Mid-Ohio Foodbank
Client Centricity Study
Acknowledgements: Our Lady of Guadalupe Food Pantry, Community Refugee and Immigration Services, Worthington Resource Pantry, St. Stephen’s Community House, Community Development for All People, Gladden House, First Presbyterian Church, Pickaway County Senior Center, North Interfaith Coalition, Smoky Row Brethren Church
Hunger is simple at its core, yet its root causes are complex. We cannot end hunger without understanding how and why it continues to plague one in six of our neighbors, challenging their ability to lead healthy, stable lives. Only when every child, adult and senior has the opportunity to thrive can we as a community realize our full potential.

Today, we need as many perspectives as possible to ensure fresh, healthy food is available to all. Our hungry neighbors have and will continue to teach us about the challenges they face as well as the strategies they have developed for persevering. Their knowledge will guide us on our journey to realize our vision of a Hunger-Free and Healither Community.

Insight into the daily lives of those we serve is the foundation for our current work and has been catalytic in our new, strategic direction to feed and end the line of hungry individuals. It drives us to mobilize the public and organize ourselves to do our best work. The Foodbank’s Feed the Line strategy continues to provide millions of fresh, nutritious meals to struggling Ohioans every day. Our End the Line strategy focuses on deepening our relationships with those we serve, our community partners and other organizations to create holistic, transformational solutions that address the root causes of hunger.

Mid-Ohio Foodbank’s mission to End Hunger One Nourishing Meal At A Time and Co-Create a Sustainable Community Where Everyone Thrives, can only be fulfilled with a client-centric focus. Please join us and The Kirwan Institute as we continue to learn from our friends, neighbors, and partners. With respect for one another’s experiences, hopes, and needs, we can and will end hunger.

Matt Habash
President and CEO

Kim Dorniden
Chief Officer; Strategic Development
The Kirwan Institute works to create a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed.

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Executive Summary

And now without this pantry, I don’t know what I would do because I buy my little stuff that I get with the food stamps, but in a couple of weeks, $64 is gone. You have to buy flour, milk, stuff like that. You know, it’s done. So I look forward to coming to the food pantry. And they help me. Right when I’m at the end of running out of everything, it’s time to go again. So I’m just thankful. I’m very thankful.

- FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT, SPRING 2015

Mid-Ohio Foodbank (MOF) has been providing hunger relief to central Ohio families since 1980. They partner with over 650 agencies in a twenty-county service region in central and eastern Ohio to provide hunger relief to hundreds of thousands of Ohioans every year. MOF is committed to becoming a learning institution and to continually improving its service model. To that end, MOF is seeking to better understand and meet their clients where they are. MOF recognizes the value of collective impact and is seeking community partners who share the vision of ending hunger one nourishing meal at a time and co-creating sustainable communities where everyone thrives.

The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University (Kirwan) is an applied research institute whose mission is to create a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed. Kirwan and MOF have embarked upon this co-learning experience to help inform MOF’s client-centricity model by placing food insecurity in the broader context of poverty and vulnerability, by identifying barriers to agency collaboration, and by highlighting voices from clients.

MOF understands that ending hunger requires broad systemic collaborations and policy conversations with stakeholders outside of the hunger relief network, particularly around the changing nature and growth of poverty. For example, focus group participants reported that the loss in government benefits that occurs when they find work is actually greater than the gain in earnings; therefore, working is actually structurally disincentivized. Their lived experiences are reflected in recent data that show that roughly half of single female-headed households with part-time work are in poverty. As another example, focus group participants noted that SNAP benefits provide many seniors with roughly sixteen dollars a month in assistance, barely enough to buy milk and eggs each week. Focus group participants shared the psychological stress of being unable to fully provide for oneself and one’s family, yet displayed resilience, perseverance, and connection with other focus group members for support.

The population earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty rate has grown in the MOF twenty-county service region in recent years. In 2000, roughly one-quarter of Ohioans living in MOF’s service region qualified for MOF services; today, that number has grown to nearly one-third of the service region population.

Though the growth of poverty has slowed somewhat in recent years, millions of Ohioans still struggle to make ends meet, and these numbers are rising. According to the January 2015 Ohio Poverty Report, roughly 1.8 million Ohioans are poor; an additional two million Ohioans are “near poor”—that is, living with incomes less than 200 percent of the poverty level.1

Poverty is also uneven: the White, non-Hispanic poverty rate is 12.7 percent, compared with the Black poverty rate of 33.6 percent and the Hispanic poverty rate of 27.4 percent.2

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poverty rate for people with disabilities is 31.8 percent. Poverty in Franklin County’s foreign-born population is close to one in ten (9.4 percent). Almost one in eight (12 percent) speak a language other than English at home. While no focus group question directly asked about judgement, discrimination, or racism, these topics came up repeatedly with the Somali and Spanish-speaking focus groups.

Living in poverty means that not all needs can be met. Both clients and service providers report housing (including utilities), medical, and transportation expenses as receiving priority over food expenses. In parallel, service providers report inadequate financial resources and staff capacity to meet increasing need in their communities. When asked about challenges to collaboration, service providers largely pointed to the lack of staff capacity and resources to enact collaboration, competition for funding, and restrictions on funding allocations.

The trends of increasing poverty rates were also reflected in service providers’ concerns that they were not adequately serving everyone in need of food assistance. They were particularly worried about serving homeless individuals and families, middle-income households, seniors, disabled and medically vulnerable individuals, and youth. Illness, injury, underemployment, and the challenges associated with aging were cited by focus group participants as key “push” factors leading people to seek food assistance.

Columbus’ size, suburban and exurban growth, and limited public transportation options pose particular challenges for rural residents, older and disabled individuals, those without cars, and parents of small children. Many focus group participants indicated that they would like food pantries to become resource centers where they could connect to numerous services.

Both clients and service providers desire easy-to-access information about existing pantry eligibility, programs, and services. Clients and service providers also cited an overwhelmed referral system with long wait times as a barrier to access. Service providers identified “knowledge gaps” as an important gap in the emergency feeding network of central Ohio. Many service providers expressed a desire for MOF to take a leadership role in coordinating pantry collaboration and knowledge sharing. One way that MOF is working to improve access to information is through PantryTrak, a groundbreaking system that helps MOF and partners to better understand and deliver food assistance. Ongoing analysis of PantryTrak data, alone and layered with complimentary data sets, can help identify potential strengths and challenges within the emergency food relief system. As more pantries adopt this groundbreaking database system, and as MOF continues to engage people and communities, MOF can become a leading voice for clients throughout the service region.

As MOF works to improve coordination, collaboration, and efficiency within the hunger relief network, the fruits of this labor will be reflected in an increasing number of thriving individuals and communities. The challenge of ending hunger is tremendous. But through collaborative efforts and client-centric approaches, these challenges can be met, and Mid-Ohio Foodbank is poised to lead this charge.

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4 US Census Bureau, ACS “QuickFacts” for Franklin County http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/39/39049.html Retrieved online
Introduction

Mid-Ohio Foodbank (MOF) has been providing hunger relief to Ohio families since 1980. MOF partners with over 650 agencies and community partners in a twenty-county service region in central and eastern Ohio to provide hunger relief to hundreds of thousands of Ohioans every year. In 2014, the Foodbank distributed 58.3 million pounds of food, enough to provide over 121,625 meals each day of the year. MOF is committed to continuously improving its service model. To that end, the Foodbank is seeking to improve their model of service delivery to better meet their clients where they are. Further, MOF recognizes the value of collective impact and seeks community partners who share the vision of ending hunger one nourishing meal at a time and co-creating sustainable communities where everyone thrives.

In 2014 and 2015, the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at The Ohio State University (Kirwan) partnered with MOF to undertake a Client Centricity study in order to inform their client-centric model of service delivery. The following report adds to a growing collection of work that is focused on understanding and addressing the issues of food access and hunger, from the neighborhood level to statewide. This study uses a mixed-methods approach, including data analysis and mapping, surveys, and focus groups. Kirwan analyzed data collected by the Foodbank in order to better understand where pantry users and potentially eligible pantry users live in relation to where poverty exists across the twenty-county MOF service region. Kirwan also conducted a survey of organizations providing hunger relief as well as those connected to the emergency feeding network in order to gain insight into barriers to collaboration and coordination of services, and to solicit the perceptions they have about the populations that they serve. Finally, Kirwan conducted a series of focus groups with food-insecure individuals in order to better understand client experiences with feeding themselves and accessing the emergency feeding network. The combined analyses in this report will inform MOF’s client-centric model by placing food insecurity in a broader context of poverty and vulnerability, by identifying barriers to agency collaboration, and by highlighting voices from clients.

THE GROWTH OF POVERTY IN THE SERVICE REGION

This report will also contribute to a greater understanding of poverty and resilience in central and eastern Ohio. According to the January 2015 Ohio Poverty Report released by the Ohio Development Services Agency, roughly 1.8 million Ohioans are poor (<100 percent of the federal poverty level), or approximately 16 percent of all persons for whom poverty status was determined.5 An additional two million Ohioans are “near poor”—that is, living with incomes between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level.6 Poverty is on the rise: 79 of Ohio’s 88 counties had significantly higher poverty rates during 2009–2013 than they had in 1999.7

Specifically within the MOF twenty-county service region, the population earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty rate has grown. Between 2000 and 2009, the income-eligible population grew 4.1 percent throughout the entire MOF service region. While the fastest growth in poverty rates occurred from 2000 to 2009, poverty is still growing, albeit more slowly. In 2000, roughly 26.4 percent of Ohioans in these twenty counties qualified for MOF services; in 2013 that

6 Larrick, 21
7 Larrick, 21
number had grown to nearly one-third of the service region population. Figure 1 below illustrates the growth of poverty in MOF’s service region. (A detailed chart of the population at less than 200 percent of poverty by county can be found in the Appendix).

![Figure 1: Population at less than 200 percent of the Poverty Rate in MOF service area](image)

Poverty varies by family type and work status, ranging from three percent among married couples to 55.3 percent for those headed by a female single-parent. In fact, just over half of families headed by a single mother working part-time are in poverty—a similar poverty rate for those same families where the mother is not working. Children and youth had poverty rates exceeding 20 percent. When families receiving social security and/or retirement pensions were excluded:

The overall rate among the truly jobless was 44.3 percent, with married couples now at 21.6 percent, male-head-no-wife families at 75.6 percent and female-head-no-husband families at 80.5 percent. These figures indicate the profound impact of under- and unemployment for this segment of society.

Differences in poverty rates by race, ethnicity, and disability are revealing. The White, non-His-

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8 Larrick, 4
9 Larrick, 25
10 Larrick, 4
11 Larrick, 25
panic poverty rate was 12.7 percent, compared with the Black poverty rate of 33.6 percent and the Hispanic poverty rate of 27.4 percent. According to the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium, the Ohio poverty rate for people with disabilities (civilians between ages 18 and 64) is 31.8 percent.

Kirwan has researched many of these nuances of poverty and used this information to better understand the realities of food insecurity in the counties that MOF serves. Kirwan and the College of Social Work at Ohio State recently released a study of vulnerable older adults in Franklin County, many of whom are food insecure. Kirwan also provided mapping and trend data of populations living at 200 percent of the poverty level to help Legal Aid understand their expanding client base. At the behest of Columbus City Council’s Infant Mortality Task Force, Kirwan mapped infant mortality rates across the county as well, showing deep disparities by demographics and neighborhoods. Infant mortality can likely be reduced if all of Ohio’s mothers-to-be have the resources they need to be healthy, including nutritious, affordable food.

Lastly, Kirwan has studied the trajectory of Franklin County neighborhoods, creating a “Neighborhood Change Index” which can help identify which neighborhoods are in decline, while others are revitalizing. These ongoing studies and collaborations with community stakeholders combined with the focus group sharing of personal experiences with deep and increasing poverty can help us better understand MOF’s critical role in sustaining and increasing individuals and families’ well-being in our communities. MOF will be able to tailor their services in a truly client-centric manner, identify potential partners with whom to collaborate, and ultimately work to create communities where all people can thrive.

ROADMAP TO THE REPORT
The following report includes an analysis of available PantryTrak data, which looks at PantryTrak households relative to poverty, neighborhood change, and Legal Aid Society of Columbus clients and provides hot spot mapping of PantryTrak households in the twenty-county MOF service region. It also includes survey responses from organizations working within the hunger relief system. The system survey analysis is followed by a breakdown of client focus group responses from the eleven focus groups held in Franklin, Belmont, and Pickaway Counties. A discussion section follows, in which themes are derived from the combined PantryTrak, system survey, and client analysis and placed in the context of MOF’s client-centric service model. We invite you to participate in this co-learning with us as we strive to work together to promote the visions of ending hunger one nourishing meal at a time, the creation of communities where all people can thrive, and the creation of a just and inclusive society where all people and communities have opportunity to succeed.

