

Stronger Together: Creating Community Partnerships to Increase Nutrition Security

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Learning Objectives

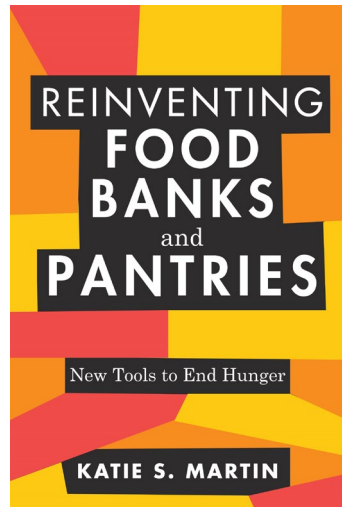
This session will provide an overview of food insecurity and the charitable food system, and how various community organizations can collaborate to provide holistic solutions to food insecurity.

In this session, participants will gain an understanding of the:

- Relationship between food insecurity and health outcomes
- Landscape of the charitable food system of food banks and pantries
- Innovative practices for providing charitable food
- Opportunities and examples of community partnerships to increase nutrition security
- Action steps for building strong community collaborations

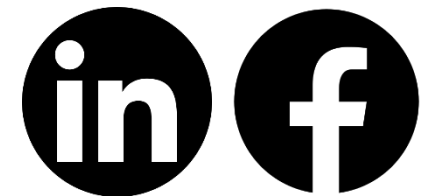


Because it takes more than food to end hunger



We advance organizational and systems change in the charitable food network to ensure people have economic and nutrition security.

Visit www.ittakesmorethanfood.org to:



Sign up for our newsletter | Contact us | View upcoming events & new resources

**We're doing good work
AND**

We can do better

**It's time to
*reimagine and
reinvent* how we
tackle hunger**



Pantry in Lower Manhattan, NYC, 1994

Scarcity Mentality

“When you are so obsessed with a lack of something – usually time or money – that you can’t seem to focus on anything else, no matter how hard you try.” – WebMD



FOCUS ON LACK



COPING
STRATEGIES



HINDERS
PLANNING



LIMITS
COLLABORATION



FOCUS ON
EMERGENCY

Where do you see the scarcity mentality at your organization?

My “Why” for Writing the Book



What is your “why”? How is it reflected in your work?

Your Turn!

What is your why?

Introduce yourself to your table. Share:

- ☐ Name
- ☐ Role & Organization
- ☐ Why does food & nutrition security matter to you?

