Community Advocacy Resident Education (CARE) Freestore Foodbank Projects



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The Freestore Foodbank:

Freestore Foodbank's mission is to improve lives by eliminating hunger in partnership with our community, and thriving community, and its vision, its objectives are to provide nutritious food, connect to support services, and offer a pathway from crisis to stability. Through the Community Advocacy Resident Education elective, residents partnered with Freestore Foodbank to create and improving nutrition of its clients. Each group first gained a comprehensive understanding of programs and resources Freestore Foodbank offers. Then, in partnership with Freestore Foodbank representatives, areas of potential expansion of were identified and the projects were implemented, working within the organization's structure.

Project 1: Healthy Eating Research (HER) Guidelines

- HER is a national program that funds research on policy, systems, and environmental strategies to promote healthy eating and advance nutrition equity. The HER Nutrition Guidelines for the Charitable Food System aim to improve the nutritional quality of food in food banks, pantries, and meal programs. Foods are ranked by levels of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars, and categorized using a color-coded system: Green (Choose Often), Yellow (Choose Sometimes), and Red (Choose Rarely).
- We partnered with the Freestore Foodbank to align their inventory with the HER Nutrition Guidelines. This collaboration supports both Freestore clients in making more informed, healthier food choices, and staff in understanding the nutritional quality of their inventory—creating opportunities to stock and promote healthier options overall.
- We used AI to generate nutrition labels for items that are difficult to find online—such as fresh produce or products with multiple varying brands. We then averaged the nutrition information and applied the HER Guidelines to categorize the entire current Freestore inventory.
- This was then presented to The Freestore with multiple deliverables for their consumers as shown below:



Helping you choose foods that support your health.



- Tip: Fill most of your cart with GREEN items when you can!
- YELLOW = "Choose Sometimes" These foods are okay sometimes - balance is key!
- Canned soups or meats Snacks like granola bars, crackers **Tip:** A few YELLOW items can add variety to your meal!

















themed months

- Limitations Limited input from community partner on their perspective on community need
- Lack of access/knowledge of technology may limit further information gathering to resources linked on brochure

Project 2: Freestore direct

Background: Food deserts are areas without access to healthy and affordable food. In Cincinnati, 25% of the population lives within a food desert. Freestore Direct provides fresh produce delivery every 2 weeks from grocery store rescue programs to families within a 30 mile radius of the Freestore Foodbank. Families are enrolled through a referral program by their PCPs if they have childen younger than 8 years old and transportation barriers. Previous survey data revealed that recipients did not know how to utilize the produce items they received or food would go to waste. There may be gap in knowledge as to how to incorporate and store unfamiliar produce items and integrate them into their diets.

Objective: Our goal is to increase effective utilization of produce within direct delivery boxes and with more effective utilization of fresh prouce, increase knowledge and practical skills around nutrition and building healthy meals.

Project:



Future Direction:

improvement

Translate brochure to Spanish

Repeat recipient survey on

utility and relevance of flyer

and suggestions for

Based on feedback, can

improve upon pre-existing

handouts on health-related

topics to be given during health

- Increase buy-in by illustrating informational flyer was created based on previous recipient feedback
- Very common gap in knowledge was how to properly store food to reduce food waste

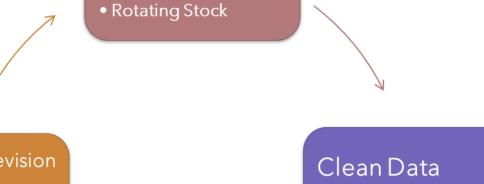
BUILDING A Please let us know what □2 medium potatoes peeled and diced helpful to receive! □3 ½ cups beef broth or substitute with water variety of foods with each meal -Brown onion, ground meat/beans and garlic until not pink -Add potatoes, broth, tomatoes, tomato soup, Worcestershire sauce, seasoning and bay leaves -Stir in vegetables. Simmer 15-20 minut

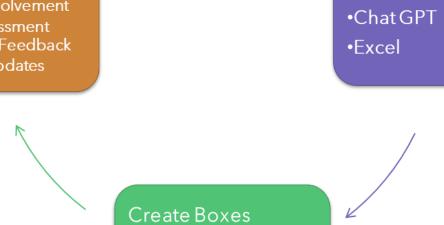
Project 3: Disease Specific Boxes

Background: Medically tailored meals have proven benefits (reduced hospital admissions and improved health outcomes).^{1,2} Cincinnati Freestore Foodbank was interested in creating medically tailored food boxes for their clients in hopes to better address food instability gaps in their clients with specific dietary needs.

Objective: Create a process to aide Freestore Foodbank in formation of shelf stable food that can be assembled for clients with certain dietary needs based on allergies, religious, or disease specific indications.

nventory





Sample Boxes:

Process:

Future Steps:

- Expanding to other diet limited or restricted diseases including diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, heart disease, etc.
- Incorporating community-based needs assessment
- Involve other community partners or experts such as registered dieticians at CCHMC and UC

Limitations:

- Lack of community-based needs assessment prior to project to target the diseases
 - Sustainability of project with both funding and focus within Freestore with competing interests and more immediate need







Dairy Free

*Brands and exact distribution of products may vary with supply

References:

Gluten Free

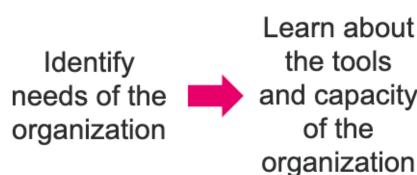
1) Deng, S., Hager, K., Wang, L., Cudhea, F. P., Wong, J. B., Kim, D. D., & Mozaffarian, D. (2025). Estimated Impact Of Medically Tailored Meals On Health Care Use And Expenditures In 50 US States. Health Affairs, 44(4), 433-442. https://doi.org/10.1377/HLTHAFF.2024.0130

Nut Free

• FIM Coalition. (n.d.). Medically Tailored Meals: The Proof. Retrieved April 13, 2025, from https://fimcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/FIMC-MTM-Research-Info-Sheet.pdf

Project 4: Customer Survey

Project 4 group crafted a survey for Bea Taylor and Liberty Street market clients. Aims of the survey include assessing client interest in a "grocery pick-up" model. Clients could select food pantry items of interest, add them to their "virtual cart," and select a pick-up time. Additionally, another aim is inquiring about clients' perception of health and how improved food access has changed their health. Future directions include Medicaid reimbursement for food at the Freestore Foodbank. This would allow the Freestore Foodbank to increase quantity and quality of food.



Understand the organization's process for review and implementation

Customer Survey