12 Larrick, 36
14 Food insecurity is limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways. (Definitions are from the Life Sciences Research Office, S.A. Andersen, ed., “Core Indicators of Nutritional State for Difficult to Sample Populations,” The Journal of Nutrition 120:1557S-1600S, 1990.)
Process and Methods

This project adopts a mixed-methods approach, merging quantitative and qualitative analyses and techniques. The system survey findings help us understand the emergency feeding system from the viewpoint of the organizations operating within it, while the focus groups enable us to gain perspective of the system from the viewpoint of the clients navigating their way through it. ArcGIS software was used for the creation of all maps and NVivo software, Survey Monkey, and Microsoft Excel were utilized in the analysis of the system survey results, focus group transcripts, and focus group questionnaires.

PANTRYTRAK ANALYSIS AND MAPPING TECHNIQUES

PantryTrak is a database which has enabled MOF and partner agencies to more efficiently collect, store, and analyze client information, assisting in a move toward a more client-centric model of service delivery. Kirwan was granted access to a subset of PantryTrak data for MOF’s twenty-county service region for the purpose of this project.

Hot spot maps were generated from the PantryTrak data to show concentrations of PantryTrak households across space using a quantile distribution method. PantryTrak data was then overlayed with poverty, Kirwan’s neighborhood change index, and Legal Aid Society of Columbus clients in order to assist with contextualization of PantryTrak data in the broader picture of poverty in the service region.

The data in PantryTrak is not entirely inclusive because not all of MOF’s partner agencies are currently using it, nor are all the pantries in the region partners with the Foodbank. However, 58 percent of MOF’s partner agencies have already adopted PantryTrak, which covers 71 percent of the total pantry transactions taking place in their network, and more partners are being added each week. PantryTrak data was accessed through Sophos SSL and Navicat software and all maps were created using ArcGIS software. There will be a final series of hotspot maps with pantry locations created in an addendum report once additional PantryTrak data is available to help visualize potential geographic gaps in service.

SYSTEM SURVEY DEVELOPMENT, DISSEMINATION, AND ANALYSIS

Seven hundred and five survey invitations were sent out electronically via Survey Monkey at the invitation of Mid-Ohio Foodbank and the Kirwan Institute, using the combined contact lists of both organizations. A sample of the invitation letter is included in the Appendix. In addition, 84 postcards with the Survey Monkey link were sent out to pantries that did not have email addresses. Over two months, 206 surveys were completed with an overall response rate of 26.1 percent. Response rates were as follows for participating target groups: direct service providers, 26.1 percent; school districts, 22.0 percent; community and government organizations, 42 percent. All survey responses were analyzed with Survey Monkey and further analyzed using Microsoft Excel. A few of the qualitative responses were also analyzed using NVivo.

CLIENT FOCUS GROUPS

Nine focus groups were held at seven locations across Franklin County, with an additional focus group in Belmont County and one in Pickaway County. Focus group sites were selected by MOF and details were arranged with each individual site by MOF and Kirwan, with the exception of the final focus group at Smoky Row Brethren (SRB) which was arranged by Kirwan. All participants were asked the same six questions except for the Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS) Somali-speaking focus group, the Our Lady of Guadalupe (OLG) Spanish-speaking focus group, and the SRB focus group. For the foreign language focus groups, several questions were reworded in order to improve their cultural sensitivity, increasing participants’ level of comfort with and comprehension of the questions. In addition, question two was changed for the SRB par-
participants in order to probe deeper into the food security experiences of individuals who qualify for aid but do not utilize services. A sample of these reworded questions can be found in the Appendix. All conversations were recorded, then transcribed and analyzed using NVivo. Additional information about focus group methodology and demographic results can also be found in the Appendix of this report.

**PantryTrak Analysis**

**DETAILED FINDINGS: HOT SPOT ANALYSIS OF PANTRYTRAK HOUSEHOLDS**

**Map 1: Hot spot map of PantryTrak Households in Twenty-County MOF Service Region**

Hot spot maps are useful in analysis because they clearly illustrate where clusters of PantryTrak households are living throughout the twenty-county service region. The following analysis describes some of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the populations living in census tracts with the highest concentrations of PantryTrak households, and also combines this information with other information including poverty, neighborhood change, and Legal Aid So-
ciety of Columbus’ client density. Census tracts were selected based on PantryTrak household density in the top 20 percent of census tracts. These census tracts cover large portions of the following neighborhoods in Franklin County: Weinland Park, Linden, Whitehall, King-Lincoln, Old Town East, Franklinton, the Hilltop, and the South Side. The majority of the tracts in these areas of town are adjacent to each other, creating large “peaks” of dark red on the hot spot maps. Many of these peak census tracts are home to disproportionately large African American and/or Hispanic/Latino populations and all exhibit poverty rates above county averages, with the exception of the contiguous West Side hot spot. The following tables compare the population living inside these census tracts to the population of Franklin County as a whole and each hot spot area's demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are discussed in the follow sections. Map 2 highlights the hot spot neighborhoods profiled below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percent Population under 18</th>
<th>Percent Population 18-64</th>
<th>Percent Population 65 and over</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>1,181,824</td>
<td>23.85%</td>
<td>65.97%</td>
<td>10.18%</td>
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<td>Weinland Park and Linden Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>25,471</td>
<td>30.09%</td>
<td>61.03%</td>
<td>8.88%</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Side Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>37,972</td>
<td>24.61%</td>
<td>65.86%</td>
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<td>West Side Contiguous Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>43,175</td>
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<td>West Side Hot Spot Tract 81.63</td>
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<td>Contiguous South Side Hot Spot Tracts</td>
<td>27,503</td>
<td>26.24%</td>
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<td>Contiguous Far South Side Hot Spot Tracts</td>
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<td>1,845</td>
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<td>66.67%</td>
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**Figure X: Population by Age in Franklin County and PantryTrak Household Clusters**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>Hispanic / Latino</th>
<th>Some Other Race</th>
<th>Two or More Races</th>
<th>White</th>
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<td>20.9%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weinland Park and Linden Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Side Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side Contiguous Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side Hot Spot Tract 81.63</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contiguous South Side Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<td>4.4%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
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<td>Contiguous Far South Side Hot Spot Tracts</td>
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<td>68.7%</td>
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<td>3.8%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Far South Side Hot Spot Tract</td>
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<td>66.8%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
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**Figure X: Race and Ethnicity in Franklin County and PantryTrak Household Clusters**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Population living at below 50% of the federal poverty line</th>
<th>Percent Population living at 50-74% of the federal poverty line</th>
<th>Percent Population living at 75-99% of the federal poverty line</th>
<th>Percent Population living at 100-149% of the federal poverty line</th>
<th>Percent Population living at 150-199% of the federal poverty line</th>
<th>Percent Population living above 200% of the federal poverty line</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weinland Park and Linden Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
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<td>East Side Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
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<td>36.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Side Contiguous Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Side Hot Spot Tract 81.63</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
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<td>Contiguous South Side Hot Spot Tracts</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
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<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Far South Side Hot Spot Tract</td>
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<td>6.9%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
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**Figure X: Ratio of Income to Poverty for Franklin County and PantryTrak Household Clusters**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent Population of Renters who are Housing Cost Burdened (30% or more of income on rent)</th>
<th>Percent Population of Renters who are Severely Housing Cost Burdened (50% or more of income on rent)</th>
<th>Percent Population of Homeowners with a Mortgage who are Housing Cost Burdened</th>
<th>Percent Population of Homeowners with a Mortgage who are Severely Housing Cost Burdened</th>
<th>Percent of Homeowners without a Mortgage who are Housing Cost Burdened</th>
<th>Percent of Homeowners without a Mortgage who are Severely Housing Cost Burdened</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>45.89%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
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<td>Weinland Park and Linden Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
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<td>36.5%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
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<td>East Side Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
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<td>32.74%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side Contiguous Hot Spot Census Tracts</td>
<td>58.95%</td>
<td>37.18%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Side Hot Spot Tract 8163</td>
<td>45.31%</td>
<td>14.51%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contiguous South Side Hot Spot Tracts</td>
<td>54.97%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contiguous Far South Side Hot Spot Tracts</td>
<td>58.64%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Far South Side Hot Spot Tract</td>
<td>33.86%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure X: Housing Cost Burdened Renters in Franklin County and PantryTrak Household Clusters**

**WEINLAND PARK AND LINDEN**

Eleven adjacent census tracts make up the peak cluster of PantryTrak households in these neighborhoods. These hot spot census tracts are experiencing poverty rates much higher than the county averages, with approximately 75 percent of the combined population of the census tracts living below 200 percent of the federal poverty line. The percent of renters who are housing cost-burdened and severely housing cost-burdened in the hot spot census tracts are both roughly 13 percent greater than the average for Franklin County, meaning more renters in these neighborhoods
are spending 30 percent or more of their income on housing expenses. Homeowners with and without mortgages are also more likely to be housing cost burdened and severely housing cost burdened in these peak tracts. In addition, the population living in these census tracts is younger on average and home to a higher percentage of African Americans than the county as a whole.

EAST SIDE
The hot spot tracts in this section of Columbus stretch from the Near to the Far East Side of the city, with pockets of low PantryTrak household density scattered throughout the area. While most of these hot spot tracts are contiguous, the PantryTrak household clusters disappear in Bexley and other wealthier tracts between high PantryTrak household cluster tracts throughout King-Lincoln, Old Town East, and Whitehall.

While the East Side PantryTrak household clusters appear slightly better off than the hot spots in Weinland Park and Linden, the area still exhibits higher rates of poverty than the averages for Franklin County. While housing cost-burdened renters and homeowners with mortgages live in these tracts at higher rates than in the county as a whole, homeowners without a mortgage exhibit housing cost-burden rates comparable to Franklin County. Just as the peak census tracts in Linden and Weinland Park have higher African American populations than Franklin County, so too do the East Side peak census tracts.

WEST SIDE
Nearly all of the hot spot tracts on the Hilltop and in Franklinton were contiguous with the exception of one tract. These hot spot census tracts exhibit higher rates of poverty than Franklin County as a whole. The contiguous tracts exhibit clusters living below 50 percent and above 200 percent of the federal poverty line while the single hot spot tract on the Far West Side exhibits clusters of 75 to 99 percent, and above 200 percent of the federal poverty line. This indicates that just over one-fifth of the population in the contiguous tracts is living in severe poverty (below 50 percent of the federal poverty line). Likewise, over two-thirds of the population in the contiguous tracts are severely housing cost-burdened. Only 14.51 percent of the population in the single hot spot tract are severely housing cost-burdened, lower than the average for Franklin County.

The isolated tract on the West Side is also notable because of the high percentages of Hispanic/Latino residents living within its borders. The Hispanic/Latino population in this single tract is proportionately over six times the size of the Hispanic/Latino population of Franklin County.

SOUTH SIDE
The majority of the hot spot tracts on the city’s South Side were contiguous, but a few isolated tracts make up small PantryTrak household clusters. While the contiguous South Side tracts exhibit similar poverty rates and housing cost-burden rates with PantryTrak household clusters on the East Side, West Side, and Weinland Park and Linden, the Far South Side tracts do not exhibit such high rates. The single Far South Side hot spot tract in particular is notable because poverty rates do not follow similar patterns to the other hot spot census tracts. Specifically, only a small percentage of the census tract’s population are living in severe poverty and nearly 30 percent of the census tract’s population is living at 100-149 percent of the federal poverty line. Many of the households at this income level will not qualify for assistance; however, individuals in this tract appear to be experiencing fewer hardships than other PantryTrak household clusters in Franklin County, exhibiting housing cost-burden rates lower than the average for the county. This tract is also home to a sizeable Hispanic/Latino population, proportionately two and a half times larger than the Hispanic/Latino population of Franklin County.
Map 3: Hot Spot Map of PantryTrak Households in Franklin County

PANTRYTRAK ANALYSIS: HOT SPOT MAPS OF EPISODIC AND FREQUENT PANTRY HOUSEHOLDS WITH POVERTY RATES OVERLAI

It is beneficial to examine PantryTrak data by user type. The following maps show clusters of episodic versus frequent pantry households overlaid with maps displaying poverty, neighborhood change, and Legal Aid Society of Columbus’ (LASC) client density (LASC offers services to those living within 200 percent of the poverty line). An episodic pantry household can be defined as a household who has visited a PantryTrak participating pantry five times or less in the last year while a frequent pantry household can be defined as a household who has visited a PantryTrak participating pantry six times or more in the last year.
Map 4: Hot Spot Map of Episodic PantryTrak Households and Poverty in Franklin County

Overlaying poverty on the hot spot map of PantryTrak households in Franklin County reveals not only where poverty is high in Franklin County, but where there are fewer households visiting PantryTrak participating sites. In particular, we can see pockets of poverty with low PantryTrak use in the northwestern portion of the county and in the Northland area.

Additionally, we can see clear differences between the episodic (Map X) and frequent (Map X) household maps. The northeast portion of the city in the Northland area is home to many more episodic than frequent PantryTrak households. This could reflect growing poverty in the area, but may also reflect the dearth of PantryTrak participating pantries in that portion of the county; clients may be travelling from this area to PantryTrak participating sites outside of their neighborhoods. What we do not know is whether these individuals and families are frequenting non-PantryTrak participating pantries nearby as well.
Map 5: Hot Spot Map of Frequent PantryTrak Households and Poverty in Franklin County
Map 6: Hot Spot Map of Episodic PantryTrak Households and Neighborhood Change Index in Franklin County

PANTRYTRAK ANALYSIS: HOT SPOT MAPS OF EPISODIC AND FREQUENT PANTRYTRAK HOUSEHOLDS WITH NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE OVERLAID

The neighborhood change index (2000–2013) can help identify areas which are experiencing decline as well as areas which are undergoing revitalization. The prevalence of decline may be a useful indicator of where future pantry users reside. The map may also aid MOF in identifying areas for outreach.