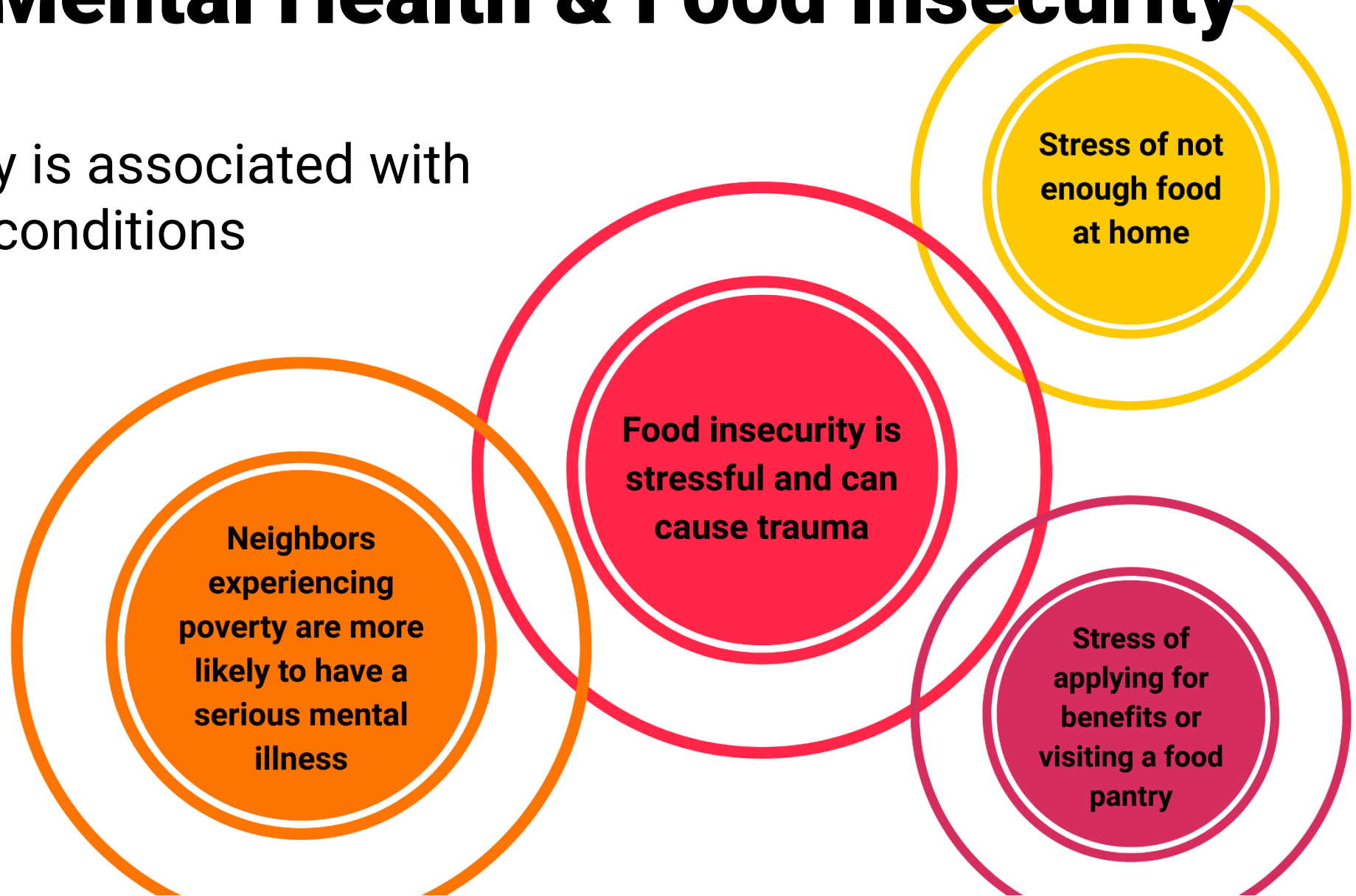
A Conceptual Framework: Cycle of Food Insecurity & Chronic Disease



Adapted: Seligman HK, Schillinger D. N Engl J Med. 2010;363:6-9.

Cycle of Mental Health & Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is associated with mental health conditions



