

The Food Depot Strategic Framework



I OUR VISION (Desired End-State)

Healthy and hunger-free communities

Adopted by The Food Depot Board of Directors on October 16, 2014

II OUR MISSION

The Food Depot fosters healthy communities by engaging a network of partners and developing solutions to create a hunger-free New Mexico

Adopted by The Food Depot Board of Directors on October 16, 2014

III OUR INTENDED IMPACT

A) Beneficiaries:

Individuals (adults & children) in our nine-county geographic region in northern New Mexico who are food insecure and/or who are living in poverty including these sub-groups who have historically been more likely to be *food insecure*:

- Children
- College students
- Working families living in poverty
- Seniors
- Individuals living in rural and frontier communities with greater barriers to food access and different levels of infrastructure
- Individuals living in tribal communities that face barriers and infrastructure challenges
- People experiencing homelessness
- People with chronic health conditions and/or who are living with a disability
- People released from prison or on probation or parole
- Veterans
- Victims of disaster

USDA Food Insecurity - Household level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

B) Benefits Created:

- a) Strengthened *food security* for those in acute need or experiencing a disaster
- b) Increased number of food secure people in NNM who have an improved quality of life (able to lead an active, healthy, self-sufficient life)

USDA Food Security - Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

IV OVERARCHING GOALS

- 1) Provide healthy food in respectful and dignified ways to the diverse range of people experiencing food insecurity in response to disasters or to fill gaps where acute hunger needs are inadequately addressed.
- 2) Expand wraparound services so people don't need to use emergency food assistance long-term and collaborate with community partners to develop local solutions to food insecurity.
- 3) Collaborate with government and community/private partners to advocate for systemic changes that help to break the cycle of long-term food insecurity.

How will we measure our success? *(To be Determined More Fully in Strategic Plan)*

- #/% Food secure individuals (children & adults) in each community/county
- #/% Individuals reporting improved healthy food consumption
- Pounds (translated to meals) distributed over time

V OUR CORE BELIEFS / GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

WE BELIEVE:

- 1) Access to quality, adequate and nutritious food is a human right.
- 2) In treating all people with dignity and respect.
- 3) In advancing equity and social justice both within our organization, community and state.
- 4) Residents best understand the diversity and cultural differences in their community and play an essential role in identifying needs and local solutions.
- 5) It is critical to illuminate inefficiencies in the food system by creating short and long-term solutions.
- 6) Food insecurity and *hunger* are preventable.
- 7) The sustainable solution to food insecurity is dependent on the reduction and elimination of poverty, resulting in a reduced need for emergency food distribution over time.
- 8) We believe in doing what we can to thoughtfully utilize natural resources and reduce food waste.

WE VALUE:

- **Collaboration** - building strategic partnerships based on shared goals
- **Equity** - embracing diversity, actively pursuing equity, and fostering an inclusive environment
- **Stewardship** - honoring the support of our communities through responsible, transparent and thoughtful use of natural, physical and financial resources
- **Compassion** - connecting to the larger community with a belief in the value of each individual
- **Integrity** - maintaining trust through transparency, follow through, support and respect
- **Visionary** - seeking opportunities to create positive changes through inspired leadership
- **Continuous Learning** - sustaining a curious mindset and engaging in reciprocal learning with members of our diverse communities

USDA Hunger - Individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity. Hunger should refer to a potential consequence of food insecurity that, because of prolonged involuntary lack of food, results in discomfort, illness, weakness or pain that goes beyond the usual uneasy sensation.

VI WHERE WE'RE HEADED

We are a food bank and we are evolving. The world is changing and we need to adapt to achieve our mission to create healthy and hunger-free communities.

“Providing millions and billions more pounds of food to millions of people over 40 years has not reduced the number of people who need food.” Katie Martin,

“Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries” 2021

Our collective challenge to end hunger means that we must focus on the people who are living with food insecurity and address the systemic causes of hunger to break the cycle of food insecurity.

A true resolution of food insecurity stretches far beyond the immediate provision of food to people experiencing hardship. As a food bank, we have a role and a responsibility to address systemic hunger in partnership with our local communities and stakeholders. Access to food is a human right.