When we overlay the neighborhood change index over PantryTrak households in Franklin County, we can see certain areas with low PantryTrak households that are experiencing decline. In particular, we can see that the Northland area is experiencing a downward trajectory, with all census tracts exhibiting either high or some decline. Likewise, we see areas of decline in the Bethel Road/Henderson Road area as well. Portions of both of these areas also exhibit higher poverty rates. While poverty rates in these areas are similar to those in areas with high PantryTrak participating pantry use, the absence of dark red peaks in these areas tells us that residents living in these census tracts are not frequenting PantryTrak participating pantries as often as residents in other portions of the county.
Map 7: Hot Spot Map of Frequent PantryTrak Households and Neighborhood Change Index in Franklin Co.

PANTRYTRAK ANALYSIS: HOT SPOT MAPS OF EPISODIC AND FREQUENT PANTRYTRAK HOUSEHOLDS WITH LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF COLUMBUS CLIENTS OVERLAID

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus was formed in 1955 with the mission of providing legal representation to low-income residents in central Ohio. The following maps overlay LASC clients (those living at or under 200 percent of the federal poverty level) on hot spot maps of episodic and frequent PantryTrak households. These maps match up quite well—particularly the episodic PantryTrak household map—indicating overlap between the populations that LASC and PantryTrak participating agencies serve.

15 Legal Aid Society of Columbus (n.d.) About Us - The Legal Aid Society of Columbus Retrieved April 14, 2015, from http://www.columbuslegalaid.org/index.php/home/about
Map 8: Hot Spot Map of Episodic PantryTrak Households and LASC Clients in Franklin County
Map 9: Hot Spot Map of Frequent PantryTrak Households and LASC Clients in Franklin County
Detailed Findings: System Survey Analysis

ORGANIZATION ORIENTATION
Many organizations responding to the survey were faith-based (nearly half of the respondents), and were highly involved with food security and child education and development. Because organizations could choose more than one area of focus, a respondent could be, for example, a church that runs a food pantry and a child care center. Figure XX details the types of organizations that participated in the system survey as well as if they were an MOF partner agency. Ninety-two percent of the respondents worked directly with people in need of services (See Figure XX). Ninety percent of the respondents already partner with the Mid-Ohio Foodbank. Organizations were given the opportunity to identify themselves in the survey. A full list of self-identified organizations is included in the Appendix.

![Survey Respondent Organization's Orientation](image)

**Figure XX: Survey Respondent Organization's Orientation**
AWARENESS OF EXISTING FOOD-RELATED COMMUNITY ASSETS AND PROGRAMS
Organizations had varying levels of awareness of food-related community assets and programs. Respondents were most likely to have a “strong awareness” of food pantries, free produce markets, and school nutrition programs; an “awareness” of soup kitchens, SNAP, and WIC; and be “somewhat aware” of farmer’s markets with SNAP voucher incentives. Figure XX displays survey participant levels of awareness of seven community assets and programs.
### Network Agency Partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>% Respondents that are &quot;Aware&quot; or &quot;Strongly Aware&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Network Agency Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Pantries</strong></td>
<td>96.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soup Kitchens/ Meal Sites</strong></td>
<td>80.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free Produce Markets</strong></td>
<td>87.65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmers’ Markets w/ SNAP Voucher Incentives</strong></td>
<td>48.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SNAP</strong></td>
<td>68.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WIC</strong></td>
<td>77.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Nutrition Programs</strong></td>
<td>77.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure XX: Survey Respondent Program Awareness

#### REFERRAL PROCESSES
Fifty-eight percent of organizations participating in the systems survey ask their clients if they have enough food to eat; if a client mentions to the agency they do not have enough food, 94 percent of agencies refer them for food resources. Approximately 50 percent of system survey respondents have a standard referral process (see Figure XX).

### Percent Yes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network Agency Partner</th>
<th>Non-Network Agency Partner</th>
<th>Agency did not identify partner status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you ask people you serve if they have enough food?</strong></td>
<td>64.63%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>40.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If a person you have served tells you they do not have enough food, do you refer them to food resources?</strong></td>
<td>95.73%</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
<td>80.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does your organization have a standard referral process?</strong></td>
<td>53.66%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure XX: Survey Respondent Responses to Questions Regarding Referrals
The most common referrals include to pantries and soup kitchens/free meal sites, referral services, government social services, social service organizations, and churches (See Figure XX). A full list of locations to which pantries refer can be found in the Appendix.

![Figure XX: Where Organizations Refer People Who Report Not Having Enough To Eat](image)

**POPULATIONS NOT BEING ADEQUATELY SERVED BY THE EMERGENCY FEEDING NETWORK**

System survey respondents make great effort to serve their clients and in this role become aware of populations not being adequately served by the emergency feeding network. When asked which populations they believe are not being adequately served, the top three responses were: homeless, middle income households, and seniors. The next set of high priority populations included disabled and medically vulnerable individuals and children/youth. Detailed responses to this question are shown in Figure X.
LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT LEAD A PERSON TO LACK ADEQUATE FOOD

The top life circumstances identified by system survey respondents that were perceived to lead a person to lack adequate food resources were a lack of income (unemployment/underemployment/inadequate fixed income), and disadvantageous life circumstances (growing up in a low-income household, lacking job training, not finishing high school and not having stable housing). System survey respondents also perceived mental illness and drug/alcohol abuse as top contributing factors. (See Figure XX).
Figure XX: Perceived Life Circumstances Identified by Survey Respondents as Leading a Person to Lack Adequate Food Resources

HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES RECEIVING PRIORITY OVER FOOD EXPENSES
Respondents felt that housing expenses, medical expenses, and transportation expenses were the most likely expenses to receive priority over food expenses, consistent with national estimates of household budgets. Notably, the next two most likely identified expenses were taking care of additional family members and childcare. Detailed responses to this question are seen in Figure XX.
Figure XX: Household Expenses Identified by Survey Respondents Perceived as Receiving Priority over Food Expenses

BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION
Service providers sometimes face challenges collaborating with others in the community. When probed about these challenges, staff capacity, funding issues and lack of partners/knowledge of other partners in the community were cited most often. Detailed responses to this question are noted in Figure XX.
Figure XX: Challenges to Collaboration Identified by Survey Respondents
GAPS IN THE EMERGENCY FEEDING NETWORK OF CENTRAL OHIO

When identifying gaps in the system, a rather evenly distributed set of challenges exists. Survey participants were asked to write out their answers, which were subsequently analyzed in Survey Monkey. Gaps related to knowledge, financial, logistical, service and programming, and others were identified (see Figure XX). Gaps in the emergency food network mean that those who are most vulnerable to hunger may not have access to the resources they need. Understanding these gaps will allow MOF and partner organizations to more accurately pinpoint the most effective uses of their resources.

Are there any gaps in the formal food assistance network of Central Ohio

![Figure XX: Gaps In The Formal Food Assistance Network Of Central Ohio Identified by Survey Respondents](image)

Knowledge gaps were most commonly reported. Suggestions in this category ranged from helping pantries access information about resources available to their clients, to getting more information to clients themselves, to informing the public at large about the necessity of hunger relief services. Examples of responses indicating knowledge gaps include:

- Getting information to those that need assistance is the biggest challenge.

- Knowledge of available resources.

- Knowledge of how to receive assistance, and having the ability and willingness to seek it. Some people fall between the gaps, and they don’t know how or where to turn or how to ask the right questions to get the help they need.
Financial gaps were the second most commonly identified gaps by survey participants. The vast majority of the comments which fell into this category were extremely short answers, many simply one word: “financial”. Examples of responses indicating financial gaps include:

Financial – with limited amounts of resources so pantries can help give more food to people.

Financial gap with whom to reach out to for grants.

A number of respondents also identified logistical gaps. Such gaps include the transport of people and food. Examples of responses indicating logistical gaps include:

Other gap [sic] is that most food pantries don’t deliver to the customer. Some folks need the pantry food, but do not have transportation to get to the pantry site. Some of these folks have health issues or are seniors. They miss out on access to pantry food they need. Definitely need more pantries that could deliver food when necessary.

Transportation needs. We often have people who do not show at our pantry because they cannot get transportation.

The fresh produce at Mid-Ohio Foodbank that is free, some of us don’t have a truck to pick it up. They need to see if when they deliver your stuff you order, if they could bring that out as well.

Finally, a handful of respondents identified service and programming gaps. Such gaps include geographic distribution of services (the zip codes 43068, 43213, 43227, 43232, and 43229), specific populations not being adequately served (homeless and immigrant populations), the days and hours of operation of pantries, and the services and programs available to pantry clients. In particular, the pantry referral service in central Ohio was mentioned as a gap by multiple survey respondents. Long hold times were also described as a barrier to access by multiple focus group participants. Examples of survey responses indicating service and programming gaps include:

I believe we need to do more to serve the immigrant communities in Central Ohio. In addition, the geographic boundaries established by providers can create unnecessary barriers.

There are service gaps [pantry referral service] for food pantry referrals. Low income folks I serve are put on hold, sometimes 15 mins. or longer. They can’t afford to use up cell phone mins. without receiving any results. Not to mention their cell phone becomes useless because they’re out of minutes quickly each month.

Unable to get through to [pantry referral service] due to the large number of callers to [pantry referral service] and lack of phone lines/volunteers.

Too much fragmentation, individuals receive too little food at too infrequent intervals.
SUGGESTIONS TO SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE WORK AMONG SERVICE PROVIDERS TO IMPROVE FOOD SECURITY

Most of the proposed actions to support collaborative work encompassed organizational communication and coordination, funding, and leadership. (see Figure XX).

Figure XX: Actions Identified by Survey Respondents to Support Collaborative Work Among Service Providers

The majority of proposed actions in the “communication” category pointed to the need for increased collaboration. Some respondents suggested including the community in these discussions, while others suggested meetings between service providers and agencies. Examples of responses advocating for increased communication include:

We simply need to talk to each other more

A “Craig’s List” type forum where agencies could post what they needed help with and how they can give help. A forum, if you will.

Coordinate communication between social service agencies, government agencies, and hunger networks.
Start a “did you know” campaign, on billboards in all corners of our communities, stating all pantries and/or services in that area and list them alphabetically

More community dialogues

Annual or bi-annual meetings with food resource agencies. Weekly newsletters highlighting different programs, agencies, and organizations’ missions to relieve food insecurity—this could help make more agencies aware of other programs.

Many participants suggested coordinating services within a particular service area; some even advocated for coordination with schools and employers. Examples of responses advocating for increased coordination are below:

I could use access to a list of service providers, contact information, hours of operation, especially with Mid-Ohio Foodbank markets in my area. Most of the time I don’t know what other organizations in my area are doing or providing, nor when they’re doing it. This past year, I tried to promote all the produce markets occurring in my area, but the other groups hosting the markets didn’t reciprocate. Also, it would be beneficial to the people coming to the produce markets if it were possible to do collaborative scheduling. People could have access to produce market food on a weekly basis if we could space them out over a month’s time.

I think PantryTrak will be a very valuable resource to promote collaboration among service providers, we are very excited to be participating in PantryTrak.

Most responses regarding funding were simple and short, often simply “more funding.” Two expanded on this, adding “Provide a list of supporters in the area” and “Force them to work together through funding requirements.”

Funding and capacity were cited by survey participants as barriers to collaboration. Even focus group participants, reflecting the feeling that they receive less food than in the past, pointed out that there is a lot of demand for pantries right now and most probably can’t afford enough food to meet all of the demand. Some focus group participants concluded that pantries cannot afford to give out more food than they already do.

Finally, many system survey respondents recognized the relative power and influence that MOF wields and suggested that the organization take a leadership role in facilitating coordination within the hunger relief system. Examples of responses advocating for leadership can be found below:

Assist identifying groups that may be candidates for collaborating?

Mid-Ohio Foodbank provides food to most of the food pantries and soup kitchens in our area. However, most of these agencies still don’t believe that we can do more if we all work together. Perhaps Mid-Ohio can work with us to help bring these agencies and churches to the table to explore ideas on working together.
Focus group findings

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the lives and experiences of our clients, several focus groups were held throughout Franklin, Pickaway, and Belmont Counties. Each focus group intentionally aimed to include participants that visited a pantry five or less times per year, six or more times per year, and those that qualified to visit a food pantry yet did not utilize pantry services. There was also an effort to include communities and populations that are typically underrepresented, such as the Somali- and Spanish-speaking communities in Franklin County.

While participants offered a host of suggestions, it must be noted that among the criticism exists a deep appreciation for the hunger relief network. Participants are very aware of the services that they are receiving and the impact that this aid has on their lives. They recognize that, through the grace of volunteers and dedicated pantry employees, the food aid they receive is the difference between going hungry and getting by. Participants spent a good deal of time explaining why they love the pantry that they frequent and the important role that the food they receive plays in their lives. In addition to their compliments, participants also offered suggestions that can help improve their lives.