U.S. Charitable Food System



1 in 3 people facing food insecurity are unlikely to qualify for **SNAP**

State of Kansas Food Bank Service Areas



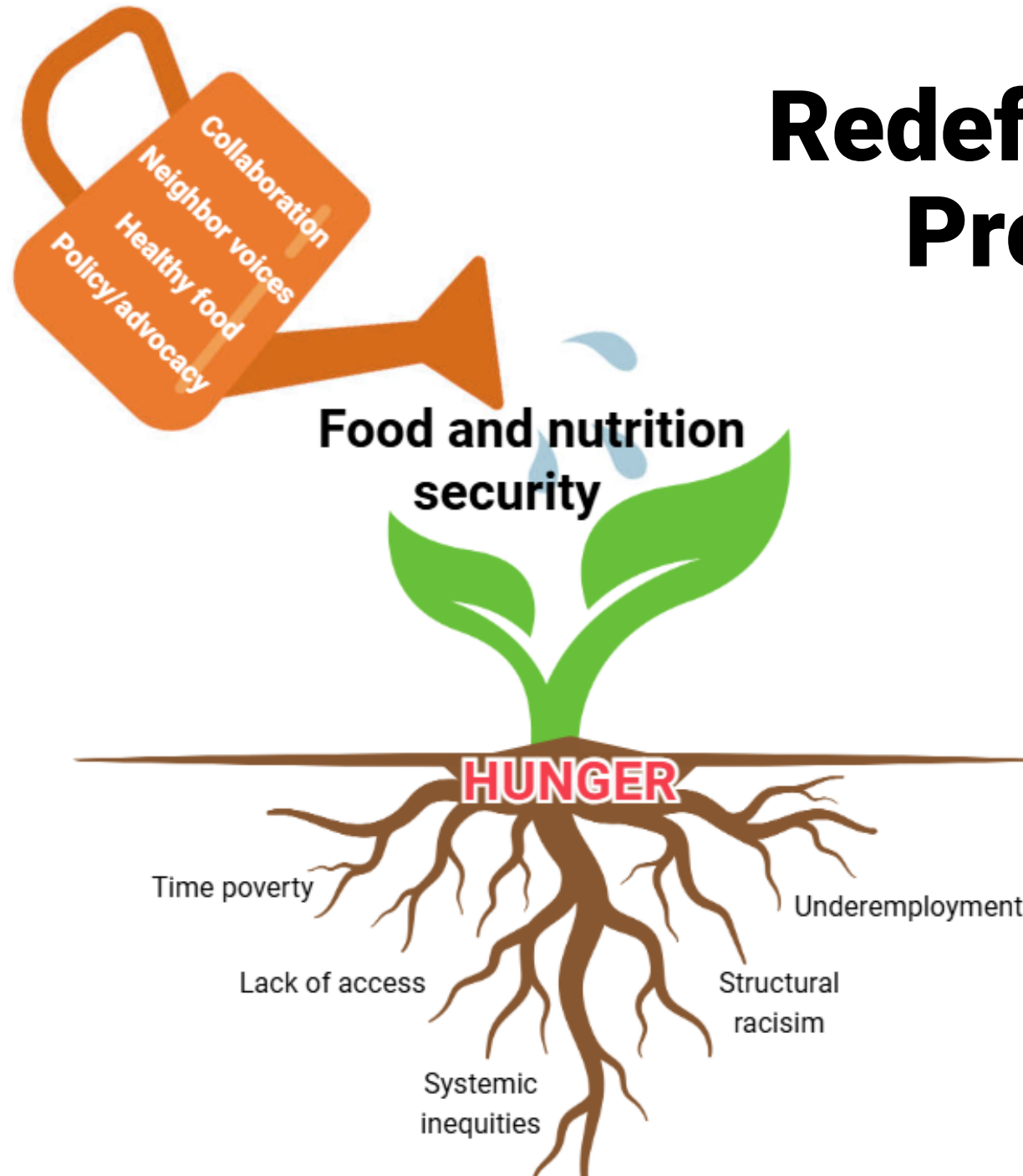
Kansas Food Bank
1,488,612 residents*

Harvesters-The Community Food Network
1,307,494 residents*

Second Harvest of Greater St. Joseph
114,825 residents*

* Based on 2019 Census estimates.

