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Edward J. Bloustein School
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A Study of Food Pantries in New Brunswick , NJ

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Acronyms

CFBNJ/CFB: Community FoodBank of New Jersey (Hillside)

CSFP: Commodity Supplemental Food Program

DYFS: Division of Youth and Family Services

EFO: Emergency Feeding Organization

FNS: Food and Nutrition Services (Federal Agency)

FPL: Federal Poverty Level

LDA: Local Distribution Agency

M.C.F.O.O.D.S.: Middlesex County Food Organization and Outreach Distribution Services

NJAHC: New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition

NJDA: New Jersey Department of Agriculture

NSIP: Nutrition Services Incentive Program

SDA: State Distribution Agency

SFPP: State Food Purchase Program

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

TANF: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

TEFAP: The Emergency Food Assistance Program

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

WIC: The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Introduction

The study of New Brunswick's food pantries is the product of a partnership between the Feeding New Brunswick Network, a coalition of emergency food providers in New Brunswick, and the Ralph W. Voorhees Public Service Fellows, a group of undergraduate students at Rutgers University. Graduate students in an Advanced Qualitative Methods course and faculty from the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the Edward J. Bloustein School provided additional support. This project is a component of the New Brunswick Community Food Assessment which is multi-year long project conducted through a partnership of the New Brunswick community, Johnson & Johnson, and Rutgers University.

The Feeding New Brunswick Network asked the students to study the city's emergency food system. During the Fall 2015 semester, students conducted a literature review, explored cutting edge food pantries in the US online, interviewed and or volunteered with most of the food pantries in New Brunswick and visited two regional food banks. Students volunteered for two to three hour shifts to understand how food gets to the pantry, is sorted and stored, and how it is organized and distributed to pantry clients. Interviews lasted one to two hours. The research team provided their notes to the pantry directors following the interviews and followed up with corrections and additional questions.



Table 1. Interviews and Participant Observation in New Brunswick Food Pantries

Pantry Name	Interviewed	Participant Observation
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church		
Christ Church Episcopal		
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle		
Ebenezer Baptist Church*		
Elijah's Promise*		
Emanuel Lutheran		
Five Loaves Food Pantry		
Greater Brunswick Charter School		
New Brunswick Housing Authority		
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services Paul Robeson and Middle School		
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling		
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives***		
Salvation Army Family & Community Emergency Services	Not available**	Not available
Society of St. Vincent DePaul		
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	No response	No response
Suydam Street Reformed Church		
Tabernacle Baptist Church	No response	No response

*These organizations are soup kitchens that provide limited groceries through specialized programs.

** "Not available" indicates pantries that were not available; "no response" indicates pantries that we were unable to reach.

*** Staff at PRAB preschools: 18 Drift Early Childhood Center, Downtown Early Childhood Center, and Joyce Kilmer Early Childhood Center pick up food from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. and deliver it to parents of children in their preschools.



Food Pantries and the Emergency Food System

Even though the United States is among the most developed countries in the world, 50 million households experience food insecurity (Paynter & Berner, 2014). Many of those households access food through the emergency food system which is comprised of food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens. Food banks aggregate privately donated food and food provided through federal and state government programs and distribute it to food pantries and other local entities. Food pantries obtain food from food banks, direct donations, wholesalers, and retailers and distribute groceries to people. Soup kitchens provide meals and may provide groceries. Some pantries and soup kitchens also provide non-food products including products that participants identify as essential for survival: “soap, toilet paper, personal hygiene products (tampons, diapers), and oral health care products (toothpaste, toothbrushes)” (Fiese et al, 2014: 427). Some pantries and soup kitchens also provide other services and referrals.

Faith-based organizations run about two-thirds of food pantries and non-profit social service organizations organize manage most of the rest. While some food pantries serve hundreds of families, the median pantry serves 15 households a day (Ohls & Saleem-Ismail, 2002). Because volunteers organize and operate about three quarters of all pantries, thinking about organizational capacity requires creativity. The traditional definition of organizational capacity includes leadership, management, planning and financial strategies, and operations. Other factors may also affect pantry capacity such as the creation of an intake form, training volunteers, and the level of commitment of those who volunteer (Paynter and Berner, 2014).

Although food pantries were designed to serve people during emergencies, many households have become long-term clients and many of those clients work (Martin, Wu, Wolff, Colantonio, & Grady, 2013). The recent financial crisis and recession prompted households that had never used the emergency food system to turn to pantries (Mares, 2013). Other pantry users include about 40% of people who participate in the federal SNAP program (Rosenberg, 2015).

As food pantries provide food to more people, many are changing the way they do business. Pantries are trying out new approaches to improve efficiency, distribute healthier food, and they are doing so in less stigmatizing ways. This next section provides an overview of some innovative approaches pantries use to achieve these objectives.

Client Choice

Most food pantries provide pre-prepared bags of food to clients. However, some pantries use a “client choice” approach in which people choose food items. Indiana, for example, requires client choice in the implementation of its federal food program (Indiana’s Emergency Food Resource Network, 2013). Creating an environment with choice reflects shifts in thinking about how to increase food security. Some pantries use a point system to encourage households to choose healthier items. And some think that choice produces less waste because people choose foods that match their cultural or dietary preferences or are foods they know how to prepare (Rosenberg, 2015). Pantries use a variety of approaches to offer choice including supermarkets, tables, inventory lists, and windows.

Supermarket. Love Center Food Pantry in Holmes County, Ohio, uses a supermarket approach in a large 4,000 square foot space that serves about 2,300 clients a month. It requires a large space for shopping, continuous restocking, and enough volunteers to make sure people get the number and variety of items allowed, especially if they qualify for federal and state food programs.

Table. Some smaller pantries adopt a table approach. Volunteers place items in groups or individually and clients choose. Volunteers may assist in this process (Akron Canton Food Bank, 2015). Using tables may limit the types of items distributed such as frozen or refrigerated products.

List. Some pantries such as Good Neighbors in Summit County Ohio allow clients to select from printed or digital lists. This approach is useful in pantries with little space for client shopping. Clients receive a list and make their selections. Using lists may pose challenges for people who are illiterate, who do not speak English, or have trouble seeing but volunteers and translated lists can help. This approach requires a continually updated list. Loaves and Fishes of Carroll County, Maryland uses this approach in their 900 square foot pantry (Akron Canton Food Bank, 2015).

Window. The window approach displays food items on a shelf. Clients select items and workers bag them. This approach can increase choice but it requires that staff and clients speak the same language and may be challenging for people with poor vision. Clients may be unable to see nutritional facts and it may limit how many people can use the pantry at any one time. In Summit County in Ohio, The First Apostolic Faith uses this approach to serve 145 clients per month (Akron Canton Food Bank, 2015).

Client choice does not necessarily mean that people can choose any item they want. Most choice pantries allow clients to choose foods from designated categories.

Technology

Some pantries use technology to track how much food is available, prepare reports, count the number of people served, and provide referrals. Digitizing can speed service, increase choice, and reach groups who are unable to visit a pantry (Rosenberg, 2015).

Yorkville Common Pantry. When the Yorkville Common Pantry in New York, which serves more than 2 million meals per year, received \$150,000 worth of computers, printers, and servers, the pantry used the equipment to track inventory, order supplies, and manage finances (Mangan, 2011).

St. John Bread and Life Food Pantry. The St. John Bread and Life Food Pantry in New York provides digital choice. Clients sign-in and access a food list on bilingual applications using touch screens. Each family is allotted a number of points that is determined by family size, clients choose food items that add up to a certain number of points, and the pantry bags them (Digital Choice Food Pantry). Using this approach allows the pantry to increase the number of people it serves and makes it easier for clients to choose what they want. The point system fosters healthier eating by setting a high point value for foods with lower nutritional value (Rosenberg, 2015).

Despite the benefits to implementing the choice approach, and more effectively using technology, for many pantries, adopting these approaches seems like a daunting impossibility. Given that volunteers run most pantries, often on shoestring budgets, getting through the week puts making even small changes on the back burner (Rosenberg, 2015).

We turn next to some of the federal and state programs that provide food and other assistance to food pantries.

Federal and State Food Assistance Programs

Three federal and state programs provide free food to food pantries: The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP).

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

TEFAP is a federal commodity food program started in 1981 that provides 70 different kinds of foods such as fresh, dried or canned fruit and vegetables, meat, cereal, juice, milk, and pasta to people through local distribution sites like food pantries and soup kitchens. TEFAP receives surplus USDA foods and, since 1989 when the surplus supply diminished, annual monetary distributions to purchase USDA foods. States receive funding for food storage and distribution.

A related program, the Soup Kitchen/Food Banks Program, was created in 1988 to distribute the same sustenance to the homeless. TEFAP merged with the Soup Kitchen/Food Banks Program in the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. In 2014, Congress appropriated \$331.34 million for TEFAP, with \$265.75 million for food purchase and \$45.59 million for administrative support funds. With the enactment of the 2014 Farm Bill, Congress plans to provide \$250 million in additional funding for TEFAP over the next several years. The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service administers TEFAP. Many states rely on their State Distribution Agency, such as a state department of agriculture, to administer the program. The amount of food each state receives is determined by the number of people below the poverty level and the number of people who are unemployed (Food and Nutrition Services, 2015; USDA, 2014; USDA, 2013).