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES: FOOD PROCUREMENT

- Majority of participants utilize pantries alongside other food resources
- Outreach to immigrant communities may be beneficial in connecting these groups to food assistance

The majority of focus group participants, with the exception of participants in the CRIS focus groups, reported that they do visit at least one pantry as part of their monthly food procurement strategies. Participants also acquire food from grocery stores, friends and/or family on occasion, and sometimes warehouse membership clubs such as Sam's Club or COSTCO, both of which accept SNAP benefits. Only a handful of participants indicated that they seek free meals at soup kitchens or meal sites.

During the focus group held at Community Refugee and Immigration Services (CRIS) it was uncovered that only one of the ten participants had ever been to or even heard of a food pantry. This indicates opportunities for reaching out to more immigrant communities. After explaining what a food pantry is, there was general agreement in the group that such services would be well received in their community.

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES: EXPERIENCES WITH FOOD

- Creative strategies to stretch food, food budget, and household budget are common
- Planning ahead for shopping at the pantry was often mentioned, including timing of visits and navigating selection (including specialty foods)
- Discrimination and cultural barriers are often faced by focus group participants in their everyday lives, including at retail food outlets
- There are many challenges to acquiring public assistance, including long wait times for referrals

Participants shared numerous strategies to stretch their food and their budget each month. These strategies ranged from shopping at multiple grocery stores for the best deals to utilizing coupons to freezing leftovers. Many participants prided themselves on their creativity in the kitchen. In particular, participants strategically visit food pantries to best meet their needs. These strategies included timing pantry visits to coincide with the pantry’s produce delivery day, timing pantry
visits to supplement meals at the end of the month when SNAP benefits run out, arriving early at the pantry to get the first pick, and coordinating appointments with friends or family who are willing to provide transportation. The amount of time food procurement takes for food insecure individuals was articulated clearly with the following focus group participant quote:

Many of the food pantries only offer once a month that you can go to each pantry, so you have to have a network of at least three or four that you can go to because if they restrict it to once-a-month access with a three-day food supply, you don’t, you can’t, there aren’t that many pantries that support that citywide. You have to, it is a full-time job to schedule food assistance. Full-time.

Many attendees requested easier access to information about where they can receive services and which services they are eligible for. They also want pantries to coordinate their hours and would like to see this information become incorporated into a shared database for referrals.

The pantry referral network in Franklin County is designed to provide a centralized referral service. However, focus group participants report the existing referral service for Franklin County is unable to handle the amount of calls it receives. Focus group participants reported spending multiple hours on hold and experiencing trouble scheduling pantry visits during the times that they are able to obtain transportation. In contrast, participants of the OLG focus group reported an overwhelmingly positive experiences with the pantry referral service, which has a Spanish-speaking line staffed by one case worker. Although participants do report challenges, all participants reported that the case worker goes out of her way to accommodate them—even scheduling people at the same time as their friends or neighbors who drive them to the pantry.

Nearly all focus group participants also stated that they simply do not have the money to afford all of the food that they would like to purchase each month, particularly healthy food like fresh produce. The majority of focus group participants also earn annual household incomes below $20,000. This indicates that the cost of food, particularly healthy food, is a barrier to access for these individuals and their families.

In addition to this, Franklin County is also home to a number of minority populations. The foreign-born population in Franklin County has grown tremendously in recent years, and with it the need to understand and address the cultural needs of these individuals. For example, the Columbus Somali community is predominantly Muslim, and most members of the community will only consume Halal meat. Specialty stores are often the main source of Halal meat but do not frequently take food stamps, so many of these participants are buying cash, which means that they are not always able to purchase meat. Religious and/or cultural specialty items or other specialty foods for specific dietary conditions are particularly challenging for food insecure individuals to procure. In fact, numerous focus group participants at multiple sites discussed a desire for heart-and diabetes-friendly options at emergency feeding sites. One participant went so far as to suggest the creation of one central pantry dedicated to serving those with diabetes, heart disease, and other diet-related health problems.

Focus group participants described a range of experiences accessing food throughout Franklin, Belmont, and Pickaway counties. The stories told by participants of the OLG focus group were perhaps the most surprising. The focus group held at OLG food pantry was populated by members of the Hispanic community in Franklin County. Although race and ethnicity were not topics which were asked about by facilitators during the focus groups, this subject came up again and again in the OLG focus group. Many of these stories underscored that discrimination and racism is a regular part of their lives and learning English was key to obtaining a job and earning a living wage.
One of the problems is because I have my job and I talk to the boss in English and sometimes he tells me he doesn’t understand what I say. And he has a preference for the white guys…And the problem is when you don’t speak better English the manager preferences the white guys…And many times, I pronounce with accent and they say, “What did you say?”…They know what I said, but they act like they don’t understand.

Where I have worked, the salary for every person is different. I have talked to many persons who have many years in the job and then they are making less money than people who were just hired. The reason they don’t get raises is because they don’t know how to ask for raises in English.

In my experience in [big box store], I also had my son with me. He’s 11. The checkout person said she didn’t understand my English and didn’t want to help me. When I told her I wanted to speak to the supervisor to see if you’re telling me the truth, she understood this. So the cashier walked to the product to check the price. She came back and said I was right…And I told my son to never allow anything like this.

Disrespect and negative judgment were a common theme during many focus groups. One participant articulated the impact of such judgments:

It’s definitely judgmental… And I would tell you have to be the bigger person when you’re in this. And I can tell you are. There are many people that have very altruistic goals, they have very high goals of what they’re doing for “those people.” And we are now, we collectively now are in “those people.” When I worked for [non-profit provider] as a volunteer…to help veterans, because nobody was doing it, I experienced the worst treatment to military heroes that you’ll ever imagine. I can’t even put some of them into words. You have to be the bigger person because “those people” are now “our people.” And the whole purpose of food pantries is to serve people in need. It doesn’t matter if you’re purple with green dots. It doesn’t matter.

The feeling of being judged extends beyond social service agencies and the pantry line for many participants. Some participants, particularly those living on the Southside, discussed how they feel that their neighborhoods do not receive equal treatment by the city, a feeling illustrated by the following quote:

Yeah it seems like, they’re like, fixing up Columbus, but it seems like to me, they’re fixing up the casino, they’re fixing up downtown, they’re fixing up OSU campus, they’re fixing up all this stuff where rich white people, sorry to say, rich white people come and see.
The issue of judgment also came up in both rural focus groups and in one of the discussions at the WRP. However, in these cases it was the focus group participants who were the judges, stating that they believed the abuse of county benefit programs by clients as one reason why they are unable to get all of the assistance that they need.

**FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES: EVENTS AND LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING PARTICIPANTS TO SEEK AID**

The following life circumstances were commonly identified as leading focus group participants to seek food aid:

- Illness and injury
- Underemployment
- Senior issues
- Cumulative disadvantage

Focus group participants were also asked about the factors leading them to seek food assistance. Medically-related situations, such as an injury or illness, or paying for medications or medical bills, was the most commonly mentioned factor. Quite commonly, participants told stories of being injured at work, injuries that led participants from being self-sufficient to relying on public assistance and the emergency feeding network to survive. Others discussed medical problems commonly associated with aging but which are exacerbated by sporadic health care, financial-, and food insecurity.

Excerpts from stories told by focus group participants that highlight the role of illness and injury are below:

I mean, the pantry I use for, like, emergencies. Like, say, if I know that I’m going to be low, and I’ve got to do what I gotta do. Cause I can’t work. I’ve been sick for six months, so, and I was working. I had a good job. But I had to quit because I just couldn’t do it. Well, I didn’t quit. I got fired actually because I missed two days. Two days. I walk to work every day, to and from work, and then I get fired for missing two days for being sick.

When I first got injured, I was in like, a stage that I couldn’t believe that I got injured from work. ...And then after a while, the bills got there. And it’s like, I have no money, I’m getting low on food. I don’t like asking other people for help, but I’m going to have to. Then I had to snap out of it, start going to the pantries, ok, give up my pride and say, “Hey, I need help.”

The specific needs and challenges experienced by seniors are illustrated in the following focus group story excerpts:

Fifty percent of what I got, when I retired is—no—nobody can live on $200/week. Try stretching that. So you gotta be, you gotta budget everything, you gotta keep track of everything. And there’s nothing ever extra. So I don’t have no big fancy TV, or the cables, or the internet, and all that stuff. I live in
a small house out in the country by myself. You just learn to cope with it. You don't progres-

No, and let me give you an example. I get a pension. Both of us get social security. I don't
get that much social security because I worked for the federal government for thirty-
something years. I didn't work under social security. But between the three, we got
a total cash increase of $18/month from last year. What are you going to do with $18?...
They [Congress] ought to have a scale that fits seniors in what their needs and what their
expenses are. Now, having said that, I mean, I'm an exception because I spend a ton of
money on insulin and other medications at my age, I'm 74. Even at that, the increases
are not reflective of what's going in society in general. So we're just stuck between a rock
and a hard place.

And in the case of health benefits, for instance, my supplement over Medicare, is $534/
month. And if I give it up, if I lose it, I'll never get it back. Now I don't mind paying that be-
cause last year alone, I spent, they spent, $20K in supplemental because I was in the hos-
tpital two or three times. So it was well worth it to me to have to pay that money although
it was a strain to do it. And they increased my insurance this past year from 2014 to 2015
by double the money that I got on my pension. So I'm in a negative situation there for my
healthcare. So, you know, they're taking more and more and more, and they're not giving
you enough to compensate to make up the difference. That's the only way I can put it, and
that's the truth.

You could talk to any senior citizen today, any of them...They've got the short end of the
stick here, this year. I really did, where it was 1.7% increase per person, and that's, that's
nothing. Not when the cost of living is going up 7%. How am I gaining? I'm losing 5.5%.
See what I'm saying? ... One thing I would like to see locally as far as I'm concerned is, I
wouldn't mind one designated food pantry that catered to special needs as far as dietary,
I mean, if there was one I could go to that had low sugar, low salt, low this, low that, that
was focused at diabetics, or one that was for somebody that had whatever dietary prob-
lem that they had rather than going to the general population, and it was isolated and
separated. I think I would like that. That would be handier for me. It would be cheaper
all around.

Veterans were also mentioned in focus group conversations:

I'm retired military. And what I get is benefits from my military service...The military
don't make a lot of money to begin with...That's why I get the food stamp card. But it's
only like $4/week. It's $16/month, but it keeps me in bread and milk when I'm at the
grocery store.

They said it [the vehicle] wasn't worth fixing. But that vehicle also takes a lot of other
people to the food banks. And without that vehicle, I have eighteen people right now that
are veterans—if it wasn't for the food banks...Because I literally go around and collect
them and we go to the food banks. And it's a full-time job just to get people food so that
they can eat. And what I mentioned is a challenge that we have. And we're all in the same
boat, and we have nowhere of getting it better. [...] If we didn't do it together, none of us would eat... At least what I can't eat that I get at the food bank, like peanut butter, jars of peanut butter, I can give them. So we kind of pool the stuff, put it all together, and then we pick out what each person, because we have diabetics, we have, you know, cancer patients that can't have certain medicines, like can't have grapefruit juice or orange juice or whatever because the acid works against their cancer medicine. So we literally put everything on the table and everyone takes what they can eat. And that's how we make it work. Unfortunately. So that everybody can get what they need and overcome the challenges.

Other times, the strength and perseverance of focus group participants were truly remarkable:

I want to address the single parent thing. My husband died when my baby was 5 years old, coming from West Virginia up here. I worked for 75 cents an hour... I walked from there to OSU. I raised three children... And I went back to school, OK, and I could do it, see, at that time, 1940, 1945, 1950, it was hard for a black person to do anything.

However, the stories told by focus group participants were often underscored by the effects of cumulative disadvantage:

I think a lot of my problem is, I know we're supposed to be talking about food, this is like a therapy session. I feel like, yeah, I know, but I just feel like because I didn't really have my mom in my life to show me how to be a woman, a female, a mother, a grandmother, that I'm lost. Like I didn't even know how to take care of my kids, I just did whatever I thought was right. I didn't even know how to have a period. I had my period at 9. I didn't even know. You know what I'm saying? So I think a lot of that was because I never had anybody in my life to really even show me anything. Nothing. Nothing. And I think that's what it is. I mean, yeah, I know I can do it. It is a struggle. I am trying. I am going to get my GED and stuff because I know that will make. I tell my husband all the time, he graduated high school, you can go to school. And we've been together 15 years. He could have been a doctor, a nurse, he could have been a lawyer. You know what I'm saying? It's like, I hate people that have high school diplomas and GEDs and don't do nothing with their life. And somebody like me that wants, and is going to get it, and is struggling to get it and can't do nothing.

**FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES: EXPENSES RECEIVING PRIORITY OVER FOOD**

The following were reported as receiving priority over food:

- Housing costs (including utilities) except in households with children.
- Medical expenses
- Transportation expenses
- Many participants report skipping bills or making partial payments on a regular basis

Housing costs (including utilities) are the top priority for most participants’ households, though many participants with children in the home reported prioritizing food over all other expenses so that their children would be able to eat. In these cases, the parents reported skipping meals or eating much smaller portions than would typically fill them in an effort to ensure that their children had enough food. This was the case with almost all participants with children in the home. However, one focus group participant who experienced homelessness with her children did report that housing expenses are always the top priority after that experience which is told in
the quote below:

When I was in a homeless shelter, that like, really changed me because me and my husband and my kids, we was like the people, we both had a job. And we was just blowing our money. We wasn’t even paying rent. We were just blowing our money. We wasn’t paying gas, we wasn’t paying electric. I was going to the casino. Scratch-offs, this, that, clothes, shoes. We was getting evicted. No gas, no electric. When I went to the homeless shelter, it changed me. Rent is number one. I don’t care what. I don’t care about no car payment. Rent is number one. That’s what the pastor told me. Rent is number one. You gotta have a roof over your head. Everything else you could be living in there with no gas, no electric, but at least you got somewhere to sleep. That’s what I did. You know what I’m saying?

Medical and transportation expenses were also frequently prioritized over food. Transportation expenses in particular were more often cited in suburban and rural focus groups. That so many focus group participants also reported skipping bills or making partial payments on bills regularly indicates a prevalence of long-term financial stress among the participants.

FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES: HOW PANTRIES CAN HELP?

• Improved access to and coordination of pantry services and programs, as well as better information provided about services and programs
• Foods to meet the needs of specific populations
• Household items not available for purchase through SNAP

Focus group participants were also asked what pantries can do to make their lives easier. Participants thought that food pantries could provide better and more accessible information about existing programs and services, stay open later to accommodate people visiting after work, become a wider-service resource center, and coordinate hours with other pantries. Participants suggested that pantries change some policies as well, such as the restrictions on number of visits and eligibility criteria. Some also requested that all pantries move towards the “choice” model, which allows pantry clients to select the foods they take home rather than being given a pre-set bag or box of groceries. Participants also had specific suggestions for the food stocked in pantries, including healthy foods, allergy-conscious foods, better quality food, ethnic foods, etc. One participant even proposed the creation of one pantry designed to cater to people with allergy and health-related dietary restrictions. Participants generally agreed that it would greatly help their lives if pantries carried household items too, including tampons, diapers, toilet paper, and cleaning supplies. There are very few sites throughout the city offering this type of aid, and participants cannot buy these items with SNAP benefits. Many participants also suggested that SNAP benefits be extended to cover such items. Additional items that participants reported having trouble obtaining included shoes, clothing, and coats.

It should be noted that facilitators generally felt that focus group participants appreciated the chance to share their stories in a safe environment (a couple of participants went so far as to refer to the discussion as a “therapy session”). Even more notable was the amount of information shared with and between focus group participants during and after the formal discussion ended. Participants shared knowledge of how to sign up for HEAP assistance, how to get help applying for JFS benefits, the locations of various pantries, soup kitchens/meal sites, and produce giveaways, as well as sites where clothing and household items are given away, and more. There may be immense value in continuing to provide these safe spaces for people to share their stories, strategies, and information with each other.
FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES: IN GENERAL, WHAT COULD IMPROVE YOUR LIFE?

- Living wage
- Simplify application and reauthorization processes at JFS
- Reform JFS programs to encourage self-sufficiency
- Improve Franklin County pantry referral service

Beyond articulating what pantries can do to make their lives better, focus group participants were asked what could generally improve their lives. There was a prevailing sentiment that it should be easier to earn a living wage if you are willing to work. After probing participants further, three key recommendations surfaced, the first two of which refer to the system within which food pantry clients operate. First, there was general agreement that the process to apply for and reauthorize benefits at JFS needs to be improved. Participants told stories of poor cultural competency of employees of public service agencies. Participants reported it is difficult to call in and talk to a person who can help them, and spend hours waiting in line only to be denied benefits. The process is also laborious, confusing, and time-consuming, requiring clients to produce multiple forms of identification and income verifications that some participants simply do not have. Most participants would like to see a system at JFS that is easier to navigate and that does not place so many burdens on the beneficiaries of these programs.

The second most common topic revolved around how SNAP benefits and Title XX benefits can actually discourage focus group participants from accepting more work because benefits drop dramatically as soon as a person gets a job or a raise. There is no grace period to allow people who have been behind on their bills for months or even years to catch up before their benefits end. Participants were also keen to point out that Social Security benefits are simply not enough to live on. Every senior participant agreed that these benefits should increase with the cost of living and that no person who has worked hard their entire life should end up in poverty.

Finally, many participants suggested improving the Franklin County pantry referral service, a suggestion echoed by a number of service providers in the systems survey. Focus group participants explained how they do not have enough minutes on their phone to wait on hold for hours at a time. Another challenge is the lack of accommodation for the needs of people who do not have their own transportation and consequently wish to schedule their pantry visit to coincide with a family member or friend’s visit with whom they can arrange transportation. Participants suggested that the call center is understaffed and that demand for the service is exceptionally high. Many requested an online portal where they could go to schedule pantry visits themselves.

Overall, focus group participants appreciated the chance to share their stories in a safe environment (a couple of participants went so far as to refer to the discussion as a “therapy session”). Even more notable was the amount of information shared with and between focus group participants during and after the formal discussion ended. There may be immense value in continuing to provide these safe spaces for people to share their stories, strategies, and information with each other.
Discussion

There was a significant amount of overlap between system provider responses encapsulating their perceptions of their clients and focus group responses describing participant’s experiences with food. The following section discusses these intersections as well as the significance of the findings of this study for MOF, the emergency feeding network, and the fight against poverty within central and eastern Ohio. While there were many points of agreement between focus group participants and system survey results, there were three large points of overlap which are discussed here in turn.

Firstly, there is general dissatisfaction with the current referral system for central Ohio’s ability to meet current call demand. Second, both clients and focus group participants expressed a desire for more comprehensive information about services and programs available in their areas. Lastly, housing expenses (including utilities), medical expenses, and transportation expenses were reported as expenses receiving priority over food by both system providers and focus group participants.

Additionally, the prevalence of medical situations as barriers to self-sufficiency within the focus group population was extremely high but was not discussed by system providers. Engaging the population eligible for but not utilizing emergency feeding network services has also proved difficult and will require additional thought and attention. Further, the geography and development patterns of the central and eastern Ohio regions are also relevant in any discussion pertaining to food access. Finally, it is recognized that MOF and the entire emergency feeding system operate within a larger system—much of which is devoted, like the emergency feeding system, to addressing the symptoms of poverty. The role that organizations such as MOF and the entire pantry network play in these larger systems is also discussed.

Both clients and providers would benefit from an expanded referral system that is accessible via internet

Both service providers and focus group participants expressed vexation with the long call wait times with the centralized referral network in Franklin County, pointing to an overwhelmed system. Many low-income individuals are only able to afford a certain amount of cell phone minutes each month. Waiting on hold in excess of even a half hour can become a financial barrier to access. Both clients and service providers suggested an online scheduling portal for clients to access food assistance. By enabling clients to obtain referrals through an online portal, call wait times could be reduced and access to pantries could be increased.

Both clients and service providers would like more information about existing pantry programs and services

Both focus group participants and service providers reported a desire for more comprehensive information about services and programs available in their areas. Service providers (and some clients) proposed a centralized database with pantry locations, service areas, days and hours of operation, and other programs and services available at each site. Many clients reported simply wanting a single sheet of paper with information on eligible pantries. Lack of information was cited as a barrier to collaboration by system providers and a barrier to access by focus group participants.
BOTH CLIENTS AND PROVIDERS REPORT HOUSING EXPENSES (INCLUDING UTILITIES), MEDICAL EXPENSES, AND TRANSPORTATION EXPENSES AS THE TOP EXPENSES RECEIVING PRIORITY OVER FOOD

While there were some exceptions to this, particularly for families with young children, there was general consensus that maintaining a roof over one's head is critical. As one focus group participant observed, "what good is food if you don't have a kitchen to cook it in?"

While focus group participants were not asked directly if they own or have access to a vehicle, many participants volunteered that information. Quite a few urban focus group participants rely on public transportation or walk most places; many of these participants indicated that transportation is not an expense receiving priority over food. However, in the suburban focus groups and the rural focus groups, transportation was identified as a top expense receiving priority over food. While transportation expenses were the third most frequent response to this question in the system survey, it is unclear whether the responses solicited from the focus group are representative of the eligible population at large. It could be that because the majority of our focus groups were held in an urban setting with the majority of participants either unemployed or retired, transportation was may not be a big expense for many of the participants.

MEDICAL ISSUES WERE REPORTED AS A LEADING BARRIER TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Medical issues, including those typically associated with an aging population (arthritis, vision and hearing issues), diet-related (diabetes, obesity, heart disease), illness (cancer or other disease), and injury (often work-related) were mentioned by focus group participants as leading factors driving them to seek food assistance in every focus group. These stories were particularly tragic when the affected party described being financially stable and self-supporting prior to the injury/illness, which was frequently the case. In addition to injury and illness being commonly reported by focus group participants, many of the individuals affected by these ailments, particularly those associated with diet and age, were much younger than one would commonly expect.

Interestingly, system providers did not identify medically vulnerable situations as leading life circumstances causing a person to seek food aid. This could be due to the answer options provided (neither “illness” nor “injury” were listed as options). Of the offered selections, only “disability” fit under these categories and only fifteen service providers identified “disability” as a life circumstance leading individuals to seek food assistance. Likewise, retirement as a driver to seeking aid was not captured by system providers in their survey responses although focus group participants who reported their age as sixty-five or over and qualify and utilize food assistance services, unanimously identified senior issues as factors leading them to seek aid. However, system survey responses overwhelmingly indicate that lack of resources (underemployment, unemployment and inadequate fixed income) are the top drivers causing people to seek assistance. This was echoed by nearly all focus group participants who generally felt that earning a living wage should not be so difficult.

THE POPULATION THAT QUALIFIES FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE BUT DOES NOT UTILIZE ASSISTANCE REQUIRES FURTHER EXAMINATION AND OUTREACH

The final focus group at Smoky Row Brethren Church (SRB) was intended to reach the population living under 200 percent of the federal poverty line that qualifies for emergency food assistance but does not utilize the available services. SRB is located in north Columbus on Smoky Row Road. In addition to serving as the home church of the North Interfaith Coalition, the church is also home to a community garden and food pantry that is not a partner network agency of MOF. The area where the church is located is economically diverse, with a relatively large population living between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty line. MOF and Kirwan advertised through Facebook, the North Interfaith network churches, and the SRB food pantry for the focus group event in hopes of reaching the eligible population that is not currently utilizing pantry services.
This outreach effort failed, as did the outreach effort for this population in all of the focus groups held, as focus group organizers were unable to attract enough individuals fitting into this category. However, one individual did respond to the focus group advertisement on Facebook but was unable to attend the SRB focus group. A summary of the interview with this individual is included in the appendix. The very fact that this category was so difficult to recruit focus group participants for is a finding in and of itself. Innovative and creative methods of outreach are certainly warranted in order to access this critical population.

**PHYSICAL ACCESS ISSUES ARE RELEVANT IN COLUMBUS GIVEN OUR DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS, PARTICULARLY FOR AGING AND DISABLED CLIENTS.**

Inadequate bus service can hinder a person’s ability to access the food that they need. Physical access challenges were most commonly cited by older and disabled individuals, those without cars, and parents of small children. Food delivery at non-pantry sites that these particular populations already frequent may be one way to increase access. MOF is already implementing this approach with the Mobile Market Program; expanding this program would likely be well received.

**THE BROADER SYSTEM**

MOF operates within larger political, social, and economic systems that affect client needs and the ability to meet those needs. Further, MOF operates within a larger network of panties and agencies working for a common goal of addressing hunger in central and eastern Ohio. Because MOF’s mission is “to end hunger one nourishing meal at a time and co-create a sustainable community where everyone thrives,” MOF understands that ending hunger requires broader systemic collaborations and policy conversations. For example, focus group participants reported that the loss in government benefits that occurs when they find work is actually greater than the gain in earnings; therefore, work is actually structurally disincentivized. As another example, focus group participants noted that SNAP benefits do not provide enough relief for most families. In terms of the formal food assistance system itself, pantry guidelines (limiting the amount of food per visit and number of visits per month) and pantry service area restrictions were described by focus group participants as too restrictive.

**Conclusion**

Mid-Ohio Foodbank strives to end hunger one nourishing meal at a time, and to co-create sustainable communities where everyone thrives. MOF plays a vital role in feeding hundreds of thousands of Ohio’s most vulnerable families and individuals. And these vulnerable families are on the rise. Fifteen years ago, roughly one-quarter of Ohioans living in MOF’s service region qualified for MOF services; today nearly one-third of those in the service region qualify. Individuals and families in poverty, many of whom are working, are pressed for both time and money and are under considerable stress. These challenges and constraints can directly impact health and well-being, despite individuals’ best attempts to “make do.” The value of the food relief network to clients is clear:

They cut my stamps. I only get $64 a month. What can you buy with that? And it takes my whole check to pay my bills. You know what I’m saying? So I come to the pantries, you know. They help me out with coats and jackets because those things I just can’t afford to buy. You know, and then I have a lot of medical issues, you know. And now without this pantry, I don’t know what would I do because I buy my little stuff that I get with the food stamps, but a couple of weeks, $64 is gone. You have to buy flour, milk, stuff like that.
You know, it’s done. So I look forward to coming to the food pantry. And they help me. Right when I’m at the end of running out of everything, it’s time to go again. So I’m just thankful. I’m very thankful.