Redefining the Problem

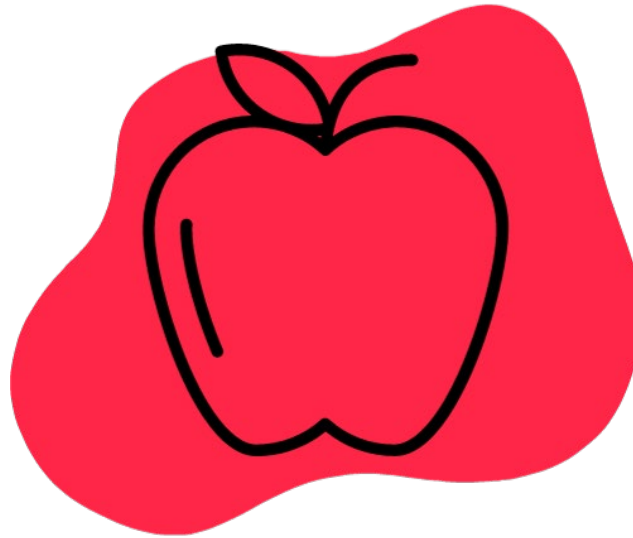


The More Than Food Framework

**Welcoming
Culture**



**Healthy
Choice**



**Connection to
Community
Resources**

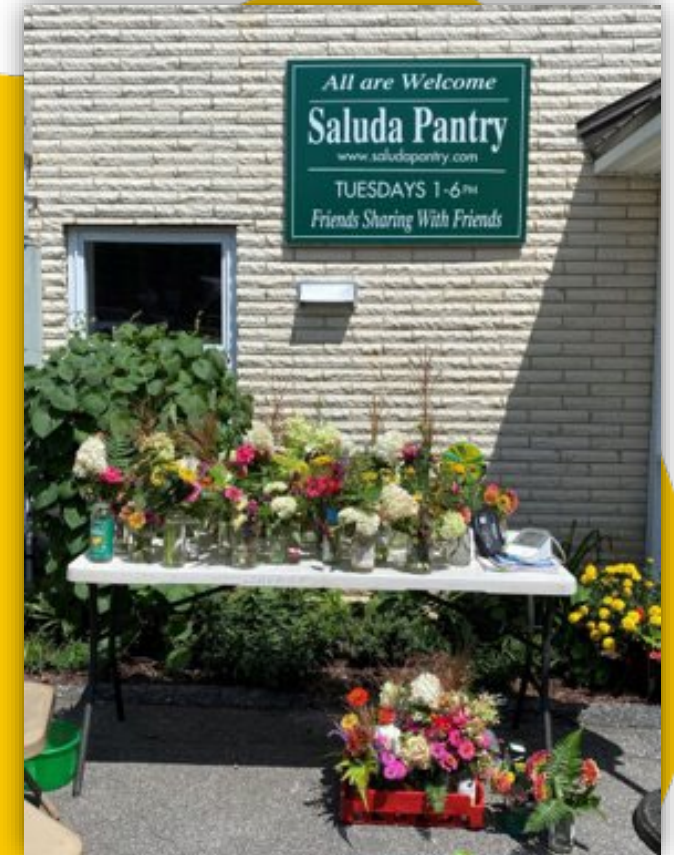


Welcoming Culture

- ✓ Customer service
- ✓ Trauma-informed care
- ✓ Intake process
- ✓ Wait time and space
- ✓ Strength-based language
- ✓ Inviting guests to volunteer



BackPack Beginnings,
Greensboro, NC



Saluda Pantry, Saluda, NC

Opportunities for Coordinated Volunteer Efforts



Design coordinated approach to volunteer training

- ✓ Co-develop shared volunteer handbook/manual
- ✓ Standardize orientation and training materials
- ✓ Clearly define roles and expectations (ex: signed commitment)



Create shared platform for volunteer opportunities

- ✓ Pool resources to increase recruitment and retention
- ✓ Document special skills that volunteers bring that may benefit other pantries (ex: grant writing)



Show appreciation while building relationships

- ✓ Host routine appreciation events, dinners and/or social hours
- ✓ Provide gifts that build comradery (ex: matching t-shirts, nametags)

Dignity of Choice

“There is no substitute for [people choosing their food]. None. Because they’re not thinking of it as a hand-up, they’re thinking of it as shopping.”

– Food pantry staff



The Outreach House, Lombard, IL

Levels of Choice

No Choice

“Traditional” food pantry model
Bags/boxes are packed in advance, and everyone receives the same items



Limited Choice

Neighbors can choose between 2+ types of boxes or prepacked bags
May also be able to choose additional items for the prepacked bag or decline foods



Modified Choice

Neighbors can choose from a menu of options or tell volunteers what they want
Volunteers select and bag the food



Full Choice

Pantry feels like a mini-supermarket; neighbors touch and select their own food
If online ordering, order food as if shopping at a grocery
* Can still set limits



