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# Resource Guide

## The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Toolkit



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The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Toolkit is designed and intended for use by food pantry managers, staff, volunteers, and USDA low-income nutrition program staff. This project was supported by Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Center of Excellence Initiative of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, grant number 2014-48757-22607. Last Updated October 19, 2017

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## Background

Food pantries are emergency food assistance agencies that serve communities and operate on the front lines of hunger in America. Many food pantries are private, not-for-profit agencies, and some are supported financially through faith organizations. The size and client-base of food pantries can vary greatly. For example, some pantries may be in a volunteer's home garage and may be open to serve clients once or twice per month. Others may be in a food bank warehouse and be open to serve clients every day. Regardless of size or client-base, the operation of most pantries depends on their committed volunteers.

Food environments have a major role in influencing peoples' food choices, dietary patterns, and health outcomes. For underserved populations facing food insecurity and chronic disease, it is critical to make healthy foods more accessible. The use of food pantry services has increased among low-income populations. The Healthy Food Pantry Project aimed to develop a toolkit that could be used by food pantries and their nutrition education partners to assess the overall healthfulness of food pantry environments. This assessment process would identify areas of improvement for food pantry leadership in coordination with their local community partners.

The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Toolkit contains an assessment tool, an instruction guide, and a resource guide. The Assessment Tool and Instruction Guide were pilot tested from July to August 2016 in 15 pantries located in 5 different states. They were then field tested from September 2016 to July 2017 in 29 pantries located in 7 different states. The Healthy Food Pantry Project was conducted by the Regional Nutritional Education and Obesity Prevention Center of Excellence-West (RNECE-W).

## About this Guide

This guide is intended to be used by food pantries and their United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) low-income nutrition education partners. These partners include the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). Both SNAP-Ed and EFNEP provide nutrition education to low-income Americans to promote improvements in nutrition and physical activity behaviors, thereby improving their overall health.

There are many programs, materials, websites, and agencies devoted to improving the health of low-income Americans in variety of ways. This guide includes many of these resources and provides links to websites with additional information that can support healthy food pantry changes. This guide is intended to be used alongside the Assessment Tool; for each item on the tool, resources are provided to help pantries improve their scores.

This guide is not intended to be entirely comprehensive. There are many relevant and useful resources for pantries that are not included in this guide. Furthermore, some items on the Assessment Tool do not have in-text or online resources provided in this guide. For these items, the lack of resources indicates that there is a general need for relevant and useful resources for food pantries.

*The RNECE-W does not endorse referenced website content.*

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## How to Use this Guide

The guide is organized to mirror the Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool. There are 69 items on the Assessment Tool. For each Assessment Tool item, this guide provides at least one resource. These resources may help pantries improve their scores on each assessment item, or help them find information and ideas for similar strategies. These resources may also help pantries find support for funding, infrastructure, or organizational capacity that could benefit their pantry.

No additional funding will be disbursed through the RNECE-W to support these resources. Please direct questions or comments about resources to a contact listed on the websites and **NOT** to the RNECE-W.

69 Assessment items

More than 69 Resources and Links

The collage features three main elements: 1) A screenshot of the 'Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool' form, showing sections for 'PANTRY INFORMATION' and 'A. Location & Entrance'. 2) The cover of the 'Resource Guide' titled 'The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Toolkit', dated 'SEPTEMBER 2017', which includes images of various fruits and vegetables. 3) A large orange arrow pointing from the assessment tool form towards the resource guide cover, containing the text 'Look for Ways to Improve Section Score'.

Please site as:  
Bush-Kaufman, A., Walsh, M., Barale, K. Resource Guide to Accompany the Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool. *Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Center of Excellence-West*. 2017. Available at: <http://wrnce.colostate.edu/>.

## A. Pantry Location & Entrance

### A.1 Location & Entrance

#### 1. See attached “Walkability Checklist” to determine the walkability score.

Improving the “walkability” of the neighborhood surrounding the food pantry can:

- Increase the ability of clients to reach the food pantry safely
- Prevent accidents from occurring outside the food pantry that may involve clients
- Ensure that hungry clients can access the pantry’s services without a motor vehicle



#### A Resident’s Guide for Creating Safer Communities for Walking and Biking

[http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED\\_BIKE/ped\\_community/ped\\_walkguide/index.cfm](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/PED_BIKE/ped_community/ped_walkguide/index.cfm)

Check Out **page 4** of the Walkability Checklist for resources!

#### 2. Is there a bus line within one street block of the Pantry?

Supporting transit options for clients without vehicles can:

- Increase physical activity among clients walking to the pantry
- Ensure clients without cars or with limited mobility have other transportation options
- Reduce transportation costs of accessing pantry services
- Provide more transportation options for clients leaving the pantry

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### 3. Is the Pantry accessible by persons of all abilities?

Many food pantry clients and volunteers have limited mobility. Benefits of improving accessibility include:

- Enhancing the dignity of clients and volunteers that visit the food pantry
- Supporting a safe environment to prevent clients and volunteers from injury
- Making it easier to move food in and out of the pantry on wheels



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

### 4. Does the agency where the Pantry is located *either* have its own parking lot or share a lot?

Some pantries are only accessible for clients by car. Providing a free parking lot for food pantry clients can benefit the Pantry by:

- Designating a safer space to park a car
- Eliminating a barrier for clients and volunteers of pantries who only have paid street parking

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**5. Are the windows of the Pantry free of bars or barriers? *Include the building where the Pantry is located.***

Bars on windows may raise concerns by potential clients regarding the safety of using the services at the food pantry. If possible, removing bars or barriers to building windows will increase the appeal of the pantry and raise the usage of services.

**6. Is there signage indicting the Pantry's location from the nearest road?**

Signage for the Pantry can help potential clients identify a much-needed source of food. Some agencies may be concerned that signage would increase their need for food that the pantry does not have. In other words, a sign may increase the frequency that a pantry runs out of food because more people are accessing their supply. This concern is important to consider when posting signage about services. Agencies can work with their local SNAP-Ed and EFNEP programs in partnership with grocery stores or food banks to increase their supply of food.

This church hosts a mobile pantry on Mondays from 1–3 pm in the afternoon. The church has a digital sign that shares this message with the neighborhood.



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

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7. **On which days of the month is the Pantry open to serve clients?** *In the calendar below, put an “X” for each day of the month the pantry is open. This question is NOT scored.*

Hours of operation are unique to each pantry. Hours of operation can depend on volunteer availability, utility costs, a shared agency’s hours, and many other factors. Emergency food agencies can conduct needs assessments (or surveys) to determine whether their hours of operation are best serving their clients.

**Assessment and Evaluation Resources: Helpful resources when working with food insecure populations (2015)** by Feeding America and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation

This resource includes information for agencies working with individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. The resource list includes guidance for needs assessments, goal planning, evaluation tools, and sample reports.

[http://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/mp/files/tool\\_and\\_resources/files/andf-eval-resources.pdf](http://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/mp/files/tool_and_resources/files/andf-eval-resources.pdf)

**How to Start a Food Pantry** by the Montana Food Bank Network

Find tips about conducting a community needs assessment on page 6.

<http://www.mfbn.org/files/howtostartafoodpantry-final.pdf>

8. **What hours for the days selected above is the Pantry open to serve clients?** *Please describe if these hours are different for different populations, like seniors, refugees, etc. This question is NOT scored.*

Pantries may opt to offer their services at different times depending on their volunteer or staff capacity. For example, seniors may require additional volunteer support to remove heavier foods from pantry shelves. Another example may include special hours for refugees that require volunteers who speak another language and require more time to move through the pantry area.

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## 9. What kind of check-in process does the Pantry use for FIRST TIME clients?

See resources under question 10 below.

## 10. What kind of check-in procedure does the pantry use for RETURNING clients or clients ON THEIR SECOND or FOLLOWING visits?

Many food pantries and food banks participate in the USDA's federal commodities program (The Emergency Food Assistance Program, TEFAP) which provides food to low-income Americans.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program-tefap>

For questions regarding TEFAP eligibility:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/TEFAP\\_EligilbeRA\\_presentation.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/TEFAP_EligilbeRA_presentation.pdf)

TEFAP requires food pantries and food banks to collect information from their clients. The required documentation may be challenging for potential clients to retrieve for a number of reasons. Documentation is often a barrier for potential clients who are in need of food. TEFAP documentation requirements vary by state. In some states, clients must provide their social security numbers, state issued IDs, or proof of residence within the state to receive TEFAP food donations. For more details about TEFAP, refer to Appendix A.

