



FOOD INSECURITY SINGLE PURPOSE CLUB

Get Started Guide

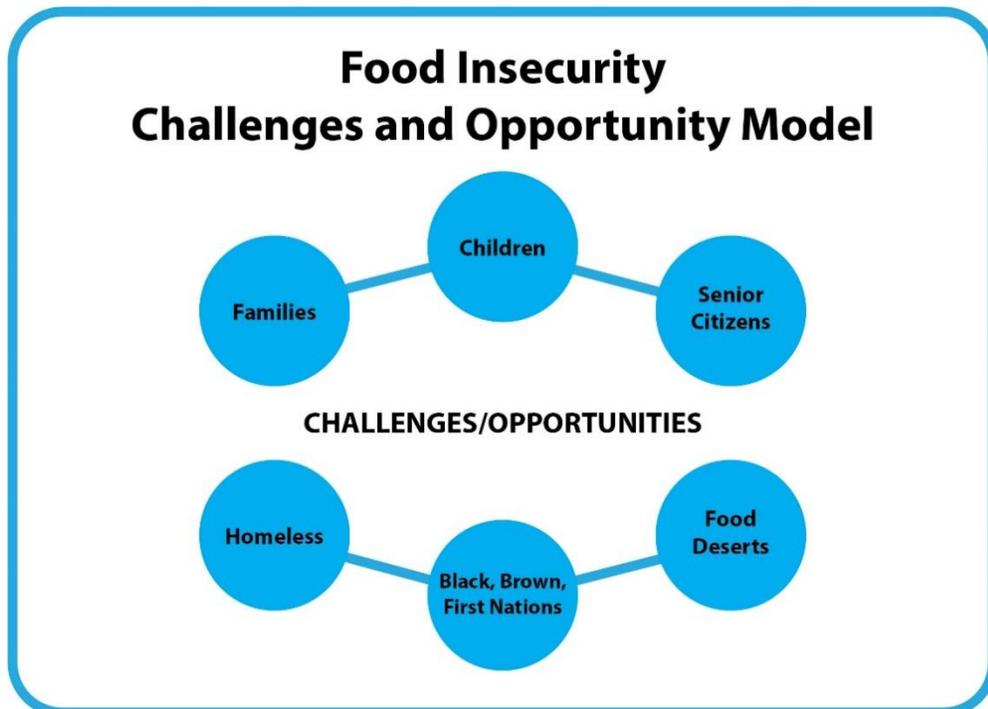
Food Insecurity

Food insecurity affects most communities and can contribute to slower learning rates among children, increased incidence of diseases and health issues, and stress and depression for our seniors. Fortunately, Kiwanis has solutions to help with many of the challenges of food insecurity.

Food insecurity is the lack of reliable access to sufficient quantities of affordable nutritious foods. Seventeen percent of Americans – more than 50 million people live in households that are food insecure.

A first food insecurity initiative for a club may be a response to a specific community request or maybe a more comprehensive request to approach the issue. The scope for a food insecurity club may be a specific portion of a community, a city-wide perspective, and over time may evolve to several cities within a county.

There are six categories of challenges and opportunities that are depicted in the model below. It should be noted that the solution for each will vary based on the current infrastructure and solutions already in place. Multiple solutions may be right for any of these opportunities and the ability to partner with other organizations will only enhance the solution.





The challenges and opportunities

The descriptions below are meant to provide definitions of food insecurity categories often experienced in communities to help a club determine the highest priorities to be tackled.

For more details on research, statistics, and background information, see the links included in Appendix A.

Children

It is estimated that one in seven children live in families that experience food insecurity daily.

The impact of food insecurity in children is that their attention spans are reduced, learning is markedly slower, lower test scores result and drop-out rates are higher. This affects their eventual ability to secure meaningful work requiring concentration which are most often accompanied by better paying wages. All are reversible with Kiwanis' food insecurity solutions.

Pre-school children, school aged children, and college students are all part of this category.

Families

Many families do not have the financial resources they need to meet the competing demands we all face – including payments for food, housing, medical care and other household necessities – which increases their risk for food insecurity. Seventeen percent of Americans – more than 50 million people – live in households that are food insecure.

According to the Urban Institute, caregivers who experience food insecurity, themselves, may be more prone to depression and have a lack of energy to nurture and engage with their children. Additionally, many caregivers experience distress when they and their children aren't receiving the nutrition they need. Overall, food insecurity has devastating consequences for the families who experience it.

Seniors

Approximately one in six seniors in the United States faces the threat of hunger and not being properly nourished. Seniors are particularly at risk because of fixed income and mobility issues. Living alone or taking care of grandchildren substantially increases their risk of hunger. The number of senior citizens dealing with food insecurity issues increased 65% between 2007 and 2014. Although fixed income is a factor for seniors, more than half of senior citizens that have some level of food insecurity are above the poverty level.

As seniors become more food insecure, they are more likely to develop diseases and illnesses such as diabetes, depression and heart disease that could cut their lives short.

Food deserts

Food deserts are geographic areas in which access to affordable and healthy food options, such as fresh vegetables and fruit, is limited or non-existent. 23.5 million people in the United States lived in a



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food desert in 2015. These often fall in poorer areas of the country, but it is not limited to low-income populations. Approximately half of the people living in a food desert were not low income.

Food deserts can be in urban or rural areas. They can exist in urban neighborhoods where corner stores carry plenty of processed foods, liquor and cigarettes, but offer few ingredients for healthy meals. They can also exist in rural agricultural communities where sparse populations cannot support food markets and gas station convenience stores often become the default grocery stores. Distance to grocery stores and lack of good transportation options are key issues in the creation of food deserts.

With limited options, people living in food deserts rarely eat healthy diets. Food insecurity has a high correlation with increased diabetes rates. For example, in Chicago, the death rate from diabetes in a food desert is twice that of areas with good access to grocery stores.

Homeless

Homelessness continues to challenge service providers in the United States where 600,000+ individuals are without their own place to stay on any given night. With significant barriers preventing access to food, homeless people remain at risk for experiencing long-term food insecurity.

There was a strong positive association with persons who had been arrested and reported food insecurity; anxiety symptoms and physical health symptoms were both positively related to food insecurity. Additionally, there were significant resources (access to medical services, and community connectedness) that were negatively related to food insecurity among homeless adults. Findings are discussed in the context of how important it is for service providers to have a clear picture of the health and well-being of their clientele, particularly as they work towards minimizing service disruption and maximizing client access to sustainable food sources.

Black, brown, and first nations

African & Hispanic

Four in 10 households are facing food insecurity. During the pandemic 39% of African American households with children and 37% of Hispanic households with children are currently food insecure. Compared with 25% and 17% respectively, in 2018. Covid has uncovered that disparities can widen rapidly.

Unemployment and access to close supermarkets are reasons for concern.

