

Suggested Standards and Best Practices:

- Summer Lunch and After School Snack
 - Work best when you have sites where children naturally congregate, such as Parks and Rec Programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. so that you can serve the maximum number of children with minimal transportation issues.
 - These sites also have paid staff and volunteers who can supervise the lunch service in accordance with program standards.
 - Work with the local school district to see if they can expand their service to fill the gap. If not, consider starting your own program with a local vendor.
 - All sites must receive initial training and be monitored once during the first four weeks of operation and again before the conclusion of the program.
 - Snacks can easily be purchased through a wholesale outlet and delivered once per week but recipient sites will probably need refrigeration for storage of perishable items.
 - Summer weekly food box – [Food For People](#)
- Backpacks for Kids is not a federally funded program and relies on foundation funding and donations; [Food for People](#), [Foodlink Tulare](#)
 - Service Clubs such as Rotary and Kiwanis are often interested in supporting youth programs financially and can provide volunteer support to assemble and transport the backpacks to the participating school sites each week.
 - School personnel are best equipped to identify children who need this resource and can submit the applications on behalf of the child once the parent has signed off.
 - In rural remote counties, it works better to identify sites and to secure the funding necessary to serve that site rather than serving smaller numbers of children at multiple sites.
 - The hub and spoke system works best in rural remotes, where school systems send vehicles to pick up backpacks.
 - An “Adopt-a Child” fundraising approach works well for the backpack program.
- It is important that CalFresh outreach be increased in the summer months to reach families who do not have access to summer food programs for their children.

Resources and Contacts:

- The Humboldt and Imperial Food Banks both have “Adopt a Child” Backpack programs. Contact: [Anne Holcomb](#), Executive Director Food For People (Humboldt), (707) 445-3166 x302
- [Sara Griffen](#), Executive Director Imperial Valley Food Bank, (760) 370-0966

Special Events: Holiday Service/Holiday Food Baskets

Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

Some rural remote Food Banks take the lead on holiday baskets (Tuolumne); others support local

agencies in their efforts, but do not collect or distribute food directly. Small staffing makes distribution of holiday baskets challenging; it requires a strong volunteer base.

Suggested Standards and Best Practices:

- Look at local preferences - different needs in different areas, and for different populations.
- Some food banks focus only on providing the meat for holiday meals:
 - Frozen chickens (for tamales, Imperial)
 - Humboldt dedicates the use of the tax benefit fund (administered by CDSS to TEFAP - providers) for holiday meat purchase.
 - Purchase of store vouchers versus actual meat product.

Resources and Contacts:

- Beth Stanton, Executive Director Interfaith Food Bank Amador County, (209) 267-9006 – holiday basket

Homebound Delivery Program (for ill, homebound, disabled)

Home delivered bags of food for people with no personal vehicle or caregiver willing to transport and who have limited access to public transportation. Generally used for medical necessity or for frail elderly who are still able to cook, and do not yet need Meals on Wheels. Can be short term or long term. Program generally uses volunteer drivers.

Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

- Challenges for remote rurals may be shared by all food banks: (1) transportation of food to diverse geographic locations requires a pool of dedicated volunteers; and (2) there is an ongoing need for checking on eligibility and need, both prior to and during the term of service.
- Some remote rural areas draw a disproportionate number of retirees and, therefore, the per capita need for services for frail elderly are higher. Disabled individuals on SSI/SSP also rely on food delivery to their homes when transportation (private or public) is a barrier, which it often is in rural remote locations.

Suggested Standards and Best Practices:

- Recruit, train and retain a cadre of volunteer drivers willing to make deliveries. Group the deliveries in routes that minimize the distance each driver has to travel. Provide detailed maps and delivery information.
- Work collaboratively with other in-home service providers such as Meals on Wheels to maximize delivery options.
- Have clear local guidelines as to who is eligible for services and train volunteers on these eligibility guidelines.
- Train volunteers on elder abuse issues and adult protective services guidelines so they can report back to the food bank or the authorities if they see anything amiss.

- Ensure food menu items meet the need of this most frail group, who are usually single, do not cook much, and who may have limited hand strength.
- Where feasible, provide information on any volunteer driver tax credits available to volunteers.