**Food pantries can remove emotional barriers for those in need by *minimizing the amount of documentation required to receive food assistance at their pantry.***

## 11. Does the Pantry have an electronic check-in procedure? Yes or No? If yes, please describe. This question is NOT scored.

Computer software can help pantries streamline client check-ins and monitor food inventories. Some food banks require their pantry agencies to keep electronic records. Other benefits of electronic record keeping may include:

- Increased food safety through enhanced rotation of foods by shelf life
- Food inventory records that can be queried as a proxy for client diet quality
- Electronic monitoring and alert systems for freezer and refrigeration systems
- Faster client check-ins; reducing volunteer paperwork burden

### Oasis Insight

“Oasis” is a computer scanning system employed by food assistance agencies that manage Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP; formerly *Food Stamps*) as well as food bank client participation in TEFAP. Food banks listed include: Greater Boston Food Bank, Atlanta Community Food Bank, East Texas Food Bank, Feeding America San Diego, San Diego Food Bank, and Capital Area Food Bank.

<http://www.oasisinsight.net/>

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## 12. Where is the waiting line for CHECK-IN and is there a place to sit down? Choose ONE.

Waiting to receive food or services is part of clients' experience at food pantries. Improving the waiting experience can enhance clients' dignity and may create an environment of social support.

### Methods to Reduce or Improve Waiting at a Food Pantry:

- Provide clients a place to wait indoors (away from weather elements)
- If weather is pleasant, provide shade for clients
- Offer chairs and benches for clients unable to stand for long periods of time
- Use an appointment system so clients arrive at designated times
- Offer activities for clients and their children in the waiting area, such as:
  - Food demonstrations of healthy recipes
  - Samples of food at the pantry that day
  - Music or storytelling
- Use the wait time to assess clients' needs for other services, such as housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, mental health and medical care, or nutrition education

## 13. Overall, how long do clients usually wait to receive food AFTER checking in?

Time is often a barrier for clients to access food pantries. Reducing waiting time may help:

- Provide clients adequate time to receive food at the pantry
- Reduce the emotional stigma associated with waiting in a food line
- Reduce risk of disruptive behavior among clients waiting in line
  - Pantries may reserve the right to refuse service to clients who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or who exhibit abusive or disruptive behavior

(Methods to reduce wait time and improve the waiting experience are discussed above.)



Client Waiting  
Areas



Images: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

## B. Food Available to Clients

### B.1. Food Distribution to Clients

#### 14. Does the Pantry have access to a garden, farm, or farmer’s market that provides fresh produce to the Pantry?

Food pantries across the country are increasing their efforts to source and offer more fruits and vegetables to clients. Local community and personal gardens can donate extra bounty to a food pantry. Farmers markets may also donate to a pantry or larger food bank. Some farmers will also agree to donate produce that they cannot sell to an emergency food program.

Benefits of Collecting Garden or Farmers Market Donations:

- Have more fresh vegetables or fruit available for clients
- Connect with new potential volunteers for the pantry
- Reduce local food waste

#### **Solving Food Waste Nationwide By Educating and Enabling America’s Gardeners to Share Their Bounty with a Nearby Food Pantry** (2016) by Ample Harvest

“A Nationwide solution to food waste with ‘no food left behind’.” This organization connects local pantries in need of produce with local growers.

<http://ampleharvest.org/>

#### **Plant-A-Row for the Hungry** by The Association for Garden Communicators

A public service program launched in Alaska in 1995 connects local gardeners and soup kitchens with food pantries.

<http://www.gardenwriters.org/Plant-a-Row>

Food pantries and banks may also develop community farms that sources food for local pantries and low-income Americans. This garden or farm may be used as a learning laboratory or outdoor classroom.

#### **Case study Gardens or Farms specifically supplying food pantries or low-income communities with fresh food in King, Pierce, and Thurston Counties of Western Washington:**

- “Mother Earth Farm” of the Emergency Food Network:  
<http://www.efoodnet.org/get-involved/farm/>
- “Elk Run Farm” of South King County Food Coalition:  
<https://elkrunfarm.wordpress.com/about-2/>
- “Olympia Kiwanis Gardens” of Kiwanis Club of Olympia and Thurston County Food Bank:  
[https://youtu.be/vvThNVDg\\_7I](https://youtu.be/vvThNVDg_7I)

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## Kiwanis Gardens in Olympia, Washington



Image: P. Frye & M. Sobotka, 2016



Image: P. Frye & M. Sobotka, 2016

### 15. What kind of food distribution does the Pantry use to send food home with clients?

There are four primary methods of food distribution to clients, and each has benefits and challenges.

1. **Pre-Packed Boxes ONLY:** The pantry offers clients boxes or bags of food packed by volunteers. The boxes or bags may be packed based on the number of people in a client's household. Clients do not get to choose the food items they receive. This method has been traditionally used to ensure food was distributed evenly to clients.
2. **Mix of Pre-packed Boxes & Volunteers Select Foods for Clients:** The pantry offers clients a pre-made box or bag and then clients may choose from other foods available that day to add to the box or bag. The foods offered outside of the pre-made box are selected and packed by volunteers. Clients are able to choose about half of the food items they receive.
3. **Clients Choose and Volunteers Remove:** The pantry offers clients a selection of foods that they can choose from. This selection may be a list or a shelf display. Volunteers remove food from the shelves and pack boxes or bags for clients. Clients are able to choose all of their foods, but they are not able to pack or handle them without a volunteer.
4. **Client Choice ONLY:** Clients move through the pantry and select their own food choices, often with a shopping cart or bag provided by the pantry; this may also be referred to as "shopping style." In this model, clients remove items directly from the shelf themselves without assistance or close supervision.

Food pantries are encouraged to provide as much choice and autonomy to clients as possible to optimize the emotional experience of accessing emergency foods. The client choice model resembles the experience of selecting food in a retail environment where food is purchased.

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**Client Choice Food Pantries** by End Hunger in America.

Overview of client choice layout and the emotional benefits to clients.

<https://www.endhungerinamerica.org/getting-started/client-choice-food-pantries/>

**Making the Switch: A Guide for Converting to a Client Choice Food Pantry** by Ohio Association of Food Banks.

[http://site.foodshare.org/site/DocServer/Making\\_the\\_Switch\\_to\\_Client\\_Choice.pdf?docID=6081](http://site.foodshare.org/site/DocServer/Making_the_Switch_to_Client_Choice.pdf?docID=6081)



Image: P. Frye & M. Sobotka, 2016

## Client Choice Food Pantries



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

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## Market and Promote Fruits and Vegetable within the Client Choice Model

The following Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool questions reflect the best methods to market and promote fruits and vegetables within the client choice model. These techniques resemble the strategies employed by junk food companies to get customers to buy more junk food at grocery stores and big box stores like Wal-Mart and Costco.

### Benefits of using marketing strategies to highlight fruits and vegetables:

- Raises client awareness about different fruits and vegetables offered by the pantry
- Decreases food waste because clients do not have to throw away food that they don't want if they were given food in a pre-packed method
- Food tastings can increase client comfort level with lesser known foods making it more likely they will select those less familiar fruits or vegetables

16. Are **FRUITS** and **VEGETABLES** placed before other foods in the pick-up line? Includes *FRESH, FROZEN, CANNED, or DRIED* fruits and vegetables.



As much as possible, arrange the fruits or vegetables first in the order of food selections for clients. (Either fruits or vegetables can be first.) Arrows can be placed on the floor to guide clients.