Recipients of TEFAP must live in households with income below 185% of the federal poverty line or receive assistance through TANF, SNAP, WIC, SSI, Medicaid or disaster assistance. Each time a beneficiary receives food, she or he must fill out a "Signature Sheet" with the date, their name, address, number of other family members who will consume the food, a qualifier code, and their signature. Beneficiaries demonstrate need through documentation of their earnings/wages/salary with a paycheck stub, letter from employer, welfare agency letter, letter from social security, or other approved document (New Jersey Department of Agriculture, TEFAP Operations Manual, 2013).

The NJ Department of Agriculture (NJDA) administers TEFAP in NJ, and it distributes more than 20 million pounds of food through this program annually. NJDA oversees TEFAP orders and shipments from the USDA to six state-contracted Emergency Food Organizations (EFOs), which,

in New Jersey, are regional food banks. These EFOs coordinate food distribution with local distribution agencies (LDAs). Food is allocated based on the number of individuals that an LDA serves. New Jersey's LDAs include emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and feeding agencies (State of New Jersey Department of Agriculture, 2006). LDAs receive TEFAP products from one EFO, pick up the food at a scheduled date and time, and store it on-site (New Jersey Department of Agriculture, TEFAP Operations Manual, 2013). To receive TEFAP foods from a food bank, food pantries must follow strict guidelines, regularly complete paperwork, and attend training. A soup kitchen or food pantry must also document that the establishment holds an inventory of privately donated food as TEFAP products supplement donations. Local Distribution Agencies complete a TEFAP Summary Report by the seventh day of each month documenting items distributed and the number of eligible recipients served. Pantries and soup kitchens are subject to inspection by the Emergency Food Organization, the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) is a federal food assistance program that provides boxed food for low-income adults 60 years or older (USDA, 2015). CSFP food packages include products such as nonfat dry or ultra-pasteurized fluid milk, juice, farina, oats, cereal, rice, pasta, peanut butter, dry beans, canned meat, poultry, fish, and canned fruits and vegetables. These packages supplement the nutrients typically absent from the diets of the target population (Food and Nutrition Service, CSFP Fact Sheet, 2015). In most states, individuals who are 60 years and older with incomes at or below 130% of the federal poverty line are eligible (Food and Nutrition Service, CSFP Fact Sheet, 2015). The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers this program (Food and Nutrition Services, 2015). The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services oversees the CSFP food program. The NJ Department of Agriculture distributes CSFP products to the regional food banks, and individuals at the NJDA are contacts for food pantries. Food banks that contract with the state receive products for CSFP boxes and distribute the packages to food pantries, soup kitchens, and other organizations with eligible members. Applicants apply for CSFP at their local food pantry where they also pick them up.

State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)

New Jersey's State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) began in 2007 to provide funds for the purchase of healthy, nutritious foods to feed low-income New Jersey residents. The New Jersey Anti-Hunger Coalition (NJABC) advocated for the appropriation of funds to assist in the procurement and distribution of emergency food and Governor Corzine created SFPP. Eight years later, the state allocated \$6.8 million dollars for SFPP (Gardener News, 2015). The amount of food purchased varies between the years of 2009-2015 with a mean of 8,542,840 lbs per year (New Jersey Government, Office of Management and Budget 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015).

The Department of Agriculture uses SFPP to support produce gleaning in an effort to get more fresh produce into the emergency food system. Activities may involve picking produce that has not been harvested from farm fields or accepting harvested produce that is deemed unfit for sale. Nonprofit entities may request funds from NJDA for gleaning support programs as long as the practice occurs at New Jersey farms and produce is distributed to New Jersey residents (State of New Jersey Department of Agriculture, 2015). NJDA administers the program through contracts with six EFOs, which are typically food banks (NJLEG, 2011). EFOs are responsible for distribution to LDAs such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters. New Brunswick food pantries, soup kitchens, and homeless shelters receive SFPP products from the Community FoodBank of New Jersey. The program targets low-income New Jersey residents (State of New Jersey Department of Agriculture, 2015). Recipients must show proof that they and each person in their household who will consume the items lives in NJ (NJ DOG, SFPP).



New Brunswick's Emergency Food Pantries

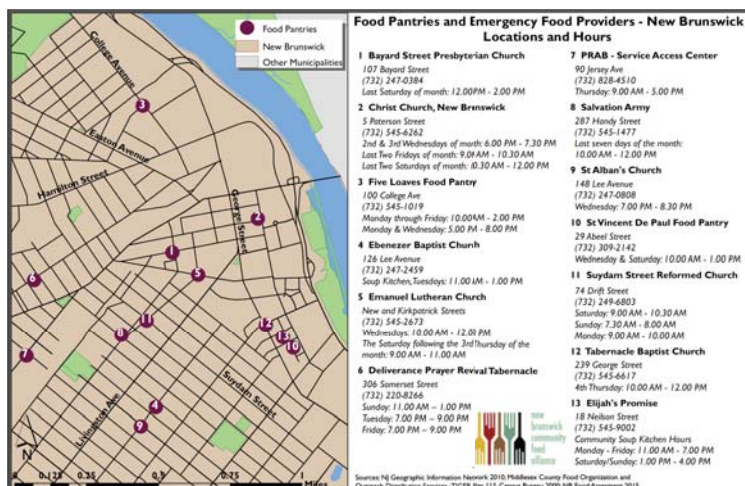
New Brunswick, a city in Central New Jersey with an estimated population of 57,080, has 19 food pantries (Census Quickfacts, 2015).¹ We grouped the pantries into categories to better describe them. There are five pantries in the “large” category. These pantries participate in state and federal food programs (TEFAP and SFPP) and receive steady food or cash donations. The six “small” pantries get food from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. and some receive direct donations. Five pantries are located in schools and food is available to families with students in the school or the New Brunswick school district. Paid caseworkers run these pantries and provide additional services. Teachers and social workers refer students and their families (See Table 2). Some preschools also provide groceries to families with children in the schools.

Table 2: Organizational Characteristics of New Brunswick's Food Pantries

Name	Non-profit Type	Years	Category
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church Pantry	Faith based	4	Small
Christ Church Episcopal	Faith based	10	Large
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	Faith based	9	Small
Ebenezer Baptist Church	Faith based	25	Soup kitchen
Elijah's Promise	Non-profit	26	Soup kitchen
Emanuel Lutheran	Faith based	20	Large
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church	Faith based	6	Large
Friends of Greater Brunswick Charter School	School	8	School
New Brunswick Housing Authority	Government	At least 3	Small
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Paul Robeson and Middle School	Non-profit/ school	3	School
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling	Non-profit/ school	3	School
PRAB - Service Access Center Rep.	Non-profit	7	Small
Salvation Army	Faith based	late 1990s	Small
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	Faith based, np	at least 19	Large
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	Faith based	NA	Small
Suydam Street Reformed Church	Faith based	NA	Large
Tabernacle Baptist Church	Faith based	NA	Small

* NA= not available

¹ A new panty is planned at McKinley School and some PRAB preschools may provide groceries.



Pantry Organizations

Staffing

Pantries require different types of staff depending on their size, location, and approach to getting and distributing food. Most pantries do the same types of activities including picking up, storing, unloading, sorting and distributing food, managing

volunteers, and organizing food and cash donations. Some pantries also provide items such as clothing, toiletries, books, and holiday baskets or gifts and staff gather, organize, and distribute these items as well. Pantries that accept federal and state food manage a greater flow of food, sort food according to federal and state rules, maintain and submit paperwork, and are required to be trained in federal and state rules and in safe food handling.

Running pantries involves a tremendous amount of time, skill, and effort and most of the pantries, including the large ones, are entirely volunteer run. The Christ Church Food Pantry estimates that it takes 90 hours to operate their pantry monthly. Paid staff run the pantries at the New Brunswick Housing Authority, PRAB, preschools, and at the public and charter schools but most of those pantry directors also volunteer their time and vehicles to pick up and distribute food. Pantries supplement their regular volunteer pool with occasional volunteer groups from churches, college and high school students, and other organizations. Larger, religiously-affiliated pantries often have core groups of volunteers and a flow of occasional volunteers. Many of the core volunteers are from the host organization or other religious congregations and view feeding people as part of their religious mission. These religiously-affiliated volunteers are often retired or younger people doing community service. Younger volunteers come from schools and colleges including New Brunswick High School and other high schools, scouting programs, Middlesex County College, and Rutgers University. Students volunteer to complete service hours or to get more involved in the community. Volunteers, especially older adults, engage in meaningful work and build relationships. One pantry director pointed out that many of the long-term pantry volunteers care for one another and consider each other family.

Besides assisting in the core pantry operations, volunteers expand organizational capacity in a variety of ways. Volunteers in two pantries deliver food to people who cannot get to the pantries.