As poverty and economic insecurity grows, service providers report inadequate financial resources and staff capacity to meet increasing need in their communities. Columbus’ size and limited public transportation options pose particular challenges in terms of physical access for rural, older and disabled individuals, households without cars, and parents of small children. Continuing coordination and collaboration with service providers will help MOF best meet their clients where they are.

PantryTrak is an innovative system that helps MOF and partners to better understand and deliver food assistance. Ongoing analysis of PantryTrak data, alone and layered with complimentary data sets, can help identify potential strengths and challenges within the emergency food relief system. As more pantries adopt this groundbreaking database system, and as MOF continues to engage people and communities, MOF can become a leading voice for clients throughout the service region. As MOF works to improve coordination, collaboration, and efficiency within the hunger relief network, the fruits of this labor will be reflected in an increasing number thriving individuals and communities. The challenge of ending hunger is tremendous. But through collaborative efforts and client-centric approaches, these challenges can be met, and Mid-Ohio Foodbank is poised to lead this charge.
Appendix

1. Full list of Columbus Dispatch and ThisWeek citations
2. Client Focus Groups – Methodology and Demographics
3. Proportion of Population Below 200% of Poverty Rate Chart
4. Hot Spot Census Tracts
5. System Survey Invitation Letter
6. System Survey Postcard Invitation Letter
7. Focus Group Questions
8. Non-English-Speaking Focus Group Questions
9. Final Focus Group Questions
10. Focus Group Questionnaire
11. Final Focus Group Questionnaire
12. Informed Consent
13. Schedule of Focus Groups
14. Phone Recruitment Script
15. Interview Summary
16. Identified System Survey Organization
17. System Survey Named Referrals
18. American Community Survey Citations
Full list of The Columbus Dispatch and ThisWeek citations

The Columbus Dispatch Article Citations


**This Week Article Citations**


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html


Client Focus Groups – Methodology and Demographics

DETAILED METHODOLOGY
Each focus group was facilitated by a Kirwan staff member and note taker. Each participant was informed of their rights and asked to sign an Informed Consent document before the formal focus group discussion began. A sample of the Informed Consent document can be found in the Appendix. Focus groups were held from January to April of 2015; a full schedule of the focus groups is included in the Appendix. Up to 15 individuals were invited to participate in each focus group, and each participant was given a 20 dollar grocery gift certificate to either Giant Eagle or Kroger in appreciation for their time. Participants of the OLG and CRIS focus groups were given 30 dollar grocery gift cards because those focus groups were longer in order to allow time for quality interpretation.

Focus groups were populated by participants fitting into one of three categories: 1) individuals who visited the pantry six times or more in the last 12 months; 2) individuals who visited the pantry five times or less in the last 12 months; 3) and individuals who qualify for food assistance (income <200 percent of federal poverty guideline), but do not utilize the services.

Host sites were responsible for recruitment, except for the engagements taking place at Community Development for All People (CD4AP), First Presbyterian Church (Belmont County), and the Pickaway County Senior Center. Kirwan staff members either assisted with or took on the lead role in recruitment for these focus groups. In the case of CD4AP, Kirwan staff attended a community event at CD4AP, during which recruitment for the third category of participants – those who qualify for food assistance but do not utilize the services— took place. In the case of both Belmont and Pickaway Counties, Kirwan staff utilized PantryTrak data to recruit focus group participants for the first two categories. A sample of the script used for these recruitment calls can be found in the Appendix.

Recruitment was successful for the first two categories of participants (pantry users), but not as successful for the final category of participants (those who qualify for pantry assistance but do not utilize it). As a result, an additional focus group was arranged with the assistance of the North Interfaith Coalition at Smoky Row Brethren Church in north Columbus, targeting people who fall below 200 percent of the federal poverty line but do not utilize pantry services. Recruitment for this final focus group was led by the North Interfaith Coalition and MOF. Although MOF advertised this final focus group on Facebook and the Interfaith Coalition member organizations advertised through their weekly flyers and in their churches, no individuals fitting into the third category attended the final focus group.
DEMOGRAPHIC RESULTS
A total of nine focus groups took place in Franklin County and one additional focus group took place in both Belmont and Pickaway Counties. Focus groups had between four and fourteen participants (Figure X).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group Site</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Development for All People</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Refugee and Immigration Services</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>Belmont</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladden House</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady of Guadalupe</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickaway County Senior Center</td>
<td>Pickaway</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoky Row Brethren Church</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Stephen’s Community House*</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthington Resource Pantry*</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Two focus groups were facilitated simultaneously at these locations and the number shown represents the total of BOTH focus groups at each site.

Figure X: Focus Groups by Site, County, and Number of Participants

Demographic characteristics of focus group participants are presented in Table XX.

<table>
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<th>Demographic Variable</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Age range (years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean age (years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>% Households with children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean children per household (with children)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education (%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or GED</td>
<td>42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s degree</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not wish to answer</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table XX: Demographic Characteristics of Focus Group Participants
DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT OF FOCUS GROUPS

One focus group was held in Belmont County at the First Presbyterian Church. Eight individuals participated in this focus group, two of whom fit into the third recruitment category. One focus group was held in Pickaway County at the Pickaway County Senior Center. Five individuals participated in the focus group and one participant fit into the third recruitment category. Nine focus groups were held at various locations in Franklin County. A total of 71 individuals participated in the focus groups, the majority of whom fit into the first and second recruitment categories. The tables below compare demographic information collected from focus group participants with 2009–2013 American Community Survey estimates for each county of interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Biracial/Multiracial</th>
<th>Black or African American</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Hispanic/Latino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belmont County</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Franklin County</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pickaway County</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>3.31%</td>
<td>93.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Racial and ethnic diversity within the focus groups loosely mirrored the county populations with Franklin County focus groups being the most diverse. In fact, Whites were underrepresented and Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics, and those identifying as “other” were overrepresented compared to their county population. However, we also know that poverty disproportionately affects minority groups in America, so overrepresentation of African Americans and Hispanics, in particular, could lead to further insights into the experiences and conditions of these demographic groups. Both Belmont and Pickaway County’s White populations make up over 90% of the total population. In the Belmont County focus group, Whites were again underrepresented. However, it should be noted that total focus group attendance stood at eight, and only one African American patrioted. In Pickaway County, all focus group participants were White, closely mirroring the 93.5 percent White county population.

**Figure X: Demographic Context for Belmont, Franklin, and Pickaway Counties**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Median Household Income (Average Household Income Range for FG Participants)</th>
<th>Poverty Rate</th>
<th>Percent Population that is Male</th>
<th>Percent Population that is Female</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
<th>Retirement Income (Retired FG Participants)</th>
<th>Public Assistance (SNAP and/or WIC for FG Participants)</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belmont County Total Population</td>
<td>$41,534</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belmont County Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>$10,000 – 19,999t</td>
<td>62.5% - 75%t</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County Total Population</td>
<td>$50,877</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>33.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>$10,000 – 19,999t</td>
<td>71.7 – 86.7%t</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>55%*</td>
<td>4.3*</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickaway County Total Population</td>
<td>$54,003</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>52.4%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickaway County Focus Group Participants</td>
<td>$10,000 – 19,999t</td>
<td>33.3 – 100%t</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>N/A**</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Twenty-six total participants reported their current employment status; of those, two are not eligible for work (retirement & disability).

t Calculations by author. Ranges are based on reported income ranges and household sizes.

In each county where focus groups were held, the focus group participant populations exhibited much higher poverty rates than the counties. Likewise, unemployment rates were considerably higher in the focus group participant population than the county populations. The same is true for participants earning retirement income and those accepting public assistance. Similarly, the focus group participating populations tended to be older on average when compared to their county populations. Only in Belmont County was the ratio of male to female similar in the focus group population.

Figure X: Socioeconomic Context for Belmont, Franklin, and Pickaway Counties
### Proportion of Population Below 200% of Poverty Rate Chart

Source: Decennial Census and American Community Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickaway</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskingum</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrow</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>40.2%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licking</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knox</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jefferson</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>38.4%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guernsey</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>33.8%</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fayette</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coshocton</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
<td>40.7%</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hot Spot Census Tracts

WEINLAND PARK AND LINDEN
14, 15, 16, 17, 7.10, 7.20, 7.30, 75.11, 8.20, 9.10, and 9.20

EAST SIDE
25.20, 27.10, 27.30, 27.50, 27.70, 28, 29, 30, 36, 37, 38, 53, 54.10, 92.40, 93.21, 93.23, and 93.31

FAR WEST SIDE
81.64

CONTIGUOUS WEST SIDE
42, 45, 46.10, 46.20, 47, 48.10, 48.20, 49, 50, 51, 83.12, 83.22, 83.30

FAR SOUTH SIDE
93.33 and 93.34

SOUTH SIDE
54.20, 55, 56.10, 56.20, 59, 60, 61, 87.10 and 87.20
Dear Friend,

At Mid-Ohio Foodbank, we believe that collective action is the key to having a sustainable community where all individuals have consistent access to the resources they need to thrive. The clients we serve are at the heart of our mission; they are our friends, family and neighbors and we seek to offer services that respect their experiences, hopes, and needs.

To achieve this goal, we as service providers need to build strong relationships together so that we can holistically serve the client and deepen the impact of our work.

In collaboration with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State, Mid-Ohio Foodbank is conducting a client-centricity research project that we hope will uncover ways for us to work together across services. As our core work in addressing hunger continues, this project creates the opportunity for us to proactively address root issues and engage in a systemic approach to co-creating thriving communities.

Below is a link to the survey we are administering as a part of the larger research project. It should only take about 10 minutes to complete, and will bring your voice, experience, and vision into this work.

[link]

I invite you to engage in this effort with us.

Many Thanks,

Matt Habash

President & CEO, Mid-Ohio Foodbank
System Survey Postcard Invitation

We need your help.

Dear Friend,

At Mid-Ohio Foodbank, the clients we serve are at the heart of our mission; they are our friends, family and neighbors and we seek to offer services that respect their experiences, hopes, and needs.

In collaboration with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State, Mid-Ohio Foodbank is conducting a client-centricity research project that we hope will uncover ways for us to work together in service providers and to deepen the collective action.

Below is a link to the survey we are administering as a part of the larger research project. It should only take about 10 minutes to complete, and will bring your voice, experiences, and visions into this work.

www.thelink.com/linktosurvey

I invite you to engage in this effort with us.

Mary Thanks,

Matt Hohash
PRESIDENT AND CEO
MID-OHIO FOODBANK

Recipient Full Name
Business Name
23456 Example Street
Columbus, OH 43201
Focus Group Questions

Mid-Ohio Foodbank Client Centricity
Focus Group Questions

The focus group will begin with the facilitator introducing herself and explaining research. The facilitator will then explain the Informed Consent process and ask for participant consent to participate in the research and distribute the questionnaires. Introductions will follow and the facilitator will ask all participants how they are doing before moving into formal questions to break the ice.

1) Where do you get your food? ... Where else do you get food?

2) Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences feeding yourself and your family over the last year?
   a. Have you ever struggled to have enough food?
   b. Whether YES or NO - How did you cope?
   c. If you’ve gone to a pantry/ soup kitchen/ shelter before, what pushed you to go there?
      i. How did you know where to go?
      ii. Did you go there because it’s close to work/ daycare/ etc.?
      iii. Did you have any trouble getting food from these places?
   d. Who in your life (friends, family, etc.) has helped you have enough food for your family?

3) What events/ circumstances in your life contributed to any challenges you’ve had getting enough food?

4) When you’ve had to choose between buying food and paying for other expenses, how did you choose?

5) What would make it easier for you to get enough food?
   a. Anything pantries/ soup kitchens/ shelters could do?

6) In general, what could be done to improve your life?
Non-English-Speaking Focus Group Questions

Mid-Ohio Foobank Client Centricity
Non-English-Speaking Focus Group Questions

1) Where do you get your food here in the U.S.? Where else do you get your food?

2) Are you able to purchase all of the food that you would like to have?
   a. How do you cope?
   b. Do you have family or friends that help you get the food that you and your family needs?
   c. Have you ever visited a food pantry or soup kitchen?
      i. How and where?
      ii. Why not? What are the barriers?

3) What prevents you from buying all of the food that you and your family would like to have?

4) When you’ve had to choose between buying food and other expenses, how did you choose?

5) What would make it easier for you to get the food that you desire?
   a. Is there anything that pantries/soup kitchens/shelters could do?

6) In general, what could be done to improve your life?
Final Focus Group Questions

Mid-Ohio Foodbank Client Centricity
Final Focus Group Questions

The focus group will begin with the facilitator introducing herself and explaining research. The facilitator will then explain the Informed Consent process and ask for participant consent to participate in the research and distribute the questionnaires. Introductions will follow and the facilitator will ask all participants how they are doing before moving into formal questions to break the ice.

1) Where do you get your food? ...Where else do you get food?