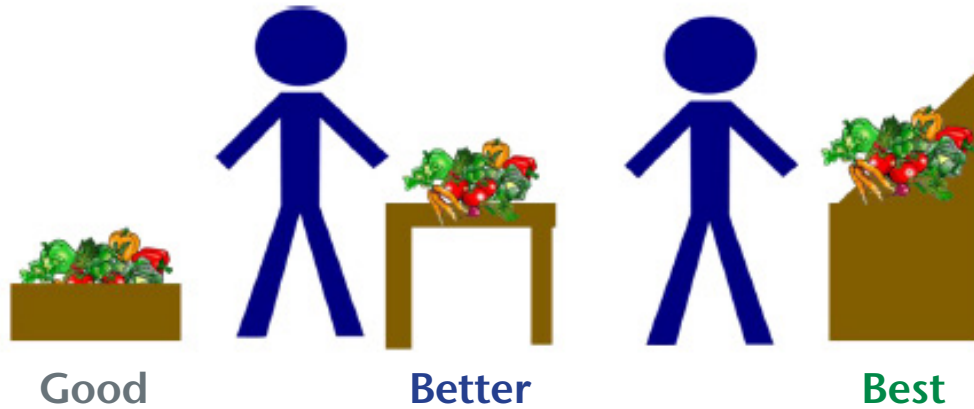
**All About the Fruit Group** (2016) from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/fruit>

**All About the Vegetable Group** (2016) from <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/vegetables>

Refer to the USDA's official MyPlate web pages for the 2015 dietary guidelines for the fruit and vegetable food groups.

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## 17. Are fruits and vegetables placed at eye or waist level and easy to reach?



**Nutrition and Health Strategy “Nudges”** by Feeding America and the Cornell University Food & Brand Lab

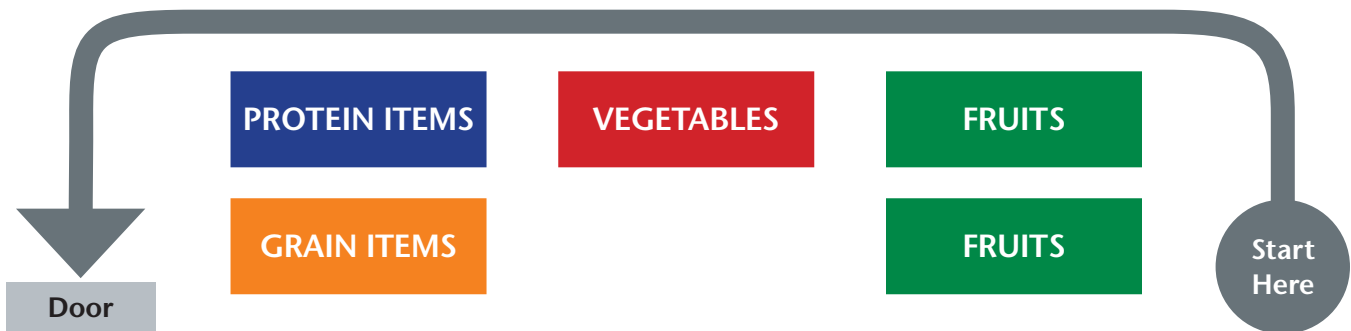
This short video provides an overview of “Nudges,” which are low- to no-cost strategies for promoting the selection of healthier food choices.

<https://youtu.be/ajmgN5wavNY>

## 18. Are there signs that highlight the LOCATION of fruits and vegetables within the Client Choice model?

*Examples: arrows, item locator signs, daily availability lists, etc.*

Arrows and locator signs can increase client selection of fruits and vegetables from the choice model.



**MyPlate-Guided Rainbow of Colors Choice System** by Ohio State University Extension

This website describes how food pantries can arrange and color code their layouts according to MyPlate food groups. This system can help clients identify and select items in different food groups, and help pantry managers decide how many choices clients may select per food group.

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-5585>

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## 19. Are there signs that highlight the NUTRITIONAL benefits of fruits and vegetables displayed throughout the Pantry?

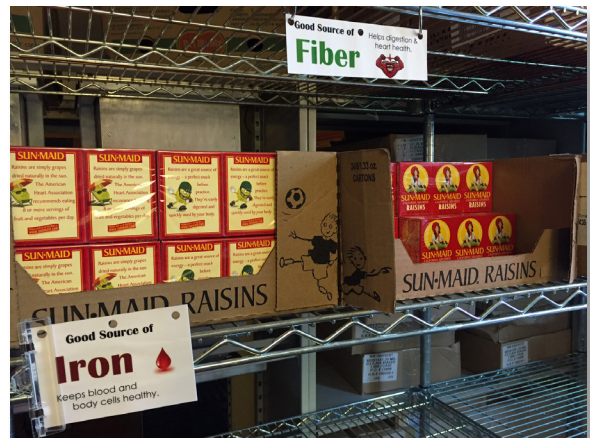
Small signs on the shelf (“shelf-talkers”) can highlight nutritional information and increase the likelihood that clients will select those foods. Pantries may also display recipe cards that show how to prepare the food in a healthy way.

- Place the shelf-talkers at eye level
- Consider including information on how to properly prepare, cook, or store the food

### Stock Healthy | Shop Healthy by the University of Missouri Extension

This community intervention is designed for small retailers that serve low-income populations and accept SNAP or Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) funds. This intervention toolkit contains many shelf-talkers and marketing strategies that can be adapted to food pantries. Check out their downloads!

<http://extension.missouri.edu/stockhealthy/>



Images: Washington State, Pierce County SNAP-Ed 2016

### Supermarket Strategies to Encourage Healthy Eating by The Food Trust

This toolkit is intended for communities where healthy food is less accessible. While it mainly addresses grocery stores and small markets, food pantries can use many different strategies in this toolkit. For example, marketing healthy food, providing nutrition education, holding tasting events, and offering pantry tours.

[http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media\\_items/supermarket-toolkit.original.pdf](http://thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/supermarket-toolkit.original.pdf)

### Hunger and Health Resources for “Nudges” by Feeding America

This website provides shelf signage, posters, and a variety of educational materials to promote healthy “Nudges” in pantries.

<https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resources/?resource-others%5B%5D=nudge>

## B.2. Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

### 20/23. Are FRESH fruit/vegetables available to clients on the day of the Pantry visit?

Scheduling fresh produce pick-ups, deliveries, and client distributions can be challenging for pantries. Pantries often lack the volunteers and transportation necessary to provide fresh fruit and vegetables to clients on a regular basis.

#### Spread the word about fresh produce!

Pantries must tell their local food banks that they want more fresh produce for their clients. Many food banks track their fresh produce inventories to measure how well they are moving the produce. Food banks often want to help the pantries that want more fresh fruit and vegetables.

#### Foods to Encourage (2015) by Feeding America

Food pantries can use this detailed framework to determine whether items are considered foods to encourage (F2E) in their pantries. This framework can be referenced when procuring food or when taking any actions to make their pantry healthier.

[http://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/mp/files/tool\\_and\\_resources/files/f2e-background-detail.v1.pdf](http://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/mp/files/tool_and_resources/files/f2e-background-detail.v1.pdf)

**Choose Healthy Options Program (CHOP)** (2004) by The Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. CHOP is a nutritional food ranking system for pantries and clients.

<https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/resources/nutrition/chop/>

**CHOP Adapted for Healthy Options, Healthy Meals** (2012) by MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger. This CHOP implementation guide provides specific details and resources for implementers.

<http://mazon.org/assets/Uploads/HOHM-CHOPGuide.pdf>

### 21/24. What is the overall VARIETY of FRESH fruit/vegetables in the Pantry on the day of the visit?

Food pantries often obtain a large portion of their food from a food bank or food distributor. Sometimes local organizations provide pantries with supplementary food donations to reduce their reliance on food banks. Diversifying food sources can help pantries improve the variety and quality of their food.

#### Request specific foods, like fresh fruits and vegetables!

A food pantry may request specific foods in food drives. They may ask potential donors for fresh fruits and vegetables.

#### SuperFood Drive

This non-profit agency provides resources for increasing donations of healthy foods to pantries. The site contains multiple helpful ideas, documents, and sources of inspiration.

<http://www.superfooddrive.org/>

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## 22/25. What is the overall QUALITY of FRESH fruit/vegetables in the Pantry on the day of the visit?

The food pantry is not a place to discard rotten, unwanted food. Food donations should be safe enough for clients to consume. Therefore, it is important for food pantries to hold food safety standards similar to restaurants and grocery stores.

**Choose MyPlate: Food Safety** (2015) from <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-safety>

Ensure that the food offered to clients is as safe as possible. Simple guidelines such as hand washing (detailed later), separating meats from produce, and cooking foods to the correct temperatures can ensure that the food pantry does NOT contribute to food borne illnesses.

**Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Handling Guidelines for Food Pantries** by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. This handout presents guidelines that food pantry volunteers can use to determine whether fresh produce is safe and suitable to distribute to clients.

[http://www.cfbnj.org/\\_assets/library/2013/01/Fresh-Produce-Guidelines-for-Pantries.pdf](http://www.cfbnj.org/_assets/library/2013/01/Fresh-Produce-Guidelines-for-Pantries.pdf)

**How long do fruit and vegetables last?** by The Greater Pittsburg Community Food Bank

This simple guide can help clients and volunteers assess the shelf life of fresh produce items.

<https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Produce-Shelf-life1.pdf>

## 26. Does the Pantry have FROZEN storage? This question is NOT scored.

Frozen storage options can help pantries increase their stock of protein, fruits, and vegetables by extending the shelf-life of these foods. Protein items often freeze and thaw better than fruits and vegetables.

### Considerations for frozen or refrigerated storage:

- What are the energy costs (i.e., utility and electricity costs)?
- Where will the freezer or refrigerator be placed?
- Is the food pantry space permanent or shared with another program, such as a mobile preschool?
- What are the maintenance costs?

Search for infrastructure grant opportunities to assist with the purchase and maintenance of frozen, chilled, or dry warehousing equipment.

### Historical grant opportunities:

- TEFAP Rural Infrastructure Grants from 2013:  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/tefap-infrastructure-grant>
- Search grant and funding engines with terms like: *capacity, storage, freezer, refrigerator, warehousing, waste reduction, food pantry, meal site, food bank, emergency feeding.*

Refer to “Other Resources We Love” on page 41 to find WISCAP’s resource for fundraising ideas!

## B.3. Frozen Fruit, Vegetables, and Lean Protein

### 27. What is the overall VARIETY of FROZEN fruit and vegetables in the Pantry on the day of the visit?

*Count all frozen fruits and vegetables.*

A food pantry may work with smaller agencies to create a purchasing committee to pool financial donations and buy frozen fruits and vegetables. Purchasing frozen fruits and vegetables has these benefits to pantries:

- More produce is available to pantries at a lower cost than paying retail price
- Collecting financial donations and using the money to buy frozen food decreases the reliance of food pantries on the food donation stream
- Frozen foods are often more nutrient dense than canned or dried foods that are traditionally donated to food pantries

#### Caution!

The capacity to store frozen foods may signal that the pantry will also accept unhealthy frozen donations (like frozen pizza, frozen meals high in sodium and fat, frozen desserts high in sugar, breaded and fried meat products, frozen fried potatoes, and high fat snack products.)



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016.

### 28. What is the overall QUALITY of FROZEN fruit and vegetables in the Pantry on the day of the visit?

Some food pantries are able to store frozen fruit and vegetables that arrive frozen. Others receive donations of fresh items that need to be frozen to maintain a longer shelf life.

**Keep It Cool: Refrigerator/Freezer Storage Chart** by The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

This printable chart can be displayed near chilled storage units for pantry volunteers to reference when deciding whether items are safe and suitable to distribute to clients.

<http://www.eatright.org/~media/homefoodsafety/multimedia/downloads/keepitcool%20refrigerator%20storage%20chart.ashx>

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## 29. What is the overall VARIETY of FROZEN and FRESH lean protein in the Pantry on the day of the visit?

Food pantries are not a place to discard rotten, unwanted food. Donations to the pantry should be an acceptable quality for clients to consume. Food pantries must maintain food safety standards similar to restaurants and grocery stores.

**All About the Proteins Group** (2016) from <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/protein-foods>

Refer to the USDA's official MyPlate web page for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for the protein food group.

Protein foods are often in high demand in food pantries. Proteins also tend to contain more fat than other food groups. Below are examples of lean proteins identified by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health (NHLBI). Food pantries should encourage these proteins because they have less fat than other protein sources.

### Lean Proteins Ideal for Food Pantry Clients:

- Chicken, skinless
- Turkey, skinless
- Tuna canned in water
- Clams or Mussels
- Lobster or shrimp
- Cod, Flounder, or Sole
- Low-fat luncheon meat, labeled
- Tofu
- Hummus or low-fat nut butters
- Low-fat meat substitutes

\*NOTE: Some meats on the NHLBI website are excluded; protein sources containing more than 7 grams of fat per 3-ounce portion are excluded from this list.

## 30. What is the overall QUALITY of FROZEN and fresh lean protein in the Pantry on the day of the visit?

Many food pantries will freeze fresh meat or other proteins to increase their shelf-life and reduce the possibility of food borne illness. Preventing freezer burn will help maintain the quality of the frozen protein. Freezer burn happens when the moisture is slowly removed from the protein, forming white ice crystals. Protein items with lots of freezer burn are sometimes inedible because the integrity of the protein is lost when it thaws. However, they may still be used for soups or stews.

### USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline: 1-888-674-6854

This hotline will answer any questions related to the safety of any fresh, frozen, canned, or dried food product with specific attention to meat and poultry. Please call the hotline for questions related to food borne illness, or proper inspection of meat, poultry, and egg products.



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

## B.4. Canned & Dried Fruits, Vegetables, and Lean Protein

### 31. Are MOST of the CANNED vegetables labeled as “low-sodium” or “no salt added” on the day of Pantry visit?

The 2015 Dietary Guidelines recommend that most Americans consume less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day (about 1 teaspoon of salt). According to the guidelines, research has shown that people with high blood pressure benefit from lowering their sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day. Many food pantry clients have high blood pressure and heart disease. Lowering daily salt intake can be challenging for food pantry clients consuming many canned foods. Therefore, the food pantry can assist clients with heart disease by stocking canned foods that have reduced sodium or “no salt added.”

#### Food pantries can help clients reduce their daily sodium intake by:

- Collecting specific donations of “low-sodium” or “no salt added” canned foods
- Educating clients about the link between high blood pressure and sodium
- Creating signs or a separate section for “low-sodium” canned foods
- Demonstrating how clients can rinse canned foods to remove some of the sodium

#### Enjoying Canned Foods: 3 Tips to Lower Sodium Intake by the Canned Food Alliance

This handout describes three simple methods to lower daily sodium intake using canned foods. (This was designed by the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion in partnership with the Canned Food Alliance.)

[http://www.mealtime.org/~media/files/fact-sheets/Tips-to-Reduce-Sodium\\_CFA-Infographic\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.mealtime.org/~media/files/fact-sheets/Tips-to-Reduce-Sodium_CFA-Infographic_FINAL.pdf)

### 32. Are MOST of the CANNED fruits labeled as “low-sugar,” “no sugar added,” or “canned in own juice” on the day of Pantry visit?

Canned fruits are often a source of added sugars in the diet in a similar way that canned vegetables are a source of sodium. Many food pantries have clients who live with diabetes. These clients must closely monitor their sugar intake. The 2015 Dietary Guidelines recommend limiting added sugars, which includes sugars in canned fruits.

#### Food pantries can help clients reduce their daily intake of added sugars by:

- Collecting specific donations of canned food labeled as “low-sugar,” “no sugar added,” or “canned in own juices”
- Educating clients about the link between added sugar in the diet and diseases like diabetes
- Creating a special section for “low-sugar” canned fruits with signs to identify it
- Sponsoring taste-tests of “low-sugar” canned fruits versus heavy syrup canned fruits so clients can taste the difference

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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## 33. What is the overall VARIETY of dried or canned lean protein available to clients on the day of the Pantry visit?

Many Americans do not consume the recommended amount of fiber each day. Dried beans, lentils and other legumes, like split peas, are excellent sources of protein and fiber. These are also considered “complete” protein sources when combined with whole grains. Beans, lentils, and peas are affordable and versatile protein sources for food pantry clients. Food pantries can promote optimal health by ensuring clients have ample supply of these low-fat protein options.

### **Canned lean protein:**

Many food pantries receive an ample supply of canned foods through TEFAP commodities and donations. Canned foods are easier to donate because of their longer shelf-lives. Food pantries should not accept home-canned donations due to the risk of food borne illness. The quality of canned foods at a food pantry is often controlled by food pantry policy and volunteer efforts. Many pantries will establish a policy on what to do with dented cans.