Many volunteers regularly pick up food donations from a variety of locations and deliver it to the pantries. New Brunswick High School and Middlesex County College student volunteers have been exceptionally helpful in bridging the divide between pantry coordinators who speak English and residents who speak Spanish by explaining in food and cultural preferences and assisting with translation.

Because occasional volunteers can be inconsistent, pantries have simple on-the-job training. Saint Vincent de Paul's coordinator emphasized the importance of making tasks as simple as possible through division of tasks and volunteer placement in a specific job (e.g., making single family bags or large family bags and running food bags to distribution). This approach makes it possible for a variety of volunteers, including occasional youth completing community service hours to help. To maintain a safe environment, some pantries require that children be with an adult and some do not allow children to volunteer. Pantries that accept federal and state food participate in more formalized training through the CBFNJ and pantries that distribute meat and fresh produce have to be trained and certified to do so.

Challenges with Volunteers

Pantry directors mentioned a variety of challenges with using a volunteer staff. Each pantry works best with an optimal number of volunteers but it's not easy to achieve that. With too many individuals, volunteers are bored and may not return. With too few individuals, the pantry struggles to collect food, unload trucks, and distribute food. Volunteer consistency is another challenge. College students are an especially important volunteer source in New Brunswick given the proximity of Rutgers and Middlesex County College. However, they are not always available, sometimes do not show up, and are often not available during school breaks. Many pantries depend on older volunteers who may have a hard time carrying heavy cases of food in and out of pantries as many pantries are located down flights of stairs. Pantry directors also worry about who will take these volunteers' places in the future (See Table 3). Another approach is to engage clients in pantry work as volunteers. While this creates many benefits for the pantries and the clients who are volunteering, pantry directors mentioned that other clients perceive the client volunteers as receiving the first choice of items or other special privileges which sometimes creates tensions. Every pantry differs in the way and the extent to which the clients are involved in pantry governance. Clients volunteer at Emanuel Lutheran, Ebenezer Baptist Church, and the Greater Brunswick Charter School.

Because volunteers run many of the pantries, some are thinking about succession planning. St. Vincent de Paul is creating an institutional infrastructure that expands the number of people who

know how the pantry operates and can better ensure its continuation. There is less concern about this in staff run pantries because other staff understand how the pantries work and will continue the efforts even if the pantry directors leave.

Table 3. Food Pantry Staffing

Name	Director	Volunteers
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church Pantry	Volunteer	Associated with the church, other religious groups, college students, or New Brunswick
Christ Church Episcopal	Volunteer	Church members, high school students, Rutgers students and others in the community
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	Volunteer	4 regular part-time volunteers with help from family. Two volunteers help with pick up and two with distribution.
Ebenezer Baptist Church	Volunteer	Regular core of volunteers, NB Fire Department volunteers, RU students
Elijah's Promise	Paid	Broad volunteer base
Emanuel Lutheran	Volunteer	Regular volunteers; 60-70% are church members
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church	Volunteer	RU students, fraternities and sororities
Friends of Greater Brunswick Charter School	Paid	Two to three mothers pack and distribute backpacks each week
New Brunswick Housing Authority	Paid	None
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Paul Robeson and Middle School	Paid and volunteers	Staff volunteer time
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling	Paid and volunteers	Staff volunteer time
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives	Paid	None
Salvation Army Family & Community Emergency Services	NA*	NA
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	Volunteer	8-12 person volunteer teams include regular and casual volunteers: older women, boy scouts, churches, students, missionaries
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	Volunteer	2+
Suydam Street Reformed Church*	NA	NA
Tabernacle Baptist Church	NA	NA

*NA=not available

Hours of Operation

Staff availability, whether the pantry accepts federal food, and when the pantries receive food from the CFBNJ or M.C.F.O.O.D.S. shapes when pantries are open and how often clients are allowed to visit. Pantries that participate in the TEFAP program have to be open at least nine hours each month and one weekend day or evening. Most pantries are open on Wednesday because they pick up their allotment of shelf-stable foods on Tuesdays and perishable foods on Wednesdays from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. St. Vincent de Paul, Christ Church, Emanuel Lutheran and Bayard Presbyterian Church have Saturday hours. Some pantries are open multiple times a week like Five Loaves and some are only open a few times a month like Bayard Presbyterian.

At most pantries, clients are only allowed to pick up food once a month. Christ Church Food Pantry clients can visit twice a month, once for TEFAP and once for SFPP foods. St. Vincent de Paul has weekly pick-ups. The school pantries are generally accessible during school days. The pantry directors split their time between schools and families learn what days the directors are at their school and tend to ask for food on those days. In emergencies, directors provide food over the summer (See Table 4).



Table 4: Number of Times* Pantries are Open per Month and Number of Allowable Visits

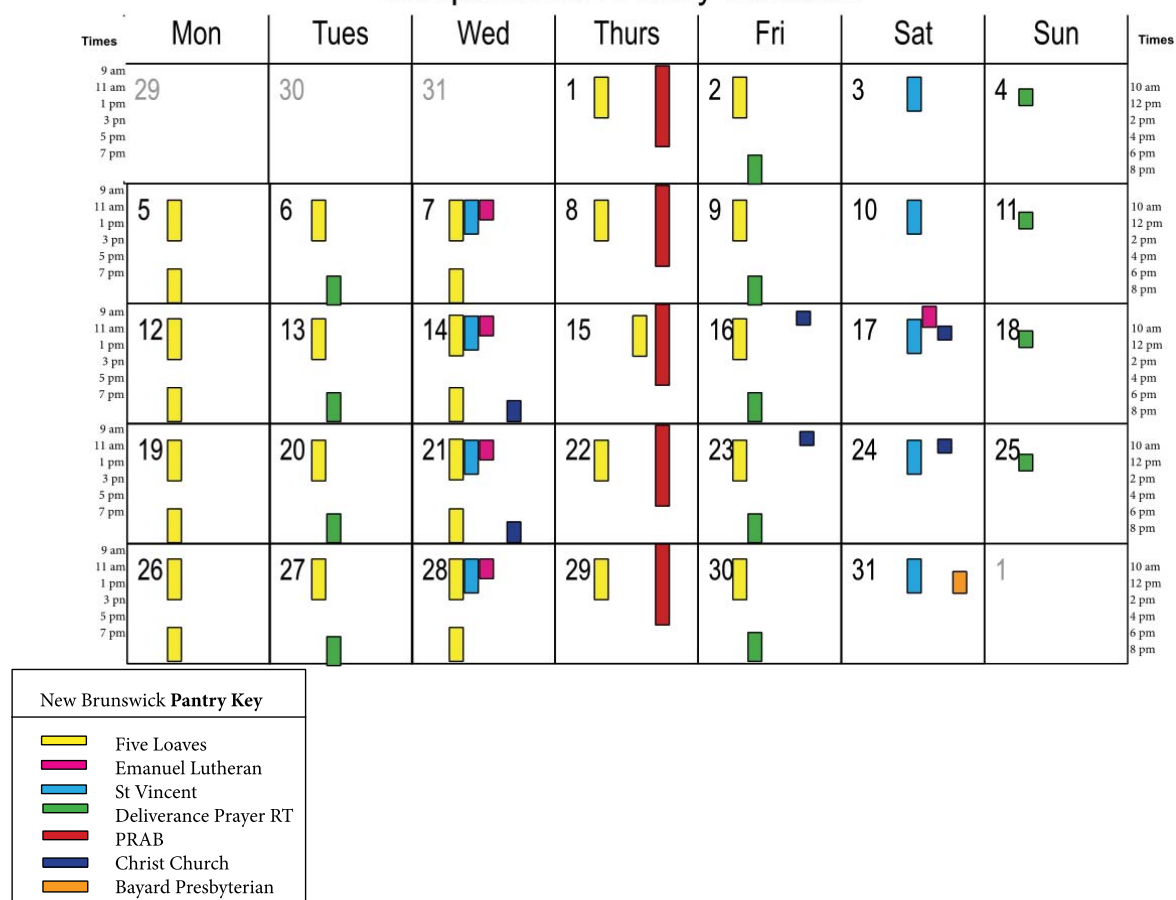
Name	Month	Weekend	Evening	Visits Allowed*
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church Pantry	1	1	0	1
Christ Church Episcopal	6	2	4	2
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	4	0	4	NA**
Ebenezer Baptist Church	4	0	0	NA
Elijah's Promise				
Emanuel Lutheran	5	1	0	1
Greater Brunswick Charter School	21	0	NA	NA
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church	22	0	8	1
New Brunswick Housing Authority	4-5	0	0	1
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Paul Robeson and Middle School	21	0	0	NA
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling	21	0	0	NA
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives	4	0	NA	1
Salvation Army Family & Community Emergency Services	NA	NA	NA	NA
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	8	4	0	4
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	NA	NA	NA	NA
Suydam Street Reformed Church	14	9	0	1
Tabernacle Baptist Church	NA	NA	NA	NA

*Number of times is based on a 30-day month starting with Sunday as the 1st of the month. Evening hours are after 5:00pm.

