**Food Assistance Advisory Committee Meeting**

July 17th, 2020 | 9:00 to 10:30

Virtual Attendance

**In Attendance:** Jeff Mathias (Blue Mountain Action Council), Leon Brauner (Ocean Shores Food Bank), Michelle Douglas (Emergency Food Network), Ken Trainor (Sunrise Outreach Center), Kris Van Gasken (Des Moines Area Food Bank), Robert Coit (Thurston County Food Bank), Christian Stephen (CAC of Lewis, Mason and Thurston Counties), Peny Archer (CSML), Aaron Czyzewski (FLL), Nikki Lloyd (Snoqualmie Valley Food Bank) and Trish Twomey (WFC), Ahndrea Blue (Making a Difference Foundation), Alan Hamilton (Clark County Food Bank) , Andra Smith (Sequim Food Bank), Ariel Medeiros (Palouse Fresh Food Project), Celia Chavez (Toppenish Community Chest & Clothing Bank), Christina Wong (Northwest Harvest), Claire Lane (Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition), Dan Lancaster (Multi-Service Center Food Bank), Emily Dexter (Port Angeles Food Bank), Emily Kaleel (Clark County Food Bank), Josh Martinez (Food Lifeline), Kate Ortiz (King County), Lindsey Robinson (Hopelink), Sue Potter(Nourish - Pierce County)

**WSDA staff:** Kim Eads, James Scovel, Erin Kester, Mallorie Shellmer and Nichole Garden

**Introductions**

**Deep Gratitude to Jeff Mathias:** Jeff has been the Chair for the FAAC meetings for two years. Jeff has agreed to stay on as Past Chair for the next year and in the event Michelle is unable to lead a meeting, Jeff will fill in as needed. Thank you to you (Jeff) and all your time you’ve served and for all you’ve done for the FA Advisory Committee. A lot of appreciation for you!

**WSDA Updates with Kim Eads:**

* Jeff Mathias certificate of appreciation for all the work that you’ve done signed by Director Sandison and Kim Eads. We appreciate your leadership, your commitment, and your low-key style! Looking forward to working with Michelle as well.
* Check-in meetings now held weekly, so addressing anything new with this update.
* Director Sandison has made headway on potential processing; turning surplus apples into applesauce, potatoes into dehydrated potatoes. We’re concerned on the time frame for processing USDA food but will look at it as a possible state pilot. James needs to order on Monday which doesn’t give us a lot of time. If we can’t make it happen this time, at least we’ve started the conversation so if this opportunity arises in the future, we’ll be in a good position to take advantage of that.
* State capacity grant closed Wednesday around midnight. Up until Monday, we did not have a lot of applicants, but that changed. Had ~ $1.2M in requests for the up-to $75k category. $150K for the $75k and under. 2 applicants for the $75k and over category. Team to review applications; a client, a food bank, and an advocate to review. Meeting Tuesday to discuss the award winners, announcing to the award winners on Wednesday.
* Kyle Merslich returning Monday 7/20 after his 3-month leave.
* On track for amendments of the $3.2M going out through the EFAP system including Food Lifeline, OIC and Kalispel Tribe.

**Michelle:**

Agreeing with what Kim mentioned regarding apple processing. Would be a great tool for future use of available seasonal products. Gratitude that so many people will potentially have more refrigeration capacity, especially in this time period where everybody needs refrigeration.

* **Approval of minutes from the January 24th meeting:** Asked for questions. None presented.

Asked Trish if we need a formal motion and a second to approve this for board members?

* Jeff answered: We usually have a motion and a second and whomever is present can vote.
* Ken Trainor motions.
* Jeff seconds the motion.
* Nobody opposed.
* **Food procurement policy:**

Trish sent out the Food Procurement Policy. There was an extensive amount of conversation on this last time. Are we ready to adopt this policy or does it need more work?

* Food pantries to have a food procurement system in place. Prioritizing donations, if unable to acquire donations, food pantries should attempt to acquire food by applying these principles when utilizing state funds.
  + The health of the client, so we’re prioritizing requiring nutritious foods
  + A good and judicious stewardship of funds
  + Client preferences
  + Support of special programs like the special dietary programs
  + Have a clear decision making process; how and what food is procured.