Benefits to Offering Full Choice



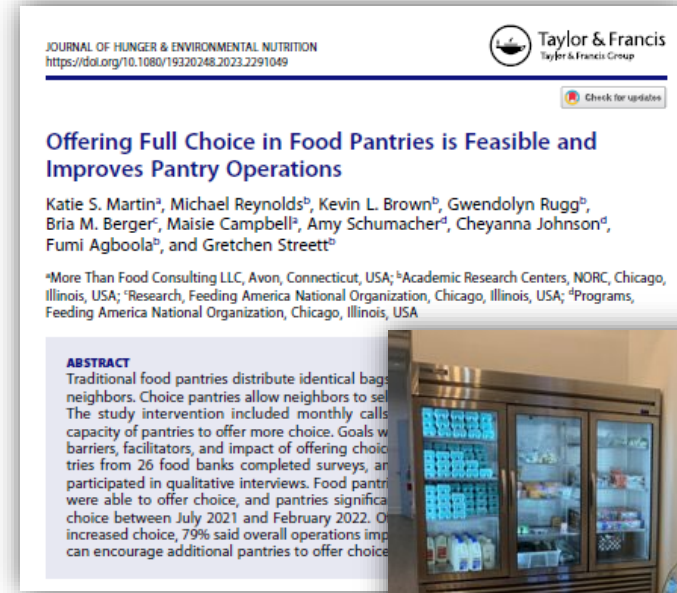
More satisfaction for guests



Reductions in food waste



More satisfaction for pantry staff and volunteers



St Thomas of Canterbury Food Pantry
Chicago, IL

79% Of pantries that increased their level of choice said operations improved.

Promoting Healthy Food

- Strong connection between hunger & health
- Understanding and incorporating neighbor preferences
- Reducing health disparities
- Implementing the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutrition Guidelines
- Making the healthy choice the easy choice with “nudges”