Food Delivery to Community Location

CSFP – Commodity Supplemental Food Program for Seniors

EFAP – Emergency Food Assistance Program: commodity foods for seniors (limited to a few grantees)

Mobile Food Pantry

Senior Brown Bag: Monthly bag of groceries for low-income seniors age 55+

USDA CACFP – Child and Adult Food Program (family childcare, private centers, adult day centers, disabled)

Produce pop up Farmers Markets

Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

- The use of refrigerated trucks has made deliveries of perishable foods to remote rural sites feasible. Food delivery to outlying sites over large distances is challenging, due to high fuel costs, truck maintenance, and time required. At the same time, a higher percentage of low-income residents live in the most remote areas.
- CSFP has strict requirements for proof of income and clients must show ID and sign paperwork indicating that they received their CSFP box. In remote communities, where volunteers and clients know each other, this verification process can be hard for volunteers to adhere to.

Suggested Standards and Best Practices:

- Use refrigerated trucks to enable transportation of perishable foods to remote communities.
- Models: mobile food pantries/farmer's markets that deliver food directly or make scheduled deliveries to community sites (agencies or food pantries) that have adequate food storage and refrigeration capacity. Where pre-ordering is feasible, this is effective.
- Utilize well trained volunteers and/or have paid staff oversee all aspects of paperwork and food distribution.
- Strategy to prevent double dipping/ food selling: Food Bank clients are provided a card color coded to the referring/serving sites. There are special caregiving cards, allowing for pickup for other people. (Imperial)
- Inform eligible partners about the CA transportation credit (see resources link).

Resources and Contacts:

- CA Transportation Tax Credit for Donated Agricultural Products: CA Tax Form 3547 provides for a credit up to 50% of eligible transportation costs paid or incurred for agricultural products delivered to a non-profit.

https://www.ftb.ca.gov/forms/2015/15_3547.pdf
<http://ftp.zillionforms.com/2015/F700312712.PDF>

- Feeding America has grants for mobile food pantries, check for [HungerNet](#) possible grants.
- [Order Ahead](#) (technology) Contact: Zuani Villarreal, Feeding America (312) 641-6532

Nutrition Education and Outreach

Nutrition Education (SNAP-Ed or other), linking people to CalFresh enrollment, community education

Unique Remote Rural Challenges:

- The use of outreach can be expensive, and some funded programs (such as SNAP-Ed) may be siloed or restrictive in their applications and cultural relevance.
- Statewide issue: Issues with immigration prevent people from signing up for CalFresh, especially when children are eligible, but their parents are not due to citizenship.
- Statewide issue: SSI and SSP recipients are not eligible for CalFresh; as a result, many disabled seniors are not getting adequate food assistance.

Suggested Standards and Best Practices:

- Look at local data, where available, to see what the utilization rate is for CalFresh. (If your county has a high number of seniors, take into account that SSI-SSP recipients are not eligible when looking at percentages per capita.)
- Bilingual and culturally competent staff can link fearful immigrant families with similar families already signed up for CalFresh.
- Work with local partners to provide education, outreach, and advocacy. Partners include public health, WIC, health care professionals, social services.
- Combine CalFresh outreach/enrollment with nutrition education and/or cooking classes, or Health Care enrollment.
- Hospitals and Medicare providers ask food insecurity questions (now a reimbursable procedure).
- Open-door clinics screen for CalFresh enrollment & provide information on local food resources.
- Provide education to Food Pantry volunteers on nutrition, to reduce the demand for non-healthy food.
- Engage in Hunger Action Month through media outreach. (See resources, Humboldt)

Resources and Contacts:

- CAFB – [Stephanie Nishio](#), Director of Programs, (510) 350-9905
- Humboldt programs, contact: [Heidi McHugh](#), Food for People Community Education and Outreach
 - Incentive program for purchases of fresh produce at farmer's markets.
 - Voucher programs for SSI
 - Community Outreach

- Hunger Action Month: 30 ways in 30 days. National campaign. Humboldt has newsletters and Hashtag Campaigns (Hunger Hurts and Hunger Heroes, highlighting local heroes). Information on website in September, or contact [Anne Holcomb](#), Executive Director Food For People (Humboldt), (707) 445-3166 x302

Advocacy Issues for RRFB Staff and Volunteers

- Advocacy issue: With SSI and SSP recipients not eligible for CalFresh, many disabled seniors are not getting the food assistance that they need (statewide issue). The [Californians for SSI Coalition](#) is doing advocacy work on this issue:
- CalFresh outreach needs to be increase in the summer months to address the fact that summer food programs may not be available to the most vulnerable children.