Everything we discussed in January still applies, is this still a good way to approach this? The biggest challenge that she sees is the difficulty in getting food. Sometimes feels like we’re on the New York Stock Exchange (laughter). Happy to have a conversation on other’s current experiences and as the market opens up, these are all positions we can apply, so look beyond where we are with the challenges to get food. Asked for thoughts from the group. None presented. Asked if anyone disagrees. None presented. Asked for a motion to adopt:

* Ken: motion to adopt.
* Peny: seconds the motion.
* Nobody opposed.

Food Procurement Policy is now adopted.

* **Subcontractor Resources Task Force update:**

In the new world order, what is most needed? What can WFC do to help us get those courses and education we still need in this new environment? Please reach out to Trish with ideas for further virtual education.

* Trish: Some of the deliverables in forming a new contract for the WFC and the work we’ll be doing. Tasked with facilitating these meetings with Michelle and WSDA as well as posting minutes and keeping FAAC page updated on our webpage. Due to not having a conference in September, offering the Food Bank Certification course sessions which is a PowerPoint presentation. Could be presented online and have folks participate that way. Also helping trainings prior to the WSDA spring EFAP meetings. Developing a student hunger toolkit working with Claire Katie who spoke at our conference a couple years back. Also sessions on food safety and understanding the new health codes and adding some sort of food certification course; one of the new rules is to have someone at each organization certified in a food safety course. ServeSafe is an option. Considering intake fairs for education on intake options. Open to ideas for trainings to stay current with operational changes during the pandemic. Asked for training ideas from the group:
  + Ahndrea: requested training on defensive driving, forklift and pallet jack training.
  + Claire and Christina shared in the chat box: they’re working with the WA Student Achievement Counsel and the State Board of Technical and Community Colleges about food access for college students. There may be ways to update that training based on what’s happening and in regards to access to benefits on campus.
  + Claire in the chat box: would people be interested in a training focused on how to better connect your clients with other food access programs like WIC and food stamps and especially given what will happen with schools this year and school meals.
  + Ken in the chat box: offering the food bank education in several one-hour blocks/modules.
  + Katie Ortiz in the chat box: could offer training on how to develop a nutritional policy for your food pantry in alignment with the new food procurement priority systems. Another item called out in the food procurement policy is equity practices, so maybe another training to focus on that. What does that mean, current practices, reexamined?
  + Josh Martinez in the chat box: how about a training for creating nutrition policies or a training for how to ask food pantry clients what foods they prefer or other needs they have. Focus on the equity practices, bringing in experts to help get a better understanding?
  + Christina in the chat box: what about ways to support meal delivery during the school year?
  + Alan: pantries talking a lot about increase in numbers or decrease in numbers. A training idea; what are the factors that contribute to this and how can we resource our clients appropriately?
  + Nichole Garden in the chat box: Nils Johnson has done some interesting work around client preference and nutrition density to create a price list to inform purchasing.
* Email Trish with any further ideas. Adjustments to be made with the contract with WSDA as we get closer to finalizing.
* **Civil Rights Task Force:**

On hold:

* Kim: we don’t have the staffing capacity right now. USDA just hired their civil rights person, but for now, this is on hold.
* **Discussion Topics:**