** NA= Not available

Four food pantry coordinators would like to increase the hours during which they distribute food to clients but are limited by the number of volunteers, volunteer concerns about safety during evening hours, and a lack of storage. Pantry coordinators explained that many clients work full-time which makes it difficult to pick up food within the pantries' limited hours of operation. In emergencies, eleven pantries provide food outside of these hours if they are available and have food. Seven pantries deliver food to clients but only in emergencies. Some pantries were initially more flexible and delivered more often but they reduced this service because they lack capacity. Five Loaves Pantry is the only pantry that delivers on a regular basis. It delivers food to 125 seniors at St. Mary's apartments on Remsen Avenue.

Sample Month: Pantry Schedule



Internet, Social Media and Signs

Pantry coordinators suggest that most people learn about pantries through word of mouth and referrals, but we wondered about their internet and social media presence. After visiting them, we also wondered about their use of physical signage. Few pantries have their own internet or social media presence but many of the host organizations provide information about the pantries on their sites. The number of food pantry host organizations with a website and Facebook page was three times more than those that had a website only, Facebook only, or no website or Facebook. Although many pantries have websites, only four have information for pantry clients such as the date and times for picking up food and pantry participation requirements. Five Loaves has a descriptive bilingual page with services and hours of operation. While the internet and social media may be an increasingly useful way to reach clients, one pantry director explained that it will not work for everyone. Many people who use their pantry do not have smart phones. Some pantries are considering physical signage that includes pantry name and hours (see Table 5).

Table 5. Internet and Social Media*

Pantry	Website	Social Media
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church	N/A	Facebook
Christ Church Episcopal	http://www.christchurchnewbrunswick.org/	Facebook
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	N/A	Facebook
Ebenezer Baptist Church	http://ebconline.moonfruit.com	Facebook
Elijah's Promise	http://www.elijahspromise.org/	Facebook
Emanuel Lutheran	http://www.emmanuelnb.org/	Facebook
Five Loaves Food Pantry	http://www.secondreformednb.org/?page_id=9	Facebook
Greater Brunswick Charter School	None	Facebook
NB Housing Authority	None	None
NB School Based Youth Services Paul Robeson and Middle School	None	None
NB School Based Youth Services Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling	None	None
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives	None	Facebook
Salvation Army	http://newjersey.salvationarmy.org/NewJersey/newbrunswick	Facebook
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	None	None
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	http://www.secondreformednb.org/?page_id=9	None
Suydam Street Reformed Church	http://www.suydamstreetreformedchurch.org/	Facebook
Tabernacle Baptist Church	None	None

**Few pantries have their own social media presence. Most of the websites and Facebook accounts belong to the host organizations.*

Facilities and Food Storage

Storage constraints often shape pantry size and what foods pantries can distribute. Some pantries lack space to store dry goods and nearly all lack sufficient freezer and refrigeration capacity. Lack of storage keeps some pantries from distributing produce, fresh and frozen goods, and limits their ability to expand. The school pantries have the most limited space. Even though St. Vincent de Paul has one of the larger dry storage areas, because of the high cost of food delivery, they limit their CFBNJ delivery to once a month. This means that for most of the month, they move food out of their storage room and into the hallway during distribution to create enough room to assemble and distribute bags.

Table 6: Food Pantry Refrigeration and Freezer Capacity

Pantry	Non-perishable	Refrigerators	Freezers
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church	Church building kitchen	0	0
Christ Church Episcopal	Two storage rooms	2 refrigerators	4 freezers
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	Kitchen	1 household refrigerator	1 household freezer
Ebenezer Baptist Church	Shed and kitchen	0	3 freezers
Elijah's Promise	Pantry	shared with EP	shared with EP
Emanuel Lutheran	Large room	1 household refrigerator, 1 refrigerator-freezer	6: 1 chest, 3 large stand up, 1 household freezer/refrigerator, 1 refrigerator-freezer*
Five Loaves Food Pantry	9x12 room, additional storage space	3 refrigerators	4 deep freezers
Greater Brunswick Charter School	Large storage closet	1 household refrigerator	1 household freezer
NB Housing Authority	Large storage closet	1 household refrigerator	1 household freezer
NB School Based Youth Services Paul Robeson and Middle School	Cabinets	0	0
NB School Based Youth Services Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling	Cabinets and small room	1 household refrigerator at Roosevelt School	1 household freezer at Roosevelt School
PRAB - Service Access Center	Room	1 household refrigerator	1 household freezer
Salvation Army	NA	NA	NA
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	16x20 room, and another room	2 refrigerators	1 freezer
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	NA	NA	NA
Suydam Street Reformed Church	12x12 room	1 refrigerator, 1 refrigerator/freezer	3 freezers, 1 refrigerator/freezer
Tabernacle Baptist Church	NA	NA	NA

*A refrigerator-freezer is used as either.



Pantry Use

We asked how pantries measure the number of clients they serve. St. Vincent de Paul sees about 1,000 households per month; households can pick-up food weekly. Emanuel Lutheran sees about 220 clients per month and Five Loves sees about 500 families per month. Both pantries only allow clients to visit once a month. Bayard Street Presbyterian, which is open once a month, sees about 200 clients. PRAB and Tabernacle Baptist see about 25 clients per week. The school pantries see about 40 families a month and the Housing Authority serves about 5-6 families a week. Some pantries see an increase in use over the summer (i.e. PRAB) while others such as St. Vincent de Paul see a decrease.

Pantries serve clients from New Brunswick and nearby towns. Clients include families and single individuals, large and small households, and people who are homeless. Many clients speak Spanish but Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle reported a majority English speaking population. In recent years, Emanuel Lutheran's clientele has shifted from Hispanic families with children to one- or two-person adult households. Seven pantry coordinators discussed the challenges immigrant households face as people may not earn much money, may walk a long way to the pantry, may not qualify for SNAP and, depending on status, may not have or be willing to provide the documentation necessary to use some pantries.

Differences in the languages spoken between pantry staff and clients can make communication difficult. Because many clients are Spanish monolingual and many pantry volunteers are English monolingual, it can be difficult for pantry staff to know how to best respond to client needs. However, many paid staff led pantries have Spanish speaking staff, some pantry staff have learned some Spanish, some volunteers are bilingual, and children often translate. And in the last few years, New Brunswick High School students have been volunteering at a few pantries including Christ Church Food Pantry and St. Vincent De Paul. In the process of doing the pantry work, these students have taught pantry staff about New Brunswick and the people who live there and they translate when necessary. At PRAB and at the school pantries, most of the staff who interact with clients are Spanish speaking. Having people who speak Spanish allows pantry directors to better understand what foods people want and why they do not choose some foods. For example, many clients share housing. Households may limit the food they take out of necessity because they lack the space to store it or the equipment to cook it. As pantry staff learn, they adapt. For example, most now provide more chickens than turkeys at Thanksgiving because they are easier to store and can be cooked in smaller ovens and for shorter periods of time requiring less utility use.

Table 7. Clients and the Number of People Pantries Serve

Name	Clients	Number of People
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church Pantry	More Hispanic people and children	200-250 people a month
Christ Church Episcopal	Mostly Hispanic, number of clients has decreased, fewer homeless, more families and immigrants	170-225 signatures and 300-480 people served per month
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	All English speaking and guests are mostly parents, members of church or heard through word of mouth	25-30 families a week
Ebenezer Baptist Church	Homeless, families, Hispanic, white, African-American	100-110 individuals per week using soup kitchen
Elijah's Promise	Small program through Ryan White	95 people a month
Emanuel Lutheran	60% Hispanic, 20% African American, 15% White, 5% other	220 families per month
Five Loaves Food Pantry	Database of 1,400 clients, about half are Spanish speaking immigrants, homeless, some families come with grandparents, aunts and uncles	500 families and 125 seniors at St. Mary's apartments per month
Friends of Greater Brunswick Charter School	Households with children who attend the charter school	Do not count households, 170 students in the backpack program
New Brunswick Housing Authority	Residents of Public Housing	5-6 households a week
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Paul Robeson and Middle School	Households with children in those schools	
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling	Households with children in those schools	
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives	Mix of older and younger families	22 households one week, 15 households the week before
Salvation Army	NA*	NA
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	New Brunswick residents who meet TEFAP and SFPP requirements	1,000 households per month
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	NA	NA
Suydam Street Reformed Church	Mostly families, some singles, mostly Latino	NA
Tabernacle Baptist Church	NA	NA

*NA= not available

Rules for Participation: Income, Residency, Identification

Where pantries get food and their own internal decisions may shape who can pick up food and how often, and what identification they need to do so. Some pantries serve anyone while pantries that use TEFAP or SFPP programs follow rules about client residency and or income. Participating in TEFAP requires the most documentation of income and identity and people have to sign at pick up. Food procured through the SFPP program can only be distributed to New Jersey residents. Some pantries set additional rules. For example St. Vincent de Paul only serves people who live in New Brunswick. The pantries at schools require participants to have children in the school or district. Other pantries ask for little information to ensure that food is accessible to those who need it.