Backpack Beginnings,
Greensboro, NC



Neighbors Feeding Neighbors,
Spruce Pine, NC

Crosstimbers Highlight



Crosstimbers Food Pantry, Edna, KS
BEFORE



Crosstimbers Food
Pantry, Edna, KS
AFTER

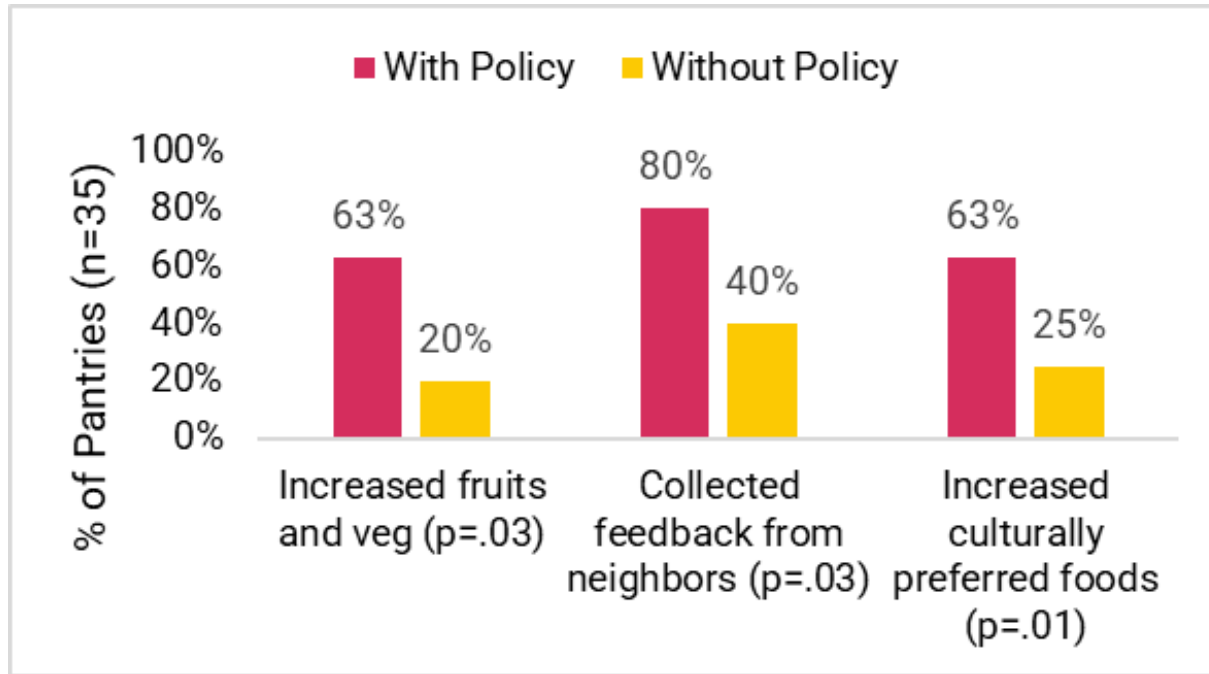
Community Partners: Nutrition Policies

Agencies with nutrition policies are more intentional and direct in communications and relationships with donors.

- Shared their policy or donation lists with donors
- Received healthier foods

“We are very specific about what it is that we want... And then when people want to do food drives, we're very deliberate about what it is that we want instead of just a food drive.” – Pantry staff

Differences between Pantries with Nutrition Policies



Pantries with policies reported greater increases in:

- fruits and vegetables
- collecting feedback from customers about food preferences
- customer preferred foods

Source: 2024 Study on Nutrition Policies at Pantries in Washington State. www.ittakesmorethanfood.org

Opportunities for Connection

Passive Referrals

- Resource info only
- No staff or volunteers
- Tables or bulletin boards with information

Warm Referrals

- Volunteers or staff have knowledge of community resources and offer warm referrals to providers
- Provide follow ups 1-3 times
- Designated area provided with resource information

Wrap Around Services

- Volunteers or staff offer classes/workshops
- Partner with other organizations to offer services and enroll guests in programs
- Create space for community gatherings

Coaching Program

- Trained coaches work w/a small group of individuals on long-term goals
- Participants work with coaches for 3-9 months
- Coaches use Motivational Interviewing skills
- Coaches actively develop community partnerships



Collect feedback to guide referrals and partnerships.

Offering Warm Referrals

- Gather feedback from neighbors about their goals and hopes
- Build relationships with community agencies to understand their services and process
- Invite neighbors to learn about referrals
- Share resources with details
- Follow up and track referrals to see if they were effective

Helps build trust and reduces barriers to access.

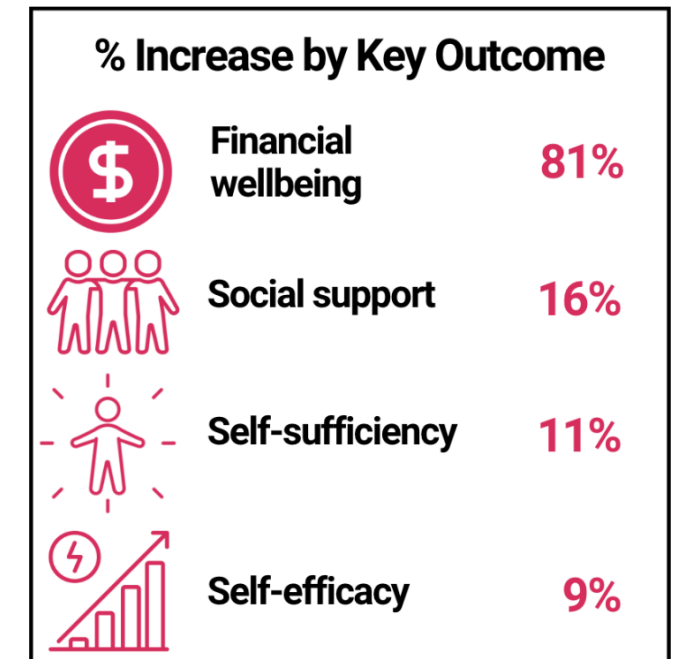


*UMOJA Health Access Point
San Francisco, CA*



Evidence-based Connections

- Testing coaching model over 15 years, multiple states
- Trained coaches meet with members over 3 – 9 months
- Improvements in Food Security, Self-Sufficiency, Financial Wellbeing



