

# Community Engagement - <sup>Lab</sup> Solutions

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What is the biggest challenge?

- Engaging rural communities + fighting stigma within the ~~and~~ rural community
- we have a large proportion of refugees + undocumented individuals.
- ~~beginning~~ educating clients on the food pantry being a safe space.
- community not really understanding the expansive need
- being a college, young community.
- identifying what the exact needs are + how to address them.
- client needs have changed over time + shifting to meet that need.
- beginning to understand there is a need to go where clients are already ~~at~~ to
- a lot of clients work 2 full-time jobs, have student loan debt + can't make ends meet

What ideas have worked?

- partnering with public municipalities
  - ↳ parks + rec, ~~schools~~ <sup>school</sup>, public libraries
- partnering w/ chefs to do demonstrations
- riding the train of trends, such as the trend of foodies
- CSA shares for clients who attend programatics

What could you do as a region to work towards these solutions?

- Partnering w/ community leaders such as chefs
- Engage w/ community not looking for a handout but just engaging as a community member
- Food Pantries are pillars of the community & is fully supported by community members
- Sharing & recording more stories of "hunger" in the region.
- Giving community humanization of food bank needs.

How can CTHG network support what is happening in your region?

- Create a regional conference
- are communities too diverse to replicate programs even w/in a region.

# Collaboration

→ Challenges: shared vision/motivation; resources; competition; communication; time; tension/conflict; even internal collaboration is hard; lack of support from lead org

What's worked:

Good facilitation

consensus decision making is better than majority rule

Smaller orgs @ the table can change policies more quickly

↳ how do you get the right people @ the table

⇓

bring leadership, program staff

Accountability is really important

Working in collaboration is really hard

Shared leadership takes practice - diff from typical work

Define roles - what can we bring to the table? Structure

Collaborations need to think about sustainability

work to find local leadership for collaboration

As a region:

Look @ midwestern agriculture economy

Land grants university talk regularly as a region

→ come together to co-create + evaluate programs

## Changing the Narrative + Equity

### 1. Farm to Pantry Coordinator

Food resource center, education programs

Food Bank

Meal service + organization

### 2. Challenges

- Speaking truth to power

- Fear

- ~~Entire~~ Risk of changing narrative - donors uncomfortable

- Implicit in perpetuating bootstrap narrative that creates "individual responsibility" & suffering

### Ideas, ones that worked

- Healthy foods policy for pantries & communicate w/ donors

- Separate fund from operating budget to try new programs

- Leading by example, being a food provider that also advocates for transformative policies, does community organizing, maintains sustainability

### Regional ideas

- Regional solidarity & unified voice

- <sup>develop</sup> Regional food charter

- Regional meeting / convening / gathering

# Capacity Building

## ① What are Biggest Challenges?

80% of donated dollar, constant <sup>need</sup> of fundraising limits other work.

Federal funding limits ability of what you can do.

Cap on volunteer opportunity has decreased individual donations. Don't have capacity to build another opportunity. 6 person agency.

Focus <sup>certain percentage</sup> of \$ having to go to programs rather than infrastructure / capacity / Admin

## ② WHAT are solutions?

- Scheduling time / space for reflection.
- Change language to engage more people
- Collaborative groups; same intent; messaging to push initiative
- relationship building

YMCA - food has become a bigger part of the hunger equation  
Missouri - food banks went as progressive / encouraged by change / bring food banks to the table for change

Des Moines Iowa - not a FA food bank / established before state FB / want accept donations of soda / Is FA shifting to healthy @ the state level.  
Starting internally & moving across the state

\$800,000 retail worth of goods if they didn't go thru the FB  
Food Pantry Network provide to partners for free

Kent County - ACCESS of W. Michigan is their umbrella org. Rallying for healthy food, CSAs from local farms But not all under the umbrella or a part of the movement / Tension to start the <sup>all food pantries</sup> Conversations / They do Run a food/co-op 25 families  
Kalamazoo - Collaborating w/orgs Leveraging programs

### Challenges

Missouri - If we couldn't purchase from Walmart we couldn't afford to support the programs. Would rather purchase from local farms but can't be the only way to do it / Can't be cost prohibitive  
- No local food hubs

Des Moines, Iowa - They have a local food hub. It's small / need funding to subsidizing purchases  
20% of food from FB of Iowa / Would like to get more from them. org capacity

Missouri - if they could work w/ and have consistent funding to provide a set level of local food.

- school garden
- working w/ school districts
- feed kids through their programs

JR Albert  
Foundation  
began in 2008

- Operational Support
- bolster an organization to value staff / provide a minimum wage structure
- Concentrating a supporting org's in Kansas / Missouri

Iowa - fighting for a living wage as an example of shifting one's messaging to fighting for

Iowa Hunger  
Coalition -

So there is a broader representation  
Speak for the entire  
anti-hunger community

Getting political / speaking out on behalf of clients.

Kalamazoo -

Matrix for the org. That helps decide on messaging & getting behind a cause / issue ex: DACA

Missouri -

Policy & Systems \$'s / but no anti-hunger coalition

org capacity