***The work begins with a question:
If the goal is to create food secure, healthy communities, then how do we reach that goal?***

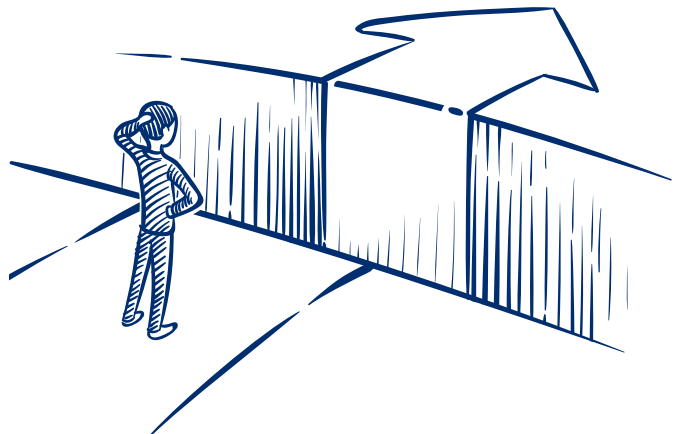
Let's look to the treatment of cancer for inspiration. Current treatments have room for improvement. New treatments that are more effective and with fewer side effects are under development. Should the existing treatments be used? Should new treatments be developed? Should we focus on a cure? The approach in cancer treatment is both/and. The current approach is to treat using the options that are currently available while investing in research and development of new treatment options, early detection and prevention strategies.

This **“both/and”** approach has a place in food banking and efforts to increase food security. The Food Depot celebrates the effectiveness and efficiency with which it has addressed the immediate crisis of hunger over the past 24 years. The impact of the service provided to our community has been profound and we will continue to meet those needs in partnership with local communities. Yet, hunger persists.

The Food Depot's pursuit of access to healthy, nutritious food for all requires an investment in other approaches that mitigate and prevent food insecurity. While the food bank continues to provide resources to alleviate acute food insecurity, it will expand its work in advocacy and coordinating wraparound services to people experiencing the effects of hunger first-hand.

What would success look like? We would see fewer food insecure people in northern New Mexico.

If we seek to create hunger-free communities, we must foster the self-sustainability of people experiencing food-insecurity by offering realistic pathways out of poverty.



What is The Food Depot's role in working to end food insecurity and hunger?

Invest a balanced amount of resources into each of the following strategies:

- 1) **Provide Acute Hunger Relief** – programming to provide food to people experiencing food insecurity immediately.
- 2) **Mitigate Food Insecurity and Poverty** – offer and coordinate wraparound services through strategic partnerships (ie, SNAP/ WIC enrollment, Resource Navigation, job development, etc) to reduce need for hunger relief services.
- 3) **Advocate for Systemic Change** – collaborate with federal, state and regional partners on strategies that address the systemic causes to break the cycle of food insecurity and lift people out of poverty.

Why must we *evolve*?

A sole focus on providing hunger relief from an acute perspective ensures future dependence on the hunger relief network and the need to continually maintain and expand acquisition/ distribution to address that dependence.

The alternative is a **“both/and”** approach that allows us to play a role in providing acute hunger relief while also employing strategies that work on a micro level to help more people become food secure and less reliant on emergency food assistance in the long-term and on a macro level to ensure that there are services, systems and policies that make it easier for people to get ahead and live healthy lives.

Three Cs



Reduce stigma and provide a positive experience for those who receive services at all levels.

- **Culture** – Do guests feel welcome? What kind of experience do we provide guests? Do we provide an experience that is welcoming and comfortable?
- **Choice** – Do guests have choices and healthy food options?
- **Connection** – What kinds of connections are we facilitating for guests that help them become more self-sufficient and less likely to be food insecure?

Katie Martin, “Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries” 2021

What **WON'T** The Food Depot do?

- 1) Provide services outside our assigned service area (with exceptions around natural disaster or emergency response).
- 2) Provide services that our community partners are better positioned to provide such as financial literacy, nutrition education, job training, and health services.
- 3) Support one candidate for a public office over another candidate, and support any political parties or their activities.

VII WHAT ARE OUR KEY STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES FOR ACHIEVING OUR MISSION

A) Key Strategies/Approaches - Goal One and Two

Goal One – Provide healthy food in respectful and dignified ways to the diverse range of people experiencing food insecurity in response to disasters or to fill gaps where acute hunger needs are inadequately addressed.

Goal Two – Expand wraparound services so people don't need to use emergency food assistance long-term and collaborate with community partners to develop local solutions to food insecurity.