### **From the Food Bank Kitchen: Beans** by The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts

This handout describes health benefits of cooking with beans and contains many tips and recipes. A cooking demonstration of “How to Use/Prepare Beans” can provide clients ideas for how to serve beans as a lean protein source for their families.

<https://www.foodbankwma.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/NewsBites-Beans.pdf>

### **A Food Pantry Wish List** by C. Joyce Kleffner and Kate Yerxa of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension

This web page includes a printable list of canned food items that public donors may choose to purchase when grocery shopping. Lists like this one can help food pantries ensure they keep an adequate stock of low-fat protein, as well as low-sodium canned vegetables and low-sugar canned fruits.

<https://extension.umaine.edu/publications/4304e/>

### **Can Defect Safety Sheet** by The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation

This simple, printable infographic provides examples of hazardous defects in canned food.

[https://www.food-finders.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Can\\_Defects\\_8\\_5x\\_11.pdf](https://www.food-finders.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Can_Defects_8_5x_11.pdf)

## B.5. Low-Fat Dairy, Eggs, and Grains

**34. What is the overall VARIETY of low-fat dairy items?** *This includes whole, fresh, powdered, or fluid packaged eggs. Select the best option that corresponds to the eggs available.*

Dairy is a large source of protein, vitamin D, and calcium for Americans. Other non-dairy items such as soy milk, rice milk, almond milk, or coconut milk, may provide similar levels of nutrients *IF* they are fortified. Cow's milk and goat's milk are naturally high in protein, calcium, and vitamin D, but they can also be high in fat. The 2015 Dietary Guidelines demonstrate that low-fat dairy products can be part of a balanced, healthy diet.

**Low-Fat Dairy Items:** milk or soy based items that meet ALL the following criteria, per 1 cup (8oz) serving:

- ✓ Fresh (as in fluid), canned, or dried (powdered milk)
- ✓ Contain 7+ grams of protein
- ✓ Contain less than 5 grams of total fat
- ✓ Contain at least 300 mg of calcium

It is often challenging for pantries to maintain a supply of milk and dairy products due to inadequate chilled storage space or limited sourcing abilities.

**Milk Gap in America's Food Banks Infographic** by DairyGood.org

This printable infographic highlights the shortage of milk donations nationwide. Food pantries may use it to encourage more milk donations from donors or during a food drive.

<https://dairygood.org/content/2015/milk-gap-in-americas-food-banks-infographic>

**The Great American Milk Drive** by Feeding America and the National Dairy Council

This is an online platform where consumers can donate funds to help food pantries and banks purchase milk. The website also links viewers to the nearest Feeding America food bank where they can donate milk or dairy products.

<https://milklife.com/give>

- ✓ Look for grant opportunities from the local state Dairy Council to purchase refrigerators to store fluid milk
- ✓ Connections with the local Dairy Council can increase dairy donations from organizations
- ✓ *If there is no chilled storage*, pantries can work to increase donations of canned or powdered milk

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## 35. What kind of eggs are available to clients on the day of the Pantry visit?

Eggs serve as a good source of protein for pantry clients. Eggs may be whole, liquid (such as egg whites in a carton), or powdered. Ensure that the eggs have been pasteurized for safety and that freshly donated farm eggs have not been fertilized. For many pantries, it is challenging to procure eggs on a regular basis. Partnering with local community or home-based chicken farms is one way pantries can obtain eggs and provide them to clients more consistently. Licensing requirements for small farms to sell or donate eggs vary by state, however there are some regulations in place at the national level (although most federal regulations do not apply to small farms selling directly to clients).

**Egg Laws by State** by the National Egg Regulatory Officials of the U.S.

This National Egg Regulatory Officials (NERO) web page provides resources for information on raising chickens and selling eggs in each state in the U.S., alphabetically.

<http://nerous.org/state-laws-regulations/egg-laws-by-state/>

**Egg Safety: What You Need to Know** by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

The FDA's web page on egg safety provides information on safely buying, storing, preparing, serving, and transporting eggs. The page also has a short video on "playing it safe with eggs" and resources to contact their outreach and information center with questions about egg safety.

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm077342.htm>

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

**Grain Items:** Count items as refined or single grain (intact grain in bulk form). 1 type of grain counts as a packaged product or a whole grain. **Do NOT count pastries, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, or grain items with added sugars over 10 grams of sugar per single serving.** This will likely exclude many processed cereals, especially “children’s cereals.”

<u>Single Grain Examples</u>		<u>Refined Grain Examples</u>	
Quinoa	Bulger wheat	Sliced bread	Tortillas
Popcorn	Oatmeal	Pasta	Muffins & bagels
Rice	Barley	Cereals	Crackers

Image from the Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

**36. What is the overall VARIETY of grain items (examples above) on the day of the Pantry visit? Do NOT count pastries, cookies, cakes, and sugary grains.**

Grains are a diet staple in cultures all over the world. Grains are a source of carbohydrates, including fiber, and B vitamins which are all important for our health. A “whole grain” item is a grain based item that includes all three parts of the grain plant: bran, endosperm, and germ. The bran and germ are removed during processing, or refining, leaving only the endosperm. The bran and the germ contain the highest amounts of fiber, minerals, and B vitamins, which is why whole grains are preferable to refined grains.

### **All about the Grains Group**

This is the official *MyPlate* web page for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The web page defines and describes the current recommendations for the grains food group.

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/grains>

**37. Of the grain items (examples above) what is the availability of WHOLE GRAIN products on the day of the Pantry visit?**

The 2015 Dietary Guidelines recommend that at least 50% of grains in the American diet should come from whole grain sources. Food pantries can help their clients reach this goal by sourcing more whole grain options and requesting whole grain donations.

### **Whole Grains 101** by the Whole Grains Council

This resource provides descriptions of different whole grains, recipes, and instructions for how to cook with them. Food pantries can use the resources on this site to educate volunteers and clients about whole grains.

<http://wholegrainscouncil.org/whole-grains-101>

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## C. Policies of the Food Pantry

These questions may not be directly observable to the rater at the time of the Pantry visit. Section C. Policy questions should be posed to a food pantry manager, staff member, or designated volunteer leader who may be familiar with the agency's policies or has access to a policy manual.

### 38. Does the Pantry have documented Nutritional Guidelines for food brought IN to the Pantry?

Nutrition policies are gaining attention in the anti-hunger and food assistance world. A nutrition policy in a food pantry may detail the types of food that the pantry will seek out or accept as donations. A food procurement nutrition policy can help the pantry accomplish nutrition related goals, such as offering clients more low-sodium or low-sugar canned food options.

**Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project** (2016) by the University of Wisconsin Extension

This is a comprehensive toolkit that targets client-choice model food pantries. This guide outlines steps for developing a nutrition policy. It also describes strategies that pantries can use to educate both commercial and community donors on how they can help promote clients' health by considering the pantry's nutrition policy.

[http://fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries/files/2015/05/Safe\\_Healthy\\_FoodPantriesGuide\\_w\\_Appendices.pdf](http://fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries/files/2015/05/Safe_Healthy_FoodPantriesGuide_w_Appendices.pdf)

### 39. Does the Pantry have documented Nutritional Guidelines for food given OUT by the Pantry to clients?

Food distribution policies differ from procurement policies as they specify what types of food will be sent *home* with clients. These policies may detail food safety precautions that the pantry will take to ensure clients receive food that is safe. The distribution policy may also identify what percentage of food given to clients should follow the MyPlate dietary recommendations.

**Food Bank Nutrition Policy** by the Nutrition Policy Institute of the University California-Berkeley

This is a project of the University of California, Agriculture and National Resources, Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI). This organization provides a training course for food bank distributors, pantry managers or lead volunteers, and SNAP-Ed or EFNEP supervisors. The course focuses on how to draft and implement a nutrition policy at an anti-hunger agency.

[http://npi.ucanr.edu/Food\\_Bank\\_Nutrition/](http://npi.ucanr.edu/Food_Bank_Nutrition/)

## 40. Does the Agency and/or the Pantry have a documented “Respect & Dignity policy” for how clients and volunteers are treated and expected to act?