LCCM, Lebanon County, PA

Breakout Group Discussion

Please work with others at your table to answer the questions and be prepared to share back with the big group

Breakout Group Discussion Topics

1. How can we strengthen collaboration among food pantries and community organizations to ensure healthy food access?
2. Where do you see opportunities for community partnerships to increase nutrition security?
3. What action step can you take to build stronger community collaborations?

*Collaboration moves
at the speed of trust.*

Yes... but...



Yes... AND...

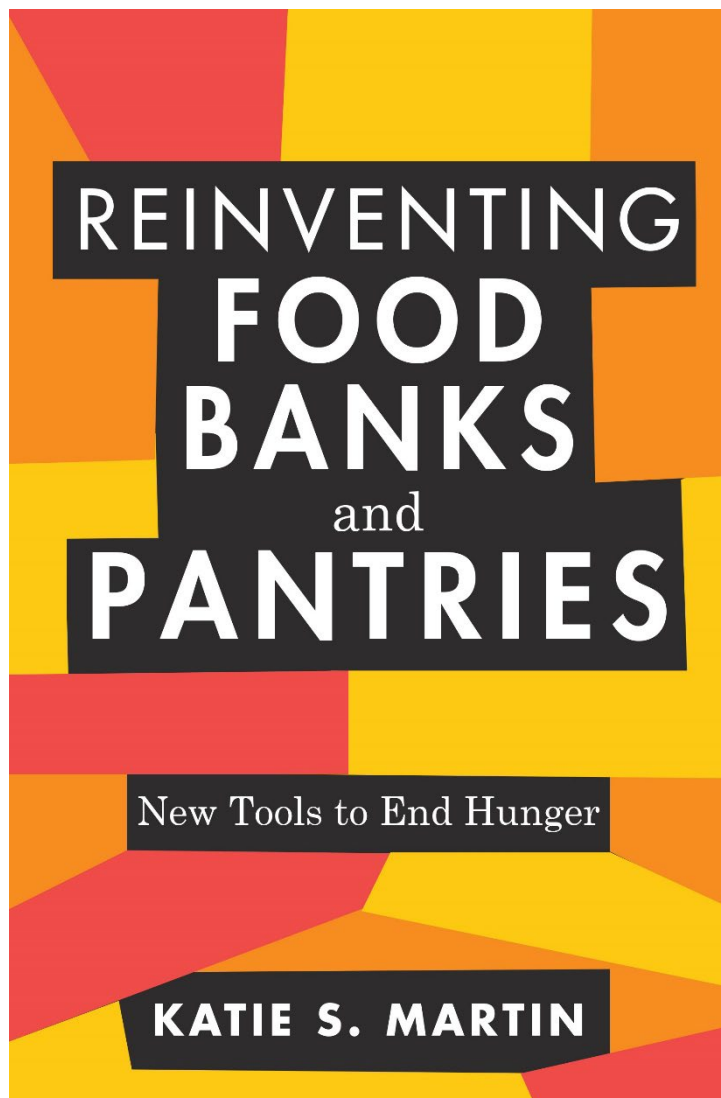
- ✓ **Build** from your existing strengths
- ✓ **Identify** your champions and cheerleaders
- ✓ **Start** small, pilot a new program
- ✓ **Use** data to inform your work
- ✓ **Explain** the "WHY", repeat often
- ✓ **Cultivate** partnerships that can bring in new funding



Holistic solutions to food insecurity

- Look for opportunities to engage with other partners
- Align on mutual goals
- Explore changes and pilot test
- Expand coordination & cooperation
- Celebrate successes





“There isn’t one silver bullet to end hunger. But there are many ways, big and small, that you can begin to make changes in your community today.

Please don’t get intimidated.
Just get started.”

Questions?

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