2) If money was not an issue, what would your grocery cart look like? How does that differ from what your grocery cart typically looks like in reality?
   i. How much does nutritional content play into your choices?
   ii. Do you base your decision on quantity? Quality?
   iii. Are there certain brands you will substitute for others to cut costs?

   a. Can you tell me a little bit about your experiences feeding yourself and your family over the last year?
      i. Have you ever struggled to have enough food?
      ii. Whether YES or NO - How did you cope?
      iii. Who in your life (friends, family, etc.) has helped you have enough food for your family?

3) What events/ circumstances in your life contributed to any challenges you’ve had getting enough food?

4) When you’ve had to choose between buying food and paying for other expenses, how did you choose?

5) What would make it easier for you to get enough food?
   a. Anything pantries/ soup kitchens/ shelters could do?

6) In general, what could be done to improve your life?
Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Gender
   Male
   Female
   Other
   I do not wish to answer this question

2. Age ____________

3. Race (please check all that apply)
   Asian
   Biracial/Multiracial
   Black or African American
   Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   White
   Other
   I do not wish to answer this question

4. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish heritage?
   Yes
   No

5. Number of Adults in your household _______________

6. Number of children under 18 in your household _______________

7. Please tell us your home zip code _________________

8. Please tell us the zip code(s) for your place of work _______________
9. Level of education (please check the highest level of education that you have completed)
   - Less than High school grad or equivalent
   - High School or GED
   - Some College
   - Associate's Degree
   - Bachelor's Degree
   - Master's/Professional Degree
   - PhD
   - I do not wish to answer this question

10. Marital Status
    - Married
    - Divorced
    - Single
    - Widowed

11. Length of time relying on food assistance ________________

12. Benefits (please check all benefits that your family receives)
    - SNAP (Food Stamps)
    - WIC
    - None
13. Household income range

- Under $9,999
- $10,000-19,999
- $20,000-29,999
- $30,000-39,999
- $40,000-49,999
- $50,000-59,999
- $60,000 and above

I do not wish to answer this question

14. What is your current employment status?

- Employed full time (35 hours or more a week)
- Employed part time (less than 35 hours a week)
- Retired
- Unemployed
- Unable to work (injury/disability)

15. How many times have you moved in the past 12 months?

____________________
Final Focus Group Questionnaire

1. Gender
   Male
   Female
   Other
   I do not wish to answer this question

2. Age __________

3. Race (please check all that apply)
   a. Asian
   b. Biracial/Multiracial
   c. Black or African American
   d. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   e. White
   f. Other
   g. I do not wish to answer this question

4. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish heritage?
   a. Yes
   b. No

For questions 5 and 6, please read the following statements and indicate whether the statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true for you/your household in the last 12 months?

5. “I worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.” Is this statement often, sometimes, or never true for you/your household in the last 12 months?
   a. Often true
   b. Sometimes true
   c. Never true
   d. I do not wish to answer this question
6. “The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have money to get more” Is this statement often, sometimes, or never true for you/your household in the last 12 months?
   a. Often true
   b. Sometimes true
   c. Never true
   d. I do not wish to answer this question

7. Number of Adults in your household ______________

8. Number of children under 18 in your household ______________

9. Please tell us your home zip code ______________

10. Please tell us the zip code(s) for your place of work ________________

11. Level of education (please check the highest level of education that you have completed)
   a. Less than High school grad or equivalent
   b. High School or GED
   c. Some College
   d. Associate's Degree
   e. Bachelor's Degree
   f. Master's/Professional Degree
   g. PhD
   h. I do not wish to answer this question

12. Marital Status
   a. Married
   b. Divorced
   c. Single
   d. Widowed
13. Length of time relying on food assistance _________________

14. Household income range
   a. Under $9,999
   b. $10,000-19,999
   c. $20,000-29,999
   d. $30,000-39,999
   e. $40,000-49,999
   f. $50,000-59,999
   g. $60,000 and above
   h. I do not wish to answer this question

15. Benefits (please check all benefits that your family receives)
   a. SNAP (Food Stamps)
   b. WIC
   c. None

16. What is your current employment status?
   a. Employed full time (35 hours or more a week)
   b. Employed part time (less than 35 hours a week)
   c. Retired
   d. Unemployed
   e. Unable to work (injury/disability)

17. How many times have you moved in the past 12 months?
   ______________________
The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: Client Centricity Study
Researchers: Jason Reece, Glennon Sweeney, & Kip Holley
Sponsor: Mid-Ohio Foodbank

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
- Mid-Ohio Foodbank (MOF) is moving towards a “client-centric” model of service delivery
- The Foodbank would like to work with community partners to contribute to the creation of communities where all people can thrive
- This focus group is intended to inform this work, enabling MOF to better understand the behaviors and conditions that many of their client’s face in addition to identifying other factors that contribute to food insecurity

Procedures: A focus group is a guided group conversation around a specific topic. In this focus group, you will be asked questions relating to food access and food security in your life. The conversation will be recorded and transcribed and notes will be taken during the focus group. No identifying information will be collected about you, therefore, you will remain anonymous and only your first name will be recorded. You will also be asked to fill out a short survey in order
for us to construct a demographic profile of all participants. This form does not ask for your name, therefore your answers will be kept confidential.

**Duration:** This focus group will be one hour in duration. However, you may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and

**Risks and Benefits:** This research contains very little risk with it as you are not asked to identify yourself and the topic of conversation is food access/security. Benefits include the expectation that these results will inform the improvement of the emergency hunger relief system in the 20-County Mid-Ohio Foodbank service region.

**Confidentiality:** Because no identifying information will be collected from you, all of your responses will be kept confidential.

**Incentives:** Each individual who participates for the full duration of the focus group will receive a $20 grocery gift card.

**Participant Rights:** You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in this study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you have as a participant in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact Glennon Sweeney at The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at (614) 688-1612 or sweeney.270@osu.edu.
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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<th>Printed name of participant</th>
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**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

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# Schedule of Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Day of Focus Group</th>
<th>Date of Focus Group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Refugee &amp; Immigration Services</td>
<td>1925 E. Dublin Granville Road # 102</td>
<td>Angie</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>February 7th @ 9:30AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worthington Resource Center</td>
<td>445 E. Dublin Granville Road</td>
<td>Jennifer Fralic</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>February 14th @ 9AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Stephen’s Community House</td>
<td>1500 E. 17th Ave</td>
<td>Rebecca Peacock-Creagh</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>January 27th @ 10AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development for All People</td>
<td>946 Parsons Ave</td>
<td>Sue Wolfe</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>March 3rd @ 11AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladden House</td>
<td>183 Hawkes Ave Columbus, 43223</td>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>February 18th @ 11AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady of Guadalupe</td>
<td>441 Industry Drive Columbus, Ohio 43204</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>February 27th @ 10AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>400 Walnut Street Martin’s Ferry, Ohio 43935</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>February 24th @ 12:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickaway County Senior Center</td>
<td>2105 Chickasaw Drive Circleville, Ohio 43112</td>
<td>Cynthia Love</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>February 4th @ 10AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoky Row Brethren</td>
<td>7260 Smoky Row Road, Columbus, OH 43235</td>
<td>Rich Hagopian</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>April 11th @ 2 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Telephone Recruitment Script

Hello. Is __________ available?
My name is Glennon Sweeney and I am a researcher for the Kirwan Institute at Ohio State. We are conducting a short study for Mid-Ohio Foodbank and ECHA. The Foodbank would like to improve their service to meet their customers’ needs better. In order to do this, the Kirwan Institute will run several focus groups throughout the region over the next few weeks. A researcher will be facilitating and taking notes, but all comments will be confidential. We were given your name by the folks at Emergency Clearing House Food Pantry. We are wondering if you could participate in a focus group on Wednesday, February 4th from 10:00-11:00 am at the Pickaway County Senior Center.
If yes: Great, the Pickaway County Senior Center is located at 2105 Chickasaw Drive, Circleville, Ohio 43113 with parking available on site.
If no: No problem. If you change your mind or would like to send us an email with your comments, we’d be happy to hear from you that way as well. (or however you’d like to handle it if the person says, I’d love to do it but have a schedule conflict).
Thank you!
Interview Summary

**QUESTION 1: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR FOOD?**
The participant shops at grocery stores such as Kroger, Giant Eagle, and Target. Additionally, she reports shopping at a natural foods store when feeling “frisky”. This however, is an exception whereas her frequency of traditional grocery stores and Target were her routine. The participant reported that she chose the stores she shops at based on both location and prices.

**QUESTION 2: WHAT WOULD YOUR IDEAL GROCERY CART LOOK LIKE?**
The participant reports self-imposed dietary restrictions including cutting both beef and pork from her diet and attempting to eat a more all-natural, organic diet. However, she cannot afford to buy all-natural and organic all of the time. Therefore, her ideal grocery cart would consist of more specialty natural and organic items in addition to more pre-made vegetarian products by brands such as Amy’s, Kashi, or Braggs.

**QUESTION 3: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES FEEDING YOURSELF OVER THE PAST YEAR**
The participant took a new job that she is happier with but which required that she take a pay decrease. However, she is saving some money on gas. The participant reports that her grandmother helps her financially and that without this help, she would always struggle. With the assistance, she only struggles “sometimes” but is living paycheck to paycheck. Her new job has brought with it new obligations. For example, she now has numerous lunch meetings and happy hour engagements that she is expected to attend on her own dime. She also feels pressured by her friends to go out to restaurants to socialize; both work and social engagements put a strain on her budget. The participant also states that she thinks that because she has dietary preferences, her grocery bill may be higher than average.

**QUESTION 4: ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC EVENTS OR CIRCUMSTANCES IN YOUR LIFE THAT HAVE REALLY CAUSED YOU TO FACE CHALLENGES IN GETTING FOOD, WHERE YOU STRUGGLED TO GET ENOUGH FOOD?**
The participant reports that she was on public assistance when she was a student. She was fortunate that she was a Young Scholar and was thus receiving a stipend, one-half to one-third of which she would send back home to help her struggling family. She states that the cause of her food insecurity at this time was simply that she was a student.

The participant also states that the pay decrease she took when accepting her new job has also created some financial hardships which have made food procurement more difficult. She states that she now has to be very careful about what she spends and is trying to get herself on a budget.

**QUESTION 5: HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN BUYING FOOD AND PAYING FOR OTHER EXPENSES? HOW DO YOU MAKE THOSE CHOICES? HOW DO YOU PRIORITIZE?**
The participant reports that she always prioritizes her bills and will eat “makeshift meals” such as rice and vegetables or simply soup with nothing else for dinner; by “makeshift meal” she is referring to meals that are not “complete” as in having a protein, vegetable, starch, etc. She reports she wastes little and “cleans out her cabinet” when money is tight. The participant also reports that she has recently taken out a loan and that the loan payments cut into her grocery budget as well.
QUESTION 6: WHAT COULD AN ORGANIZATION LIKE MID-OHIO FOODBANK DO TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO ACCESS THE FOOD YOU WANT TO EAT EACH MONTH?
The participant struggled to answer this question. However, she did note that she came across the Facebook ad for the focus group and was surprised that she met the criteria listed because she had looked into food stamps but doesn’t qualify. She feels she is in a “gray” area. The interview moved onto the next question which probed deeper into her current needs. Her responses to the next, more general question could be applied to this question as well.

QUESTION 7: WHAT COULD HELP YOU IN GENERAL TO ACCESS THE FOOD THAT YOU WANT TO EAT EACH MONTH?
The participant reports that a financial increase would help immensely. Beyond that, she struggled to articulate what else could help. She noted that she does not live in a food desert so her barriers really are financial rather than physical. The participant then began questioning her own financial habits wondering if she may be mismanaging her money and concluded that if she isn’t mismanaging her money, she would like a raise, but she simply doesn’t know if she is doing everything she can to live within her means. Financial literacy and healthy eating on a budget classes as well as resources to provide recipes that would fit her dietary restrictions would provide the participant with financial confidence and financial management skills as well as resources to enable her chosen diet. Specifically, she would like a class where she could bring in her grocery receipt, have it evaluated, and receive money-saving advice.

The participant went on to express how excited she was to see the ad for the focus group because she was under the impression that if she didn’t qualify for food stamps, there were no other assistance programs available to her. The participant goes on to note at the very end of the interview that while she tried to utilize coupons as much as possible, she has trouble looking for coupons for produce, which makes up a large portion of her diet.