A food pantry’s philosophy on how clients and volunteers should be treated affects all facets of the pantry. It affects clients’ wait time and check-in experience; it affects the way volunteers communicate with clients and each other; and it affects the nutritional quality of the food sent home to clients. A respect and dignity policy is a formal way to uphold a positive emotional culture in the pantry. It can ensure that the food pantry maintains a supportive environment for staff, volunteers, and clients.

### Ensuring Safety of All Pantry Patrons through Volunteer Background Checks

Food pantries often serve families, and young children may be present in the space where food is distributed to clients. Volunteers and clients have opportunities to interact in a busy and chaotic environment. This type of environment may present occasions where adults are alone with children. It is the food pantry agency’s responsibility to ensure the safety of children while on site with their families.



Many states require agencies to conduct background checks on staff and volunteers who will be interacting with children, the elderly, individuals who are disabled, and other vulnerable populations. Food pantries are often not required to conduct background checks on their volunteers, although many still have policies requiring volunteers working with school pantries or home-delivery programs to complete background checks. Pantry staff can make it clear to potential volunteers that background checks are required for everyone. This may help minimize the risk of volunteers feeling distrusted or concerned about prior offenses that may not be relevant to their volunteer duties. Volunteer background checks are not done out of distrust or judgement; only to fulfill the food pantry’s priority to operate in a safe and professional manner for the sake of clients and other volunteers.

### Volunteer Background Checks: Giving Back Without Giving Up on Privacy by PrivacyRights

This website provides a comprehensive overview of laws and policies surrounding background checks from the standpoints of organizations and volunteers, as well as tips for both parties. It offers references and resources for organizations, including national sex-offender registries, databases for finding credible background screeners, and a link to the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. It also provides a link to access a tool which agencies can use to develop a Privacy Policy, to help communicate the rationale of the background checks to volunteers.

<https://www.privacyrights.org/consumer-guides/volunteer-background-checks-giving-back-without-giving-privacy>

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## 41. Is the “Respect & Dignity policy” or statement visible in a place where clients and volunteers can see it within the Pantry space?

A visual representation of the respect and dignity policy can increase general awareness of the behavioral expectations of clients and volunteers within the pantry. Displaying signs or posters that highlight expectations within the pantry can benefit all clients and volunteers. It may also enhance accountability of peoples’ behaviors.

### Posted Respect and Dignity Policy



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

## 42. Is Food Safety Training a documented requirement for Staff and Voluneteers who have leadership positions?

**Food Safety Training from Servsafe** by the National Restaurant Association

This training course reviews the basic food safety practices for preparing and serving food. Trainees can earn a food handler certificate from the National Restaurant Association that is valid for five years.

<https://www.servsafe.com/home>

**Food Safety Website** by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

This webpage provides information about different food safety topics.

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/index.html>

## 43. Is Food Safety Training a documented requirement for Volunteers that do not have leadership positions within the Pantry?

Compared to paid staff, volunteers often serve the pantry on a less routine schedule and usually do not have leadership roles or responsibility over other volunteers.

**Food Safety Website** by Washington State Department of Health

This webpage provides tips for meeting food safety expectations. Because food pantries deal with food that is close to expiration, pantries can keep their clients safe by providing food safety training for volunteers.

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/FoodSafety/Tips>

## D. Food Safety, Frozen, Chilled & Dry Storage

### D.1. Storage

44. Does the Pantry have FROZEN storage available for foods?

45. If yes, please record temperature.

Frozen storage availability can greatly increase the offerings of fruits and vegetables to food pantry clients. However, both frozen and refrigerated storage require utility usage. Therefore, the food pantry should plan for increased energy expenditures when using frozen and chilled storage.

#### Guidelines for Frozen Storage by the National Restaurant Association that Apply to Pantries<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Temperature of frozen storage should be below 31° F.
- ✓ Product rotation can ensure that food is distributed to clients before it molds or rots. Rotate new products to the back of the shelf and bring the older products forward.
- ✓ Schedule staff or volunteers to look through the freezer to remove spoiled food.
- ✓ Randomly select frozen food items to check for frost and proper internal temperature.
- ✓ Ensure good airflow in the freezer space. This is important to keep food safe!
- ✓ Defrost the freezer regularly if needed.

46. Please select the following types of FREEZERS the Pantry has available for food storage.

*Include off-site units and list the number of units.*

Anti-hunger agencies may have a variety of different freezer units available to store frozen food. The rotation of food through all units should be monitored. When units are stored in different places, it may become more difficult to monitor the temperatures and quality of frozen foods.

Search for infrastructure grant opportunities to assist with the purchase and maintenance of frozen, chilled, or dry warehousing equipment. Note: this is the same information from page 18.

#### Historical grant opportunities:

- TEFAP Rural Infrastructure Grants from 2013:  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/tefap-infrastructure-grant>
- Search grant and funding engine with these terms: *capacity, storage, freezer, refrigerator, warehousing, waste reduction, food pantry, meal site, food bank, emergency feeding.*

Refer to “Other Resources We Love” on page 41 to find WISCAP’s resource for fundraising ideas!

1. *ServSafe Coursebook*. 5th ed. Chicago, Illinois: The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Copyright 2010.

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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47. Does the Pantry have REFRIGERATED/CHILLED storage available for foods?

48. If yes, please record temperature.

Similar to frozen storage, refrigerated or chilled storage increases the pantry's ability to offer fruits and vegetables in the freshest form along with protein options like meat and dairy.

## Guidelines for Refrigerated Storage by the National Restaurant Association that Apply to Pantries<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Keep temperatures between 32° F and 41° F. Temperatures above 41° F can cause food to spoil more quickly and may lead to food borne illness.
- ✓ The chilled storage spaces need to be checked at least once a week.
  - Regardless of the pantry's hours, someone should be scheduled to check chilled storage spaces once a week to ensure that food does not spoil.
- ✓ Chilled storage units should receive regular check-ups from a maintenance professional.
- ✓ Avoid over-stocking chilled storage units to maintain good airflow.
  - Airflow is necessary for the food in the unit to stay cold. If air flow is stopped, then parts of the refrigerator will become warmer and food may spoil.
- ✓ Raw foods should be stored separately from ready-to-eat foods.

## Order of Food Storage in Refrigerators



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

1. *ServSafe Coursebook*. 5th ed. Chicago, Illinois: The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Copyright 2010.

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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## 49. Please select the following types of REFRIGERATORS the Pantry has available for food storage.

*Include off-site units and list the number of units. Choose ALL that apply.*

Anti-hunger agencies may have a variety of different refrigerator units available to store chilled food. See the Historical Grant Opportunities on page 29.

- ✓ The rotation of food through all units should be monitored.
- ✓ Monitoring the quality of chilled food becomes more difficult if the refrigerator units are located in more than one place.

## 50. What is the approximate square footage of ALL dry storage space available to the Pantry?

Dry storage areas are one of the most unique features of any food pantry space. This is because many food pantries begin from another community based anti-hunger effort, such as a faith community or a health organization. There are *best practices* to increase food safety in dry storage spaces. (These are listed below 51.) Keeping a well-organized and maintained dry storage area makes it much easier for volunteers and staff to rotate the food inventory.

## 51. Please describe dry storage space. *This question is NOT scored.*

There is no right way to maintain a dry storage area, but there are wrong ways that can endanger the food and pantry clients. Please refer to the guidelines below to avoid dry storage hazards and keep food safe.

**ServSafe Coursebook: Dry Storage Guidelines<sup>1</sup>** by the National Restaurant Association

The ServSafe Coursebook describes dry storage best practices in the restaurant industry. Some of those practices are relevant for food pantries, including:

- ✓ Keep dry storage areas cool and dry.
  - Keep dry food storage areas between 50–70° F.
- ✓ Ventilate dry storage areas to keep the temperature and humidity consistent throughout the space.
- ✓ Store dry food at least six inches away from walls and at least six inches off the ground.
- ✓ The dry storage area should not have windows or direct sunlight. Direct sunlight can increase the temperature of the space.

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1. *ServSafe Coursebook*. 5th ed. Chicago, Illinois: The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Copyright 2010.

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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## D.2. Food Safety

### 52. Is there a thermometer or thermostat in the Dry Storage area?

A room thermometer or shelf-thermometer is an inexpensive tool that can generate significant savings for the food pantry by reducing spoilage.