Most of the pantries provide food to people during emergencies or disasters such as flood, fire, hurricane, divorce, domestic violence, unusual expense, or sudden loss of employment. Most commonly pantry directors talked about households displaced due to fire and the challenges of hurricanes and flooding given that parts of New Brunswick flood during large storms. Hurricane Sandy still looms in everyone's memories and some pantries, especially St. Vincent de Paul, provided food for people in New Brunswick as well as people who had been displaced from other parts of New Jersey and were staying in nearby hotels or with family. In these instances, pantries provide food outside of the normal hours when possible and, depending on the emergency, to people who may not belong to the pantry. Pantries may receive additional goods during some emergencies.

How New Brunswick Pantries Get Food

New Brunswick's pantries get food from regional food banks, direct donations, and some pantries purchase food. Pantries receive food from one or both of the regional food pantries: the CFBNJ based in Hillside and M.C.F.O.O.D.S. based in East Brunswick.

Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ)

The Community FoodBank of New Jersey (CFBNJ) began more than 40 years ago in the back of a station wagon and has since expanded to alleviate hunger and poverty in 18 of New Jersey's 21 counties. With a staff of 150 and 30,000 volunteers annually, CFBNJ distributes about 44 million pounds of food each year to about 1,200 feeding programs that include about 320 food pantries, 80 soup kitchens, and 70 shelters. For a feeding program to join the food bank, CFBNJ holds one-on-one meetings, conducts an on-site visit, speaks to directors and volunteers, and hosts an orientation

with a question and answer session during which it offers tips for success. CFBNJ places a poster in each agency with information for clients who want to provide feedback.

CFBNJ receives food through TEFAP, CFSP, and SFPP, corporate donations, individual donations, grocery store gleaning, farm gleaning, and voluntary food drives. Corporations donate food that is close to expiration, has been phased out, has damaged packaging or is refused at delivery. Wakefern and individual Shoprite stores donate food as do other grocery stores. America Grows a Row volunteers pick extra produce and produce that is grown specifically for distribution through the emergency food system at participating NJ farms such as apples, blueberries, squash, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and lettuce.

Agencies that participate in the federal TEFAP and CSFP programs or the state SFPP program receive a monthly allotment of free food; the amount depends on the number of people pantries serve. Pantries can also purchase food from CFBNJ through two channels - the co-op list and the non co-op list. The Co-op list includes food that the CFBNJ has purchased at low prices. The non co-op program allows pantries to “purchase” food for a \$0.16-0.18/lb shared maintenance fee. CFBNJ also delivers food to M.C.F.O.O.D.S. In addition to food services, CFBNJ offers a variety of programs including assistance applying for SNAP benefits, filing tax returns, volunteer processing and training center, culinary arts program, butcher program, diaper bank, Tools 4 Schools, kids clothing closet, and an Agency Direct Store Pickup Program. This last program links some CFBNJ agencies with supermarkets directly. If a store has a lot of product, it can be picked up by a driver on the way to/from deliveries and dropped off at an agency.

Seven New Brunswick food pantries are CFBNJ partners to receive TEFAP and SFPP food and others are partners who can pick up donated food at CFBNJ. Four New Brunswick schools (Paul Robeson, New Brunswick Middle School, Woodrow Wilson, and Livingston) participate in CFBNJ’s backpack program that provides food over the weekend and one food pantry operates a Cafe in partnership with CFBNJ. Pantries that do not receive federal and state food can partner with CFBNJ and shop there.

Middlesex County Food Organization and Outreach Distribution Services (M.C.F.O.O.D.S.)

M.C.F.O.O.D.S., Middlesex County’s food bank, serves more than forty pantries weekly at a new location in East Brunswick. Three paid staff members run M.C.F.O.O.D.S.: Director Jennifer Apostol has been working with the food bank since 1998 and a warehouse manager oversees daily food organizing, stocking, and inventorying.

M.C.F.O.O.D.S. Distribution

Tuesday January 3, 2015 Allotment

- 1 case ready to eat meals
- 5 cases Thai rice stir fry entree
- 1 case water
- 5 cases buffalo ranch salad dressing
- 1 case pickled cabbage fish vermicelli meal
- 5 cases mandarin oranges
- 2 cases pasta

(M.C.F.O.O.D.S. website, 2015)

M.C.F.O.O.D.S. receives donated foods from a variety of sources including CFBNJ, a bakery, and M.C.F.O.O.D.S.-organized food drives and distributes that donated food to the county's emergency food providers². M.C.F.O.O.D.S. established food drive rules to gather the most needed non-perishable items such as tuna, peanut butter, cereal, canned fruit, canned meat, pasta, rice and soup. It also accepts personal hygiene and baby products and a bakery donates hundreds of loaves of bread weekly. The pantries can take as much bread as they like. M.C.F.O.O.D.S. sometimes receives monetary donations which allows them to purchase food but because they are not a 501c3, they can only buy from certain state suppliers. M.C.F.O.O.D.S. also gathers food using its own truck and van.

M.C.F.O.O.D.S.' warehouse manager decides how food is allocated to pantries and each agency receives the same amount of food. Food is not distributed directly to clients. Five to six regular volunteers organize the food inventory in individual bins and bags which are placed on carts for Tuesday morning pick up. The pantries can add "extra" items at M.C.F.O.O.D.S. On average 13 New Brunswick pantries pick up non-perishable food on Tuesdays. On Wednesdays M.C.F.O.O.D.S. distributes perishable food which usually includes produce, meat, dairy, and frozen foods. Because M.C.F.O.O.D.S. lacks refrigeration, all of the food has to be distributed within hours. On Wednesday mornings, on average of 9 New Brunswick pantries pick up perishable food. If there are leftovers, M.C.F.O.O.D.S. calls other food banks or pantries to pick up the surplus.

² Top food drives for M.C.F.O.O.D.S. 2014. "More than 275 business, organizations, churches and schools sponsored food drives in 2014. These donations combined with corporate product donations and contributions from the Community FoodBank of NJ resulted in a total of 1,481,600 pounds of food being distributed through the M.C.F.O.O.D.S. Program." (M.C.F.O.O.D.S. Flyer <http://www.mciauth.com/MCFOODS%20Brochure.pdf>)

M.C.F.O.O.D.S. recently moved from Jersey Avenue in New Brunswick to East Brunswick. Most of the pantry directors have not minded the move and have appreciated that the parking is easier and the distribution is more organized. But some organizations such as PRAB and the school based case workers find the location less convenient. The old location was close to the main PRAB office. And the school based case workers each drive to M.C.F.O.O.D.S., sometimes twice a week in their own cars, and the new location has added distance (and therefore time) and cost to their trips.

Direct Donations

Food pantries receive direct food and cash donations from companies, non-profit organizations, and individuals. Receiving donations is required to accept federal food and helps pantries meet demand when they receive inconsistent food from the food banks. Donations also provide pantries with food that comes with no regulations about how it is distributed. Some pantries receive food through informal relationships and some have relationships with corporations and individuals that provide a consistent supply of donated food. Christ Church parishioners bring donations on Sundays when they attend service. At Emanuel Lutheran, church members bring cash and food donations including frozen food. Faculty and staff donate food to the school pantries and the pantry directors send emails that identify the items they know families will use. A religious group brings bread to St. Vincent de Paul. Ebenezer Baptist receives leftover meat, fish and potatoes every Tuesday from Longhorn Restaurant. They freeze these foods to serve or distribute. Five Loaves received fresh produce from Pop's market at the end of the farmers market day. Some pantries, including Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle Food Pantry, do not receive direct donations. PRAB is working to build direct donation relationships.

Many pantries get food from food drives and purchase food with donated cash. Some pantries organize their own drives and some receive food through drives organized by others. Rutgers Against Hunger, a university effort that collects food and cash during the year and gathers food when students move out at the end of the semester, donates food and cash to many New Brunswick pantries. PRAB holds in-house food drives and requests items by posting a product wish-list with canned goods especially soups, vegetables, cereal, eggs and bread. Many food pantries do not set ground rules for food drives but rather accept what people give. Emanuel Lutheran switched to cash donations because it allows them to purchase items that meet client needs. Ebenezer Baptist also purchases food to supplement what is not donated. Christ Church buys \$500-800 worth of food each month and St. Vincent de Paul buys from the Co-op list, CFBNJ, and big box stores.

Distributing Food to Pantries

Getting food to the pantries is logistically challenging. Many pantries do not have vehicles large enough to pick up food from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. or CFBNJ. CFBNJ delivers to a few food pantries because of limited street parking. Five Loaves Food Pantry rents a truck to pick food up directly from CFBNJ and estimates that it pays about \$1,500 dollars a year on vehicle rental. All pantries pick up food from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. and some do so twice a week to get non-perishable foods on Tuesdays and perishable foods on Wednesdays. Some pantry volunteers and staff use their own vehicles (See Figure 1).