1. **The client intake process and how people are doing it during COVID, client data, what, why, how we’re collecting it – What’s working? What are you thinking for the future? Biggest barriers? Other helpful info?** (Waiver was approved through the end of June, additional 2 week waiver has been requested which has not been received.)
   1. Ken: assigned intake person at each food bank, having clients tell the intake person their information. No passing of pens or paper. Both curbside and walk-up at a table.
   2. Lindsey: walk-up model, also asking questions so there’s minimal back & forth. Prepared a letter in 4 languages to explain their intake process and opportunity to give their information for TEFAP to the intake specialist. Upped PPE as well. Lindsey to share the letter in the chat box.
   3. Kris: letting people fill out their own forms on a clipboard that gets sanitized between uses. Need to wear a mask, not checking IDs. Hand their papers in before going through the line. Pick from a list of foods, they get a cart with those items then also get to choose their fresh items.
   4. Dan: covered breezeway, screened off door, slide their DL through the hole for information. First, last and DOB. Enter into database, 98% of everybody. New people get a form to return their next visit. Entering into a fully web based system with a web link to register online.
   5. Jeff: drive-thru, daily form, started collecting age groups, which slowed them down to roughly an hour, this last time taking 2 hours to get everyone through. Signage and explaining the intake will help speed things up. Hard to say whether these are repeat or new clients due to the drive-thru distribution model. Starting to ask this week whether new or returning. Running 6 different distributions each week in 2 counties.
   6. Sue in the chat box: language barriers and long lines are their main challenges. Talking with software developers to create a phone app for check-in, recalls, contact tracing, etc. Sites are moving to ID #s to help with efficiency. Not enough volunteers.
   7. Trish: many struggles to help find community volunteers due to the increasing COVID cases.
   8. James: had a virtual walk-thru of FLL Link-2-Feed. There’s a way to sign into the food bank via the web for the check-in process. Still a work in progress, but lots of potential.
      * Josh: been working to get Link-2-Feed available for partners in WW. Paused due to COVID, but working to restart it along with an advisory board from partner agencies. Appealing factors are; appointment system, providing barcodes/club cards style, trying to make the data collection as unobtrusive as possible.
   9. Sue in the chat box: anyone else having to do data collection for HUD, CDBG grant $ and if so, how are you doing it?
      * Josh: Mike has had success with their system for the CDBG grant
      * Michelle: Mike is using categorical need which hasn’t been available in Pierce Co. So at this point, for EFN, the CBDG $ will have to be turned away. Can’t figure out how to do it.
      * Sue: doing it at 2 sites. It’s clunky but working at this point.
2. **What is the information that we’re asking people for? Why are we asking them? How are our forms lining up? How are you auditing your forms? How are you thinking about client demographics?** There’s a big difference between request and require. That distinction isn’t always clear to the client.
   1. Josh: important point about requesting and requiring and the imbalance of power resulting in a client not knowing if they would not be served, or get less, food for not providing information. Keep in mind language barriers; which has prioritized an intake software option. Trying to make as few fields as possible required
   2. Michelle: how are you asking for ID in a way that lets people know that they don’t have to provide that to get food?
      * Trish: asked for it to see the address for service boundaries.
      * Lindsey: agreed with Trish. These practices should be examined to determine the populations served. Perhaps there are other ways to get the information that still empowers the clients. Clients need to know they’ll still receive food despite data collection.
      * Claire in the chat box: rather than asking for ID to verify address, there’s a more critical way to collect that info such as a letter, bill, or ID which gives people options.
      * Sue: spelling of names can be challenging so they just ask for something with their name printed on it. Moving to customer numbers will eventually reduce the need to ask for this.
      * Ahndrea: don’t report or collect names. Can they still serve clients even if they don’t give their name and address?
        1. Michelle: how are you letting people know that it’s optional to give that information and people will still get food? What language are you using?
        2. Ahndrea: we don’t have any requirements to get food from our food bank. We can’t make someone give information they don’t want to give. We try to remove every barrier possible. We have many undocumented people that don’t want to give their names so we don’t require it.
        3. Kim: minimum requirements and where there’s flexibility. TEFAP; it is required to have the name, address, # in the family once annually. Then just tracking of when they come to pick up food. It is up to the client to tell the food pantry if something has changed. If someone doesn’t have an address, “homeless” is acceptable or the address to the food pantry. All self-declared, nothing requiring documentation. Any changes to this would need to happen at the federal level. The DHD did lighten these requirements. Regardless of if someone is in your service area or not, give them food. For EFAP, there is no requirement. Systems evolve because people are trying to do the right thing, like making sure that those in need are getting food including asking for ID or mail. We did update the TEFAP forms regarding what you cannot ask for. We don’t make up the majority of your food, so there are other reporting considerations. Maybe a task force to start addressing some of these issues as a group decision along with education. What tools can we help people be successful with? This is a great conversation to have more in-depth.
3. **Proposing to start a task force to talk about the “why” behind asking for this data and how to get to a system that is most equitable as possible. Also to lobby on the federal government side. If you’re willing to be on a new taskforce, write it in the chat or contact Trish and we’ll start a committee.** 
   1. Kim: our team would love to be involved and supportive and continue our conversations with USDA and to share what the task force shares with us.
   2. Trish: getting lots of names, so taking those down.

**Thank you and closing remarks**