#### **Proper Storage Temperatures for USDA Food Commodities by California Department of Education**

Correct temperature control is essential to maintain food quality, nutrient content, and to control bacterial growth. Daily temperature monitoring is necessary to ensure proper storage conditions. Food pantries may have a variety of food products in their dry storage areas. Knowing the correct storage temperatures will help keep those foods fresher for longer.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/fd/mb00404.asp>

#### **Storing Food for Safety and Quality by Oregon State University**

Proper storage can extend a food's shelf life. Shelf life can depend on the type of food, its packaging, and storage conditions like temperature and humidity. Food pantries can reference this comprehensive guide to find detailed information and tips about proper food storage.

[http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/sites/default/files/documents/pnw\\_612\\_storingfoodforsafetyquality.pdf](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/fch/sites/default/files/documents/pnw_612_storingfoodforsafetyquality.pdf)

### 53. Record the temperature of the thermometer or thermostat in the dry storage and select the appropriate score.

Food storage in food pantries is similar to food storage in restaurants, so similar safety practices and assessment tools may be used.

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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## 54. Are hand washing signs displayed above sinks?

Hand washing is one of the simplest food safety measures a food pantry can employ. All volunteers should wash their hands prior to assisting in the food pantry. Providing a space for clients to wash their hands—or use hand-sanitizer—will improve food safety. Visual reminders to wash hands, such as hand washing signs, will encourage this behavior and thus food safety at the pantry.

**Germ Busters** by Washington State Health Department

This website provides hand washing signs in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and English. There are also posters in 13 languages illustrating each step of the hand washing process. A pantry can hang these signs in hand washing areas for food pantry volunteers and clients.

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Food/FoodWorkerandIndustry/HandWashingSigns>

**Handwashing General Posters** by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

This website provides many different styles of hand washing posters, including signs intended for children and young adults.

<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html>



Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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55. How clean and clear is the area where food is brought into the Pantry?

## Dirty and Cluttered



## Clean but Cluttered



## Clean and Clear



Images: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

The area where food is brought IN to the pantry is considered the receiving area. Food may become contaminated in the receiving area if it is very disorganized. It is important to keep the receiving area clean and free of debris for the safety of volunteers and the food itself.

**Tips on Food Receiving at the Food Pantry**, adapted from the National Restaurant Association<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Food deliveries should be arranged when the pantry is closed to clients. This helps to keep foot traffic low and to give staff and volunteers enough time to organize or store the food.
- ✓ Train volunteers how to inspect deliveries for rotten or molded items *at the time of the delivery*. Empower volunteers to prevent spoiled food from being stored at the pantry.
- ✓ Display the pantry's food rejection policies in the food receiving area. This can show food donors what quality of food donations the pantry will accept. This may prevent rotten or unsafe food donations from entering the pantry space.
- ✓ Display pictures of unacceptable foods to help volunteers determine which food donations to reject.

1. *ServSafe Coursebook*. 5th ed. Chicago, Illinois: The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Copyright 2010.

## 56. What kind of transportation equipment is available for use by the Pantry?

Food pantries often rely on a variety of transportation methods to pick up and deliver foods for clients. A pantry vehicle must pass emissions, be registered, insured, and drivers must be licensed. These requirements can be expensive. Pantries may rely on private vehicles to transport food. As the pantry grows and acquires more fruits and vegetables for clients, the transportation needs may increase. A high-use vehicle that is privately owned may lead to organizational challenges related to the maintenance cost of the vehicle, or if something happens to the driver. A *best practice* of food delivery is to use an agency-owned and insured vehicle. Often, this requires support from a Board of Directors and a capital funding campaign. Below are some tips on transporting perishable food in any vehicle.

**Transporting Foods to and from Pantries**, adapted from the National Restaurant Association<sup>1</sup>

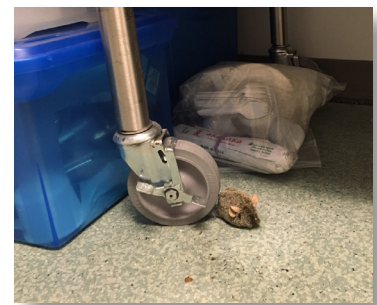
- ✓ Insulated food containers should be used to keep foods at or below 41° F
- ✓ The motor vehicle should be cleaned on a regular schedule
- ✓ Drivers transporting food should complete food safety training

### Concerned about Pests?

Pests (like ants, rodents, and cockroaches) are attracted to food. This makes food pantries—like grocery stores and restaurants—prime targets for pest infestation. The best treatment for pests is to *prevent infestations before they start*. The most effective way to prevent pests is to deny them access to the pantry and remove any sources of food, water, or shelter.

**Deny Pests Access to the Pantry**, adapted from the National Restaurant Association<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ All doors and windows should have screens; it is recommended to have a screen mesh size of “16 mesh per square inch.”<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ Ensure all doors close properly without any cracks or gaps
- ✓ Use door sweeps or “air doors” in entry ways from the outside to the inside pantry space
  - An “air door” is a large fan that is placed above a door and whenever the door is opened, the large fan blows air downwards. This keeps flies, gnats, and mosquitoes from entering the food pantry
- ✓ Check all deliveries for an infestation of pests
  - Be careful with tropical fruits! Large spiders can hide in banana boxes
- ✓ Seal open spaces around pipes
- ✓ Cover floor drains with hinged grates to prevent rats or mice from entering the pantry
- ✓ Seal cracks in floors and walls



1. *ServSafe Coursebook*. 5th ed. Chicago, Illinois: The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Copyright 2010.

Image: A. Bush-Kaufman, 2016

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## E. Services

### 57. Does the Pantry provide or partner with another agency to deliver Nutrition Education Classes on site?

**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed)** by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/>

**Guide to Hands on Learning** by Second Harvest

These Second Harvest Heartland educational activities are designed to help teachers and students learn more about hunger and identify actions they can take to tackle the growing need in our communities.

<http://www.2harvest.org/get-involved/volunteer/educational-resources-and-tools.html#.WAWY9MI1G7E>

**Nutrition Education for Volunteers** by City Harvest

Learn to be a nutrition education volunteer, including shopping on a budget and ways to help end hunger. Volunteers can learn how to share their passions for cooking and basic nutrition.

<http://www.cityharvest.org/volunteer/nutrition-education-volunteers>

**Cooking Matters in Your Food Pantry** by Share Our Strength's Cooking Matters®

<https://cookingmatters.org/sites/cookingmatters.org/files/CMYFP.pdf>

### 58. Does the Pantry host food demonstrations, provide samples, or distribute recipes to clients?

**Quality Assets** by Feeding America

Criteria presented for developing tools and resources.

**Poster Criteria:** <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resource/poster-criteria/>

**Healthy Recipe Criteria:** <https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/resource/healthy-recipe-criteria/>

**Tasty Recipes on Your Budget** by [EatFresh.org](http://EatFresh.org)

This recipe database allows users to search for recipes that are suitable for specific needs. These include recipes for limited kitchen environments, “very quick recipes,” and “low added sugar recipes.” This database also has video tutorials, an “ask a dietitian” messaging resource, and several other resources for low-income families.

[www.eatfresh.org](http://www.eatfresh.org)

### 59. Does the Pantry have visual or spoken referrals to WIC, TANF, SNAP, etc.?

Food pantry clients typically meet the eligibility requirements for these federal assistance programs. Referring clients to these programs allows the pantry to provide a broader scope of assistance to clients beyond their existing food donations and services. Clients may be visually referred by posters and pamphlets, or verbally referred by pantry staff (for example, as clients check in).

## F. Other Supplementary Programs

### 60. Does the Pantry participate in a “BackPack Program” where food is given to children in school bags?

BackPack programs help pantries provide children that are food insecure with meals for the weekends—a time when they may not otherwise have a stable source of food. There are a variety of ways that food pantries can establish and administer these programs, and some best practices have been documented.

**Starting a Backpack Program** by Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee

This guide was developed to provide agencies that are interested in starting Backpack programs with suggestions and best practices. The guide can serve as a checklist for pantries exploring the plausibility of developing a Backpack program, or those who are interested in modifying or improving the way they administer their existing Backpack program.