Table 8. Where and How New Brunswick Pantries Get Food

Pantry Name	TEFAP	SFPP	Purchase	M.C.F.O.O.D.S.*	Food Drive	Food or Cash Donation
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church						
Christ Church Episcopal						
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle						
Ebenezer Baptist Church						
Elijah's Promise						
Emanuel Lutheran						
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church						
Greater Brunswick Charter School						
NB Housing Authority, 7 Van Dyke Ave						
NB School Based Youth Services Paul Robeson and Middle School						
NB School Based Youth Services Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling						
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives						
Salvation Army Family & Community Emergency Services			NA*		NA	NA
St. Vincent de Paul						
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA
Suydam Street Reformed Church						
Tabernacle Baptist Church	NA	NA	NA		NA	NA

*NA = not available

Figure 1: How Food Gets to the Pantries

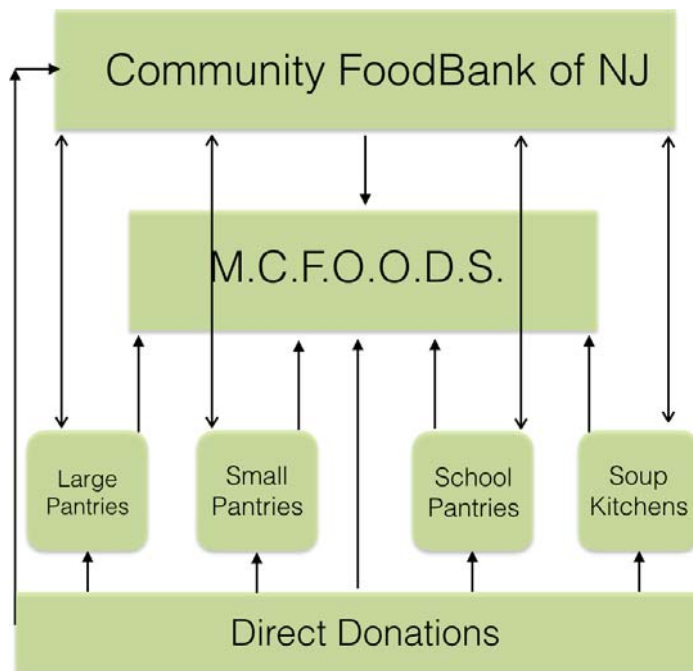
Foods Pantries Receive

Pantries distribute dry and canned products, refrigerated and frozen food, bread, and fresh produce. What foods they have to distribute depends on where they get food, their capacity to store it, and their ability to get the food to clients before it goes bad.

Non-Perishable Products: All of the pantries provide non-perishable dry and canned products because these products can be stored easily and the food banks provide these items. Pantries regularly receive canned vegetables, fruit, pasta, meat and tuna/other fish, soup, boxed pasta, cereal, rice, sauce, peanut butter, jelly, milk, and canned beans (garbanzo, pinto, black). They occasionally receive dried beans. Some pantries set aside cans with pop-top lids for people who are homeless. Sometimes pantries receive restaurant sized cans. For example, Paul Robeson and Roosevelt School pantries receive large cans of yams, corn, and fruit cocktail. These items are difficult to carry and are too large for smaller families but are useful for larger families.

Refrigerated and Frozen Products: Some pantries get products that require refrigeration such as fresh vegetables, fruits, hummus, yogurt, condiments, cheese, milk, eggs and prepared foods. Frozen products include frozen vegetables, meat (poultry, red meat, pork, and fish), and fruit. Emanuel Lutheran explained that meat comes in small packages, such as whole chickens, or in large 10-pound bags. Depending on household size, pantry organizers and volunteers distribute the products. The larger pantries that use federal and state food can receive these products but only if they have enough capacity to store them. Pantries also receive prepared meals which many save to distribute to people who are homeless.

Fresh Produce: Many pantries distribute fresh produce but they face challenges in doing so. Most pantries pick up fresh produce at M.C.F.O.O.D.S. on Wednesdays and have to distribute it that day. This means that many New Brunswick pantries are open on Wednesdays and people who pick up on



other days may not receive produce. Some pantries find that there is a mismatch between the type of produce they get and the type of produce that people will take. For example, there is demand for potatoes, onions, and tomatoes and less interest in winter squash and spinach at Roosevelt School. Many pantry directors mentioned that the produce is often very ripe, which means that they have to distribute it quickly and they often have to pick out and discard rotten produce. The St. Vincent de Paul pantry works with Elijah's Promise to make better use of some very ripe produce. Chefs at the soup kitchen turn overly ripe produce into salsa or sauce.

Bread: Many pantries distribute bread. M.C.F.O.O.D.S. has a plentiful supply of bread and some pantries receive it from other sources. The Bayard Street Presbyterian Church collects loaves of bread because they do not require refrigeration and can be given out on Saturday. A religious group collects day old bread from stores and drops it off at St. Vincent de Paul's pantry for distribution.

Table 9. Type of Foods Pantries Distribute

Pantry Name	Dry Goods	Produce	Refrigerated	Frozen	Bread
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church					
Christ Church Episcopal					
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle					
Ebenezer Baptist Church					
Elijah's Promise					
Emanuel Lutheran					
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church					
Greater Brunswick Charter School					
NB Housing Authority					
NB School Based Services Paul Robeson and Middle School					
NB School Based Services Roosevelt & Lord Stirling					
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives					
Salvation Army		NA*	NA	NA	
Society of St. Vincent DePaul					
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Suydam Street Reformed Church					
Tabernacle Baptist Church		NA	NA	NA	NA

*NA= not available

Pantries, Food and Food Banks

Pantries identified what foods they would like more of, what they receive too much of, and what their clients do not take. In general the pantries would like more staples, more fresh produce, and they would like to be able to purchase more nutritionally dense foods consistently from CFBNJ. A few observed that they used to be able to purchase a broader selection of nutritious foods through the Co-op list. And pantry directors asked for more notice about what to expect in each allotment and more consistency so that they can better plan their food purchases. A few pantry directors that use CFBNJ mentioned that sometimes things do not go according to plan and they do not always receive what they expect to receive. Many of the pantries also mentioned that some of the produce they receive through the food bank system is spoiled. They sort through to discard it before distribution. The pantry directors are all happier with the current M.C.F.O.O.D.S. system even though the drive for some is longer.

Table 10. Select Food Pantry and Client Food Preferences

Name	Food Pantries Would Like More Of	Food Pantries Receive Too Much Of	Foods Some Clients Do Not Take	Foods Clients Want
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church Pantry	nutritious food	snacks	yams, pumpkins, restaurant sized items	
Christ Church Episcopal	dried pinto beans		cranberry sauce, grits, garbanzo beans	meat, milk, eggs, cereal
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	meat, chicken, turkey, frozen vegetables, produce		squash, yogurt, pork	chicken
Emanuel Lutheran	fresh milk, eggs, produce, frozen fish, canned food with less sugar and less salt		whole wheat pasta, frozen blueberries	
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church	rice, cereal	grapefruit juice	pasta, "ethnic" or gourmet sauces, tri-color and whole-wheat pasta	rice, black beans, eggs, milk
Friends of Greater Brunswick Charter School		dusty, expired, odd, chicken noodle soup	unusual creamy soups, large packages, food past sell by date	
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives	canned goods: soup, vegetables, corn; bread, eggs, staples			fruit, vegetables, bread, non-perishable
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	chicken, milk, cereal, mac and cheese, beans, soup	matzo, cranberry sauce, stuffing, instant mashed potatoes	cranberry sauce, peanut butter, whole wheat pasta, butternut squash, jelly	black beans, rice

Foods Distributed at a Typical Pick up

The coordinator or volunteers at all but three pantries decide what foods clients receive. The other three pantries provide clients with options and they make their own selections. Either way, what is in the bag depends on what foods pantries receive or purchase. Many pantries follow some nutritional guidelines and include a variety of products in the bags. St. Vincent de Paul includes rice, cereal, protein, vegetables, fruit, and a snack. Other pantries like Deliverance Prayer Tabernacle do not follow any guidelines; contents depend on what food is available each week. Christ Church follows some combination of the two practices with bags based on what is provided by CFBNJ and supplemental purchases along with staple items like rice, milk (when available), and protein. Christ Church and Emmanuel Lutheran try to include staple items such as bread, meat, and vegetables. These pantries adjust bags for people with dietary restrictions for health or religious reasons. St. Vincent de Paul develops a menu for their bags at the beginning of the month and what shows up on the menu depends on donations, the federal and state food allotments, other donations, and what they purchase. One 5-6 item menu is created for single individuals while a 10 item menu is created for families. The pantry may supplement a large family with a “family plus bag.”

Bayard Street Presbyterian, Paul Robeson School, New Brunswick Middle School, Tabernacle Baptist, and Five Loaves Pantry allow clients to choose foods. Each pantry uses a different approach. Bayard Street lays out two bins of soup, one bin of vegetables and fruit, one of protein (tuna, peanut butter, beans), and one bin of pasta. Clients walk down the line of bins and make selections according to guidelines posted on signs (e.g. take two cans of vegetables). The pantry adjusts the signs based on product availability. Clients at the Paul Robeson School pantry select dry goods from a small pantry closet and fresh produce from tables in the front of the school. And Five Loaves pantry runs a bigger choice pantry. The church’s pastor previously ran a food pantry and after every food pantry pick up, he would clean out a barrel behind the church full of things people did not want. When the pastor decided to launch a pantry at the Reformed Church, he searched the internet for an alternative approach and found Crisis Ministry, a pantry in Princeton that uses client choice. Through consultation with their coordinator, Five Loaves adapted their model. Today, Five Loaves runs a client choice program based on a point system. Point allocation and balance is written on a slip for clients when they arrive. Items from different food groups have different point values and there are points for protein, vegetables, fruit, legumes, extras like cereals, rice, and “goodies for the kids”. Clients are also given bilingual shopping cards that explain a shopping list that constitutes a nutritionally balanced diet. If people cannot get down the stairs to the pantry, volunteers tell clients what products are available.