Goal One and Two Strategies and Approaches:

- 1) Build on strengths as a food bank with an established history of effectiveness.
 - a. Continue high-level operations with distribution and nutrition targets
 - b. Streamline efficiencies within existing distribution models
 - c. Maintain and expand diverse acquisition sources
 - d. Maximize use of technology to increase efficiencies
 - e. Employ quality assurance and quality control
 - f. Create fail-safe backup plans to current distribution approaches
 - g. Evaluate and adapt warehouse operational efficiencies
 - h. Thoughtful use of resources
- 2) Supplement food acquisition sources by maximizing food rescue opportunities, including those opportunities in New Mexico.
 - a. Engage communities and partners in food collection and distribution
 - b. Identify new sources to meet specific dietary needs and provide culturally appropriate foods
- c. Explore opportunities to prolong shelf life of rescued foods
- 3) Develop and implement customized hunger-relief strategies and approaches for each county/region/zone to reach people where they are with what they need.
 - a. Establish local work groups that represent the diversity of the community, including those who are most directly impacted by food insecurity to
 - I. Identify gaps in service
 - II. Outline approaches to hunger relief
 - III. Identify strategy to improve food access for that particular community
 - b. Collect and utilize data and direct feedback from those most impacted in a community to inform approaches to hunger-relief
 - c. Hunger-relief approaches consider and prioritize the 3C's--Culture, Choice, Connection
 - d. Assess existing wraparound services in the community and possible collaborations to support food security

Collaborative Strategy for Hunger Relief:

The Food Depot works with a network of nonprofit organizations and distribution partners to provide hunger relief services in a community. The Food Depot provides food, resources, and support while the nonprofit organization coordinates the distribution of food to community members

Leadership Strategy for Hunger Relief:

The Food Depot's staff and volunteers coordinate and implement the distribution of food to community members

- 4) Optimize, reorganize and prioritize critical hunger relief partnerships
 - a. Continue and expand Agency Segmentation Project assessment of current nonprofit partnerships
 - b. Evaluation of each strategic distribution partnership
 - c. Identify and pursue new strategic partnerships
 - d. Include evaluation of wraparound service integration into the assessment
- 5) Lead in food-insecurity mitigation: address acute hunger-relief needs and provide wraparound services by piloting a best-practice “3 C Model – Choice, Culture and Connections service center”
 - a. Model that is scalable, replicable and integrates the following components (as example):
 - o Grocery store with client choice
 - o Food trucks and mobile pantry buses
 - o Wraparound services & resource navigation
 - o Pay what you can cafe
 - o Food rescue in collaboration with restaurants, banquet halls, hotels, prisons, schools, local farmers and growers, and new sources
 - o Kitchen and classroom training space - community rooms

B) Key Strategies/Approaches - Goal Three

Goal Three — To collaborate with government and community/private partners to advocate for systemic changes that help to break the cycle of long-term food insecurity.

Goal Three Strategies and Approaches:

- 1) Engage elected officials in provision of healthy foods and wraparound services, and systemic changes to eliminate hunger.
- 2) Develop a statewide advocacy group to address systemic changes to eliminate hunger and poverty.
- 3) Strengthen government programs addressing hunger and poverty such as job training

programs, living wage, SNAP and WIC funding.

- 4) Eliminate barriers to people and communities accessing government programs for help.
- 5) Facilitate use of government programs by partners in communities throughout our service area.
- 6) Identify potential partners to move local, state and federal advocacy efforts and policy development forward - Partners may include New Mexico food banks, food bank partner agencies, and other advocacy organizations.
- 7) Develop a successful method of educating elected officials about hunger, and keeping them updated as hunger changes in New Mexico.
- 8) Educate communities in our service area about the severity of hunger and food insecurity and engage them in advocacy efforts.
- 9) Train partners to conduct advocacy efforts in their communities.
- 10) Develop plans with local communities to end hunger and increase food security.

“Here are three thoughts I’d ask you to consider – open-mindedly and with the hope that we can make extraordinary food available to every person in this country.

The first: to end hunger and food insecurity in the United States we must attack their root cause, namely poverty.

Second, the food bank and emergency food network constitutes one of the largest sustained private peacetime mobilizations of human compassion and resources in the history of this country. It must use that power to change society.

Third, everybody living in this country, regardless of race, income, or residence, has the right to the healthiest and best food available.” - Mark Winne, author of *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*.