SUMMARY/COMMENTS
The participant exhibited a high degree of self-doubt concerning her abilities to properly manage her money. She referred to herself as existing in a “gray area” between being food secure and insecure enough to qualify for assistance and was pleasantly surprised by the news that she does in fact qualify to receive assistance from pantries. The participant was a young African American woman employed by the City of Columbus. The degree that work engagements impact her food budget is notable and may be one area worth further investigation with this population that qualifies for but does not utilize assistance, particularly those who fall into this category but do not qualify for public food assistance (SNAP). Further outreach to this population is certainly warranted as this interview is not representative of the population, only of the women whose experiences and opinions have been recorded.
Identified System Survey Organization

Non-Partner Named Agencies
1. Chillicothe & Ross County Public Library
2. Jefferson County Community Action Council
3. Jefferson Local Schools
4. Mount Vernon City Schools
5. Public school district
6. Scioto Paint Valley Mental Health Center 2-1-1

Partner Named Agencies
1. Refuge Baptist Church Food Pantry
2. ACCEL
3. Alfp
4. Barnett Community Center
5. Brice United Methodist Far East Feeding Ministry
6. Broad Street Food Pantry
7. Broad Street Presbyterian Church
8. Brookside Church
9. Canal Winchester Human Services
10. Centerburg Senior Services
11. Church of Christ of the Apostolic Faith
12. Church Triumph
13. Clair UMC Food Pantry Plus
14. Clintonville-Beechwold Community Resources Center
15. Columbus Recreation and Parks Department/ Summer and After School Food Programs.
16. Community Christian Fellowship Pantry
17. Community Development for All People
18. Community Development for All People
19. Community for New Direction
20. Community Kitchen at the Hope Center
22. Coshocton Senior Center
23. Crossroads Food Pantry
24. Croton Church of Christ Food Pantry
25. Eastside Community Ministry
26. Ebenezer United Methodist Church
27. Epworth Food Pantry
28. Fayette County Food Pantry
29. Fellowship of Christ’s Community
30. Gospel Tabernacle 1205 Hildreth Ave Columbus, Ohio 43203 Pantry Hildreth House 1290 Mt. Vernon Ave Columbus, Ohio 43203
31. Grace Community Church South Solon, Ohio
32. Grater Hilltop Area Shalom Zone
33. Grove City Food Pantry
34. HAMS
35. Heritage Memorial Church Food Pantry
36. Higher Ground Food Pantry
37. Hilltop Preschool
38. Hope Clinic of Ross County
39. IMPACT
40. In His Presence Ministries International. Columbus
41. Interchurch Social Services
42. Jubilee Food Pantry
43. LAMC Food Pantry
44. Living Word Bible Fellowship
45. Lower lights Community church
46. LSS Food Pantries
47. MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH
48. Macedonia Baptist church
49. Marion City Schools, Marion, Ohio
50. Mark D. Stansbery
51. Measures of manna food pantry
52. Moms2B
53. My brothers keepers
54. New Beginning Christian Center (New Beginning Ministries, Inc.)
55. New Creation Produce Market and Epworth UMC Cooking Group
56. New Faith Ministries
57. New Mt. Sinai Church of God in Christ
58. NNEMAP
59. Northland Church of Christ Food Pantry
60. Northside Food Pantry
61. OSU Star House
62. Our Lady of Guadalupe Center of Catholic Social Services
63. Plain City Food Pantry 156 West Main Street P. O. Box No. 2 Plain City, Ohio 43064-1145
64. Pleasant City Food Pantry
65. PLEASANT VIEW UNITED METHODIST FOOD PANTRY
66. Project Redeem, Inc. (youth development org.)
67. ProTeen Center
68. Reynoldsburg Helping Hand
69. Richwood Civic Center REAP
70. RJ Hairston Food Pantry
71. Ross County Hunger Coalition
72. S.S.C.M. South Side Community Ministries
73. Society of St. Vincent de Paul St. Lawrence Haven
74. St Andrew AME Church
75. St Paul AME outreach
76. St Vincent dear Paul Lancaster
77. St, John Food Pantry on S. Ohio
78. St. Paul Lutheran - Pasadena Ave
79. St. Paul's Episcopal Church-Bread & Roses Soup Kitchen
80. St. Vincent de Paul
81. Standing on the Promises of God Church of Perpetual Promises
82. Teen Challenge Columbus
83. The Church Triumphant
84. The circle shelter
85. The Daily Bread Center
86. The Father’s Table Hot meal and Pantry
87. The Kirkpatrick food Pantry
88. The Salvation Army
89. The Welcome HOME Foundation
90. Threshold Community Services helping hands food pantry
91. United Way of Central Ohio
92. Walnut St UMC, Christ’s Community Kitchen
93. We Care Food Pantry
94. Westland EC Food Pantry.
95. Worthington Resource Pantry
96. Yorkville United Methodist Church Food Pantry
97. YWCA Family Center
System Survey Named Referrals

Non-Partner Agency Referrals

1. Other pantries
2. Hands On Central Ohio, Maryhaven
3. 211
4. 211 and Mid-Ohio foodbank
5. Madison Township Food Pantry
6. Food pantry produce markets
7. Food Pantries
8. Salvation Army, food pantries, St. Vincent de Paul Sometimes we will send food home with students.
9. Broad Street Food Pantry
10. Soup kitchens, free meals, SNAP (OBB or Food Stamp Outreach), other pantries
11. Area food pantries St. Ladislas, Mt.Carmel Baptist Church, CD4AP, Mid-Ohio Food Bank
12. Mid Ohio Food Bank Leave a Mark Church
13. Danville Interchurch Social Services
14. HandsOn
15. Other food pantries in our area and give out pamphlets that tell of free services
16. pantries and soup kitchens
17. other food pantries in the area
18. To Other hurch,To Food Pantries Sites
19. We actually go to Mid Ohio food bank weekly and pick up food for the children and the community.
20. Lutheran Social Services, local pantries or other produce distribution sites
21. Interchurch Social Services and other pantries in Knox County.
22. Other food pantries in the area
23. Local food pantry and churches.
24. HEART food pantry, school’s weekend backpack program
25. job and family services
26. Rose Ave community Center or the Well
27. Other Food Pantries; other church organizations who have food pantries; other charity organizations
28. the other pantries in the county, surrounding counties
29. Produce Markets, soup kitchens and food pantries
30. United way, food banks
31. Community resources, i.e. soup kitchens/sandwich lines, ODJFS, food pantry, Hands on Central Ohio
32. Urban MISSION.
33. There is a Summer Feeding Program link on the school’s website.
34. Other local organizations

35. Local food pantries or hot meal site
36. Hope Clinic(Chillicothe)/Mobile food market (Mid Ohio Food Bank) Church food pantry Local Christian Center/Food Pantry
37. 211
38. Food bank Social services
39. Food banks, farmers markets, churches
40. Food pantry
41. Multiple pantries, county community services
42. Local food pantry
43. 211
44. Mid-Ohio Food Bank
45. Vineyard Northside Pantry; Clintonville Research Center; Worthington Food Pantry; Mid-Ohio food Pantry
46. Our produce market, close pantries, MOFB benefits / intake staff.
47. other neighborhood food pantries
48. Lutheran Social Services
49. Vineyard
50. To Hands On/their website or pantry listing provided by MOF
51. other churches in the area that we know that distribute food
52. Mid-Ohio food or other local pantries
53. To other food pantries that operate at different days and times.
54. Pantries
55. We give out food and I tell them about other food pantries in our area
56. Near by food giveaways that we are aware of
57. Food Pantries - with open market give them extra
58. The foodline at hands On
59. Gladden Community House Food pantry
60. Other Pantries in the area
61. area food pantry
62. Local pantries; Jobs and Family Services, Local organizations
63. Food pantry, St. Vincent DePaul
64. CD4AP Fresh Market CD4AP daily lunch program Stowe Mission for food pantry and for daily meals
65. Other food pantries consistent with their address
66. We offer food that we have available. Interchurch job and family sevices
67. Inter Church social services
68. local food pantry, emergency pantries
69. Christ Table Salvation Army Church on 6th Street
70. Other food pantries in the county as well as giving them extra food if we can.
71. The Salvation Army
72. Mid Ohio Food Pantry
73. Interchurch or Salvation Army Food pantry, Free dinner nights at local churches
74. Local food pantries, County Job and family Service, WIC
75. The local food pantry or the local church food bank

Partner Agency Named Referrals
1. LSS Food Pantries; Other Food Pantries; Faith Mission Community Kitchen; The Community Kitchen; HandsOn
2. We have several other groups in our community that provide food also.
3. Local children services
4. food pantries
5. HandsOn
6. SALVATION ARMY, LAST CALL MINISTRY, CALL 211
7. LSS food pantries Faith Mission Community Kitchen
8. JOIN for future referral.
9. Coshocton Senior Center - congregate meals, home delivered meals, mobile market, commodity food program. Job and family services. Local food pantries.
10. hands on
11. Children and Family Services Food Stamps
12. Hands On Join
13. Ohio Benefit Bank. Other area pantries when a family comes from outside our service area.
14. If they live out side of our four zip code zones, we will refer them to a food pantry in their zip code, we have compiled a list.
15. Food pantries in their area or Hands On
16. JOIN or Hands On Central Ohio, we often give ‘emergency’ bags (2-3 days worth of food)
17. Other food pantries mainly
18. 211
20. Other food pantries mostly
21. People in Need, Delaware,OH
22. other food pantries. St. Stephen's or the vineyard north.
23. other pantry's in there area
24. COA Food & Nutritional Services Governmental Food Assistance Programs Meals on Wheels
25. We either provide them with food, or refer them to local food bank. Also to soup kitchens.
26. We are a food pantry, serving specific zip codes, but we let people know about other pantries in the greater Columbus area if they’re out of our area.
27. Local pantries and soup kitchens
28. give additional as needed
29. Food pantries in their residence zip code
30. Food pantries and Jobs and Family Services
31. Our 211 referral services
32. Food pantries, community meals, or financial assistance such as SNAP or WIC
33. most often agencies funded by United Way (my organization) such as Lutheran Social Services, for example
34. our pantry and others close by
35. local food organizations
36. Hands On
37. Here!
38. close by area. we have a list we can them too.
39. Agencies closest to them, depending on need. Encourage them to apply for WIC while residing at Family Center.
40. We refer them to other pantries in the area
41. Hands On Central Ohio J.O.I.N/Catholic Services Goodwill of Columbus
42. Greater Glory Ministries Champion Avenue
43. Homeless to places within walking distance
44. Mid Ohio food bank
45. close food pantries open the particular day
46. No where. We feed them. We do referrals through Hands On and Join.
47. Crossroads United Method Church @ Hague & Briggs Rd.
48. Several community based food resources including food pantries, soup kitchens, weekly meal sites (churches), WIC, SNAP, ODJFS, and provide emergency food supplies
49. My Agency - The Salvation Army
50. Various govt. agencies
51. “Free Meals” section of the street card provided by “Coordinated Point of Access” or use First Link
52. Mi-Ohio Food Bank, Holy Family and Lutheran Social Services, St. John's Church, Inner City, Potters House,
53. Lutheran Social Services, Church for All People, and a variety of other venues here on the Southside of Columbus.
54. to our own pantry or to the one closest to them
55. Local Food Pantry
56. Free Produce stops, Food Pantries, mobile meals
57. soup kitchens, JFS, WIC
58. To other local resources
59. Richwood Emergency Assistance Food Pantry
60. Local food bank, community places for dinner, churches
61. Hot Meals, other pantries
62. We provide grocery store gift cards; also refer to local food pantries
63. Other pantries or soup kitchens in the area
64. Senior Services local food pantry
65. Local food pantries. In circleville, that is picca, TLC and north court church of Christ. For soup kitchens in circleville, it's the community kitchen at the Presbyterian Church on Monday Wednesday and Friday at five, and community united Methodist Church on Sundays at six.
66. depend on the need. close to their boundaries. of their need be.
67. Other food pantries in the county, and places to get free meals.
68. Information and Referral
69. To our Food Pantry
70. other food pantries and places that serve meals
71. food pantries soup kitchens
72. local food pantry
73. Food pantry
74. HandsOnCentral Ohio
American Community Survey Citations

American Community Survey 2009-2013 5-year Estimates
County-Level and Tract-Level Data (collected on Social Explorer)
1. Table 1: Total Population
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3. Table 14: Hispanic Or Latino by Race
4. Table 17: Age
5. Table 21: Average Household Size
6. Table 25: Educational Attainment for Population 25 Years and Over
7. Table 37: Unemployment Rate for Civilian Population In Labor Force 16 Years and Over
8. Table 57: Median Household Income (In 2013 Inflation Adjusted Dollars
9. Table 80: Households with Public Assistance Income
10. Table 81: Households with Retirement Income
11. Table 103: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in 2013
12. Table 110: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 2013 for Housing Units with a Mortgage
13. Table 111: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 2013 for Housing Units without a Mortgage
14. Table 114: Poverty Status in 2013 for Children Under 18
15. Table 115: Poverty Status in 2013 for Population Age 18 to 64
16. Table 116: Poverty Status in 2013 for Population Age 65 and Over
17. Table 117: Ratio of Income in 2013 to Poverty Level

American Community Survey 2011-2013 3-year Estimates
Tract Level Data (collected on American Fact Finder)
1. Table S0101: Age and Sex
2. Table B17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months
3. Table B25070: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months
4. Table B25091: Mortgage Status by Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in the past 12 Months

County Level Data (collected on Social Explorer)
1. Table 1: Total Population
2. Table 9: Age
3. Table 118: Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income in 2013
4. Table 125: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 2013 for Housing Units with a Mortgage
5. Table 126: Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income in 2013 for Housing Units without a Mortgage

American Community Survey 1-year Estimates
County Level Data (collected on American Fact Finder)
1. Table B17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months 2013
2. Table B17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months 2012
3. Table B17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months 2011
4. Table B17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months 2010
5. Table B17002: Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months 2009