Some food pantry directors discussed the client choice approach and cited concerns about adopting it. Most pantries lack the space to store food and allow people to shop. Several feared that the pantries would need to be open many more hours because it would take longer for people to select their own food. And increasing pantry hours also means that they would need more volunteers. Pantry directors were also concerned about their ability to maintain a diverse supply of food through the month and to ensure an equitable distribution of the food they receive.

Table 11. Examples of Typical Bag Composition at Two Pantries

Christ Church Food Pantry September 2015	St. Vincent de Paul Family Bag November 7, 2015
Twice a month	Once a week
NA	single person: 1 bag; family: 2 bags; family plus: 2 bags plus a package
1 box cereal	1 box cereal
1 box milk	1 box of pasta
1 can fruit	1 pkg of rice
1 can/pouch vegetables	1 snack (granola bars)
1 pkg rice	1 jar peanut butter
1 can beans	1 jar jelly
1 can spaghetti & meatballs	1 jar nutella
1 box pasta	1 pouch/can of corn
1 can tuna fish (until gone), then 1 jar peanut butter	1 pouch of tomato sauce
1 pkg mac & cheese	1 can of applesauce
1 odd ball or snack	bread until gone
bread/cherries frozen or dried	choice of fresh products until gone including: bagels, cream of broccoli soup, hummus, salsa, yogurt dip, cheese, lemons, pears, apples, grapes
1-2 people get eggs or small pork product/ 4 or more get large pack chicken quarters or whole chicken	

Food and Health

Almost all of pantry directors are concerned with the connection between the food products they provide and health but what pantries can distribute depends on what they receive. Many pantry directors would prefer to get bags of dried beans. Most want to provide more produce but it is hard to get fresh produce and distribute it before it goes bad because it is so ripe when they receive it. Nearly all of the pantries do not provide desserts and sugary drinks and some limit sugary snacks.

Christ Church does not buy cookies, puddings or sugary foods. Some pantries turn these items away but some do not because they fear that they will lose future donations. One pantry director felt uncomfortable putting “healthier” products in bags because he did not feel like he should dictate what people eat. A few pantries mentioned requests for food related to particular health concerns such as diabetes and gluten sensitivity.

Some pantries report they could accept more frozen and refrigerated products if they had more storage space. Emanuel Lutheran wants to distribute fresh produce for a more healthful alternative to canned veggies (high in sodium) but spoilage and lack of refrigeration make that difficult. The Bayard Street Presbyterian Church is interested in seeing more nutritious products. When asked to note health concerns, most pantries reported some clients are diabetic or have high blood pressure. Based on information provided on intake forms, Emanuel Lutheran works to accommodate diabetic clients by adjusting what is in their bags and Five Loaves volunteers check product labeling to find foods for particular clients.

Some pantry directors explained that people do not know what to do with some of the products that fall in the “healthy” category such as whole wheat or tri-color pasta. Their clients gave them back because they either did not know what to do with it, did not like it, or thought it had gone bad. Some pantries teach clients about healthy foods and offer tastings, demonstrations or menus. Ebenezer Baptist tries to encourage clients to consume vegetables. Their general menu for the month is one chicken, one tuna, one pizza, and one other (pasta, beef) with vegetables and starch. St. Vincent De Paul pantry is interested in working with nutritionists to develop recipes based on what is provided in bags.

In 2011, The Greater Brunswick Charter School Food Pantry held a pantry potluck event to encourage clients to use some of the foods that were accumulating in the pantry, specifically brown rice and whole wheat pasta. The goal of the event was to provide recipes explaining how the foods could be used, and to give everyone a chance to taste those foods prepared in culturally familiar dishes, specifically traditional Latino/Hispanic meals. Clients wrote down the recipes they used and copies were shared. On that same night, SNAP Ed provided nutrition education for the families, and NJ Learning to End Hunger, a group of Rutgers students trained to do SNAP enrollment screening, conducted SNAP screening for approximately ten families. In addition, fresh produce was distributed in the pantry, and babysitting and ESL classes were provided. The event was a success because it was more than simply distributing recipes for these healthy but less popular foods, it was a meal and related activities that provided an opportunity for families to come together to try the foods in a festive atmosphere.

Food Pantry Challenges

Product Availability

Pantries describe a mismatch between the food they get and the food their clients will use. Finding culturally appropriate healthy food consistently is an ongoing challenge. For example, dried black, pinto or red beans, canned or frozen vegetables, and staples like rice and cereal are sometimes in low supply. Meanwhile pantries receive foods that some customers are unfamiliar with such as blueberries and peanut butter. While many clients take what is given to them, some clients leave behind unfamiliar items. Pantry directors identified these items as foods that people return or leave:

Foods Clients Return or Do Not Want

- yams
- cranberry sauce
- pumpkins in cans
- squash
- grits
- brown rice
- whole-wheat pasta
- tri-colored pasta
- dates
- sparkling water
- frozen blueberries
- unfamiliar soups
- “ethnic” foods such as Thai Rice
- garbanzo beans
- instant mashed potatoes
- condiments such as spicy mayonnaise and certain salad dressings
- yogurt

The most commonly cited reason for clients refusing these foods is lack of understanding about how to prepare them. For many pantries, the first step in getting their clients to take the food is educating them on how it may be used. Some of the pantries try to introduce people to these foods through tastings at pick up time and some have noticed that parents take products like peanut butter when their children are with them. Most of the pantry directors said that few clients want whole wheat or tri-color pasta. One pantry suggested taking the lists of food in the bags and working with Rutgers nutritionists and chefs at Elijah’s Promise to develop healthy menus from

Foods Clients Want

- applesauce cups
- adobo (Goya)
- beans (Fresh/dry)
 - red
 - black
 - pinto
 - Ducal refried
- bread
- cake mixes
- canned vegetables (low salt)
 - corn
 - carrots/peas
- canned fruit (low sugar)
- cereal
- coffee (Spanish variety)
- flour tortilla mix
- frozen foods
- garlic
 - powder
 - minced
 - paste
- granola bars
- mac n cheese
- maseca (for corn tortilla)
- meat
 - chicken
 - Spam ham
 - Vienna sausage
- milk (fresh)
- oil (Mazola corn oil)
- oatmeal (avena)
- Recaito (Goya)
- Rice (Canilla)
- soda crackers
- Sazon (Goya, Knorr)
- Sofrito (Goya)
- Soup
 - Maggi Soups
 - Cup of Noodles
- spaghetti
- spaghetti sauce
- vinegar
- Corn Meal (Goya)

common bag ingredients and have EP chefs demo the food which is similar to the Charter School's event described above.

If clients persistently refuse to take items, pantries may attempt to limit donations to reduce waste. By communicating with the CFBNJ, Christ Church stopped receiving their most undesirable item, cranberry sauce. On the other hand, Emanuel Lutheran received frozen blueberries that were difficult to distribute as many clients had not had them before. However, the pantry does not turn away donations but rather attempts to educate clients about the food. If they receive an item that is unfamiliar, a volunteer will take it home, cook it, and report back to clients. Vegetarian or vegan

clients will not take meat or dairy products and some of the pantries adapt the bags to their needs.³ Holidays present other challenges. Around Thanksgiving pantries receive turkeys, cranberry sauce, canned yams, dried mashed potato mix, and stuffing mix which do not resonate with some clients. Pantry directors have also learned that some families share housing and have limited ability to store food, may not have kitchen facilities to cook, and may lack the money to pay the utility cost to cook something as large as a turkey. And some guests will not accept pork for religious reasons.

Some pantries have developed guidance for food drives to get more donations of food that households will use. Families at the Roosevelt School pantry ask for specific items and sometimes name brands. The Roosevelt School list is below. We added to it the items that other food pantries said they would like more of and/or their clients ask for.

Rationing

While most pantries have never completely run out of food, they frequently ration food to ensure a sufficient amount and variety throughout the month. Pantries frequently run out of high-demand items, especially rice, black beans and some canned vegetables. Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle adapts bags for late walk-ins with similar products to whatever they have run out of. Ebenezer Baptist Church's Soup Kitchen can always provide a hot meal but may not offer guests goods to bring home. The need to ration increases as weeks pass after a CFBNJ food delivery. Emanuel Lutheran explained that its purchases from the CFBNJ Co-op list round out the free food allotments in these situations. Pantries like PRAB and Paul Robeson that only receive products from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. are more susceptible to shortages and often ration their products. Five Loaves used to ration food frequently but the necessity to do this eased as they expanded their storage and built more connections with people who can donate food. In contrast, Roosevelt School's pantry has seen fewer clients this year and they do not need to visit M.C.F.O.O.D.S. weekly, leading to an increased need for rationing. The schools also slow their food collections as the school year ends as they are closed over the summer, with the exception of emergency calls for help. The Charter School's food pantry does not receive enough food from M.C.F.O.O.D.S. and only had sufficient food was when it worked closely with RAH.