<http://secondharvestmidtn.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Starting-Your-Own-BackPack-Program.pdf>

**Find Your Local Food Bank** via Feeding America

Food banks often provide services to local pantries to help them administer Backpack programs. This search engine can help you locate food banks in your region that may be able to assist in the development and administration of a Backpack program. Links to food bank websites are also provided, along with their contact information.

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/>

### 61. Does the Pantry participate in/receive reimbursement for Federal Child Nutrition Programs, such as Summer Meals, CACFP, etc.?

The USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service funds Federal Child Nutrition Programs through state agencies that administer and implement these programs. These efforts include: the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Summer Food Service Program, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and Special Milk Program. Each program works to fight hunger and obesity, and anti-hunger agencies like food pantries can be reimbursed for providing healthful meals to children. Each program works to fight hunger and obesity, and they reimburse agencies for providing healthful meals to children.

**School Meals: Child Nutrition Program** by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/child-nutrition-programs>

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## 62. Does the Pantry have a Registered Dietitian or Nutritionist on staff or one that regularly volunteers?

Nutrition experts can be utilized by food pantries in many ways. They can oversee pantry programs, facilitate nutrition education or cooking classes, and help to ensure that the pantry is administered as healthfully as possible for clients. While nutrition experts can be an asset to pantries, they can also be difficult to find, and in some cases, difficult to afford.

**Find an Expert** by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

This search engine can help pantries locate and connect with Registered Dietitians in their communities. Users may search by zip code or by specific areas of expertise.

<http://www.eatright.org/find-an-expert>

**Get Trained** by Feeding America

Feeding America provides resources for Registered Dietitians (RDs) and Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) to get trained and connected with food pantries and food banks. RD candidates (those working towards obtaining their RD certifications) can gain important skills and experience through internships at food pantries. Connecting with RD candidates enables pantries to utilize nutrition experts without the expense of formally hiring them on staff. Feeding America also offers information on their Food Insecurity and Food Banking Supervised Practice Concentration for RD candidates.

<http://healthyfoodbankhub.feedingamerica.org/get-trained/>

## 63. Does the Pantry offer nutritional training to staff or volunteers regarding the USDA MyPlate food groups or serving sizes of foods?

Providing staff and volunteers with nutrition education can be a launching pad towards improving the nutritional environment of the pantry, overall. When staff and volunteers learn key nutrition concepts, they can play roles in educating clients and identifying ways to make the pantry healthier.

**(Refer to question #57 for resources on nutrition education programs that food pantries may utilize to educate staff and volunteers.)**

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## 64. Does the Pantry have a Mobile or School Pantry that is off-site in operation? *May be in partnerships with larger-member food bank/distributor.*

Mobile and school pantries enable pantries to provide food to people in need that may not otherwise be able to access their services at their regular locations.

### **Considerations for Starting a School Food Pantry** by Food Bank of Delaware

The Food Bank of Delaware developed these eight considerations for agencies interested in implementing school food pantries. These considerations may also be useful for pantries who intend to start a school pantry independently, or those who are interested in starting one with the help of their own local food bank.

<http://www.fbd.org/school-pantry-considerations/>

### **School Pantry Program Handbook** by the Great Falls Community Food Bank

The Great Falls Community Food Bank developed a comprehensive handbook that details the process of designing, implementing, and evaluating a successful school pantry. The handbook includes various criteria, guidelines, policies, and forms used in their school pantry model.

<http://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2011-2012/Children-Family/Minutes/Sept-19-2011/exhibit012.pdf>

## 65. Does the Pantry offer home delivery of foods or hot meals?

Some food pantries have successfully developed home delivery programs to serve those in need who have limited mobility, such as seniors and individuals with limited abilities. While these programs are beneficial to communities, they can be challenging to develop and administer.

### **Emergency Food Pantry Delivery Program** by Mature Services, Inc.

Mature Services, Inc. is an agency in Akron, Ohio that has successfully developed a food delivery program for individuals in need of emergency food assistance. Their on-site food pantry home-delivers three days' worth of emergency food donations to individuals in their county. They were able to raise the funds to administer the program by partnering with numerous agencies, organizations, and foundations. They also deliver reasonably-priced nutritious meals to seniors and individuals with disabilities in their county.

<http://www.matureservices.org/nu/foodpantry.php>

View Mature Services, Inc.'s partner agencies and sponsors here:

<http://www.matureservices.org/msi/partners.php>

The partners listed here demonstrate that a variety of different agencies and organizations are interested in food security and may be interested in partnering with food pantries.

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## 66. Does the Pantry provide hot meals on site?

Some pantries have kitchen facilities and staff that enable them to serve hot meals on site to clients. This is a particularly beneficial service for clients who may be homeless or who are unable to prepare hot meals for themselves at home. Pantries should become aware of the regulations on food service in their area.

\*NOTE: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration classifies food pantries, food banks, and soup kitchens as “nonprofit food establishments,” which have different regulations than for-profit food establishments.

## 67. Does the Pantry have specialty food items such as gluten-free or baby foods?

Keeping a stock of specialty food items is a very beneficial service for clients in need of them, as they can be challenging to obtain. For instance, gluten-free foods for clients with celiac disease, infant formula for clients with babies, or dairy-free products for clients with lactose intolerance can be expensive and otherwise out-of-reach for pantry clients.

- Promote the pantry’s need for specialty food items throughout your community
- Promote the need for specialty food items in food drives
- Allot a portion of funds from fundraisers to purchase specialty items from your food bank distributor (they are likely cheaper at food banks than retailers)

## 68. Does the Pantry sponsor or demonstrate volunteer appreciation or awards for service?

Volunteers often make up the primary labor force of a food pantry or food bank. As such, a strong volunteer force moves pantries towards their goals of alleviating hunger in their communities. Volunteer recognition, such as hosting “Thank You Nights,” can improve a volunteer’s dedication to the mission of the pantry. Volunteer name tags or assigning special duties to volunteers can increase their feelings of accountability and responsibility.

**Building Strong Volunteer Programs** by Washington NonProfit

Washington NonProfit is a state association focused on Washington’s nonprofit sector. They improve nonprofit sector representation in state and federal policy decisions, and they improve access to programs, services, and funds to enable them to build their capacity. This resource may help pantries gain a better understanding of how to support their volunteers. It explains essential elements of supporting volunteer involvement, and identifies simple steps to strengthen volunteer programs. Volunteers are crucial to food pantries, and it is important to recognize their efforts and the importance of their roles in the agency.

<https://vimeo.com/album/3041684>

## 69. What comments would you like to share about your Food Pantry environment? *Please use the space provided below. This question is NOT scored.*

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## Other Resources We Love

**WISCAP's Guide to Resources for Wisconsin Food Pantries** by The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association

This resource guide for Wisconsin food pantries provides a variety of ideas and information that may be helpful for pantries in every state. Fundraising ideas can be found under Finding Money on pages 35 – 42. Other sections in the guide include: Getting Food, Publicity & Networking, Outreach—Connecting Families to Resources, and Resources & Organizations.

<http://wiscap.org/pdfs/WISCAP%20Guide%20to%20Resources%20for%20Wisconsin%20Food%20Pantries%202.pdf>

**Produce Guides** by The Greater Pittsburg Community Food Bank

These guides provide information and ideas about how to save overripe fruit and vegetables from being wasted by extending their shelf lives. Food pantry staff and volunteers may reference these guides, or they may display or distribute them to clients.

<https://www.pittsburghfoodbank.org/produce-guides/>

**Safe and Healthy Food Pantries Project (2016)** by the University of Wisconsin Extension

This is a comprehensive toolkit that targets client-choice model food pantries. This guide outlines steps for developing a nutrition policy. It also describes strategies that pantries can use to educate both commercial and community donors on how they can help promote clients' health by considering the pantry's nutrition policy.

[http://fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries/files/2015/05/Safe\\_Healthy\\_FoodPantriesGuide\\_w\\_Appendices.pdf](http://fyi.uwex.edu/safehealthypantries/files/2015/05/Safe_Healthy_FoodPantriesGuide_w_Appendices.pdf)

# Resource Guide to accompany The Healthy Food Pantry Assessment Tool

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### ***ServSafe Coursebook***

5<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago, Illinois: The National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation. Copyright 2010.



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