³ The USDA has run cranberry purchase programs for the last few years to prop up prices given high cranberry production <http://www.ams.usda.gov/content/usda-announces-cranberry-products-purchase-program>

Non-food Programs and Donations

Twelve pantries offer non-food services or items to their clients. Eight pantries are affiliated with nonprofits that provided services in addition to food distribution. What non-food services are offered depends on pantries' resources and objectives. PRAB and the Community Based Service Program have the most non-food related programs including: case management, clinicians, an energy program, and assistance with SNAP applications. Case managers at school pantries help connect families with other programs since they are able to connect with them on a one-on-one basis.

WIC and SNAP Applications, Education and Counseling: The CFBNJ conducts SNAP outreach events at some New Brunswick pantries. PRAB's Jersey Avenue site hosts SNAP representatives the first and last Wednesday of every month. The New Brunswick Salvation Army also hosts that program (CFBNJ, 2015). SNAP Ed gives presentations at Five Loaves a couple times a semester.

Rental and Utility Assistance, Diapers, Hygiene Products and Clothing: A few pantries provide rental or utility assistance, PRAB operates a home energy program for low-income residents, and a few pantries distribute non-food items such as hygiene supplies, diapers, and coats. Five Loaves and St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry participate in a new diaper program with CFBNJ. Bayard Streets Presbyterian gave out 800 coats. And Saint Vincent de Paul purchases laundry detergent from CFBNJ because it is significantly lower in price, which leaves more money for food.

Case Management: Case managers in the School Based Programs offer help with SNAP applications.

Other Services: Bayard Street Presbyterian gave money to their clients when they had surplus of cash, and they host holiday dinners three to four times a year that each feeds more than 200 clients. Christ Church offers books to the children who accompany their parents to the pantry.



Table 12. Other Services and Products Pantries Provide

Name	Non-Food Products	Other Services
Bayard Street Presbyterian Church Pantry	Shampoo, soap, deodorant, razors, coats, bibles, clothes, diapers, cash	PRAB staff talk about social services; flea market; clothing
Christ Church Episcopal	Books	Social Work Intern, men and women's health, utility aid
Deliverance Prayer Revival Tabernacle	Only when M.C.F.O.O.D.S. provides notebooks/binders, toothpaste, shampoo	
Ebenezer Baptist Church	Clothes, toiletries when available	SNAP-ED, HIV testing
Elijah's Promise		
Emanuel Lutheran	Diapers, toiletries when available	
Five Loaves Food Pantry at Second Church	Diapers	SNAP Ed presentations
Friends of Greater Brunswick Charter School	Hygiene products when available, clothing, free bench where people leave and take things	SNAP Ed, dinner accompanies many programs
New Brunswick Housing Authority		Housing
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Paul Robeson and Middle School		Case management
New Brunswick School Based Youth Services: Roosevelt School & Lord Stirling		Case management
PRAB - Service Access Center Representatives	Home energy programs, clothes line, diapers, toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, mouthwash	SNAP-ed presentations, information with healthy recipes
Salvation Army Family & Community Emergency Services	NA	NA
Society of St. Vincent DePaul	Couple of times of year: toothpaste, toothbrushes, moisture creams, soap, detergent	Some emergency services
St. Alban's Church Food Pantry	NA	NA
Suydam Street Reformed Church*	NA	NA
Tabernacle Baptist Church	NA	NA

*NA=*not available*

Ideas to Explore

Pantry directors and volunteers have many ideas to strengthen New Brunswick's food pantries and we offer some of our own as well.

Common Physical Signs and Logo. FNBN could create a uniform logo to be displayed on signs outside of pantries or on window decals. Uniform signs would symbolize a shared mission towards ending hunger. It would also make it easier to locate pantries from the street.

Recipes and Cooking Demonstrations Using Common Food Pantry Ingredients. One way to improve the healthfulness of diets and to increase uptake of healthy and culturally unfamiliar foods is to identify common pantry bag ingredients and work with nutritionists at Rutgers and chefs at Elijah's Promise and their Let's Cook program to create interesting, appealing, and culturally appropriate healthy meals and to host cooking demonstrations and opportunities to taste the food.

CFBNJ. Pantries expressed that they would like to see a bigger and nutritionally dense variety of food items on the Co-op list, more consistency in what foods they receive, and increased advanced notice about what foods are provided month-to-month. CFBNJ is limited in the foods they receive and it would be helpful to talk with the NJ government staff who implement the TEFAP and SFPP programs to learn about their constraints and untapped possibilities. CFBNJ also provides many of these foods in the warehouse but pantry staff have to visit Hillside to select these items. Some pantry directors also hope for improved systems that ensure they receive the food they order. Pantries would like food that can be prepared without a full kitchen. They often save cans with pop top lids and frozen meals. They would like a more consistent supply of foods that are well matched to people who are homeless and those who lack cooking facilities in their homes.

M.C.F.O.O.D.S. Pantries are considerably happier with M.C.F.O.O.D.S.' new location because it is organized more efficiently than the Jersey Avenue location. However, some pantries have to drive further. The pantries would like more healthy food and fewer condiments and a few mentioned wanting an increase in frozen foods. Pantries would like produce to be less ripe.

Increase Client Participation. Some pantries suggested a need to think of ways to engage with clients to better understand their needs and address them. This might involve engaging clients in FNBN or in a food pantry resident advisory council.

Reusable Bags. One pantry director would like to incorporate reusable bags to reduce waste and make it easier for people to bring food home.

Improve Food Pantry Pick Up Locations. A few pantries would like to improve the places where they distribute food. For some this means increasing or better using space and for others it means making places function better and look more appealing to clients through renovations. Pantries lack the resources to improve their locations and could use funding and in-kind assistance.

Storage. Limited dry, refrigeration, and frozen storage limits pantry expansion. Storage also affects what products pantries accept.

Mentoring. Many smaller pantries indicated that they would like to expand their services but are not quite sure how to do so. If more established pantries “mentor” smaller pantries, these groups may become aware of how to access more refrigeration and freezer space, grant money, and even CFBNJ allotments.

Spanish Speaking Volunteers. Given that many pantry clients speak Spanish, it would be helpful to have more Spanish speaking volunteers.

Referral Resource. Rutgers University Social Work students and pantry staff could provide or make available information about other programs to pantry clients. It would be helpful to produce a food pantry resource guide with information about how to access other forms of assistance.

Improve the Food Bank Food Distribution System. CFBNJ and M.C.F.O.O.D.S. regularly distribute food to pantries. While CFBNJ delivers, some pantries still travel to either CFBNJ or to M.C.F.O.O.D.S. to pick up their CFBNJ allotments and to do so they often rent vehicles. Additionally, all of the food pantries in New Brunswick visit M.C.F.O.O.D.S. as often as twice a week. Some pantries asked for vehicles that they could share to ease costs. While it is not easy to improve this distribution system, it would be helpful to see how other food banks and pantries have improved their systems. This might suggest some reasonable and doable future possibilities.

Technology and Choice. Our final theme emphasizes the importance of technology and choice, two of the most crucial topics in food pantry innovation today. There are choice pantries operating within the tri-state area; we urge pantries, the food banks, FNBN, and the New Brunswick Community Food Alliance to visit these pantries and ask them hard questions about how and why they decided on the choice approach, what problems they’ve run into in making it a reality, and what they would do differently.

Glossary

Emergency Feeding Organization (EFO) An Emergency Feeding Organization is defined as a public or non-profit organization that provides emergency sustenance for food-insecure individuals. These EFOs coordinate practices with a series of local distribution agencies (LDAs) with food allocated based on the number of individuals that LDA serves (State of New Jersey Department of Agriculture, 2006).

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Food and Nutrition Services is an agency of the USDA's Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services. The FNS aims to eliminate hunger and obesity in the United States through the 15 federal nutrition assistance programs including TEFAP, CSFP, WIC.

Federal Poverty Level (FPL) The Federal Poverty Level is annually established by Department of Health and Human Service in order to determine eligibility for social programs and services. This threshold serves a simplification of poverty levels established by the U.S. Census Bureau for use in administrative services (U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 2015).

Local Distribution Agency (LDA) A Local Distribution Agency receives New Jersey's 800 LDAs include but are not limited to emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, or feeding agencies. These LDAs receive food products from food banks as well as through outside donations to distribute to clients.

State Distribution Agency (SDA) A State Distribution Agency serves an intermediary who helps administer various federal and state assistance programs such as CSFP, NSIP, TEFAP, and Schools/Child Nutrition Commodity Programs. Such agencies include departments of agriculture, departments of health and human services, and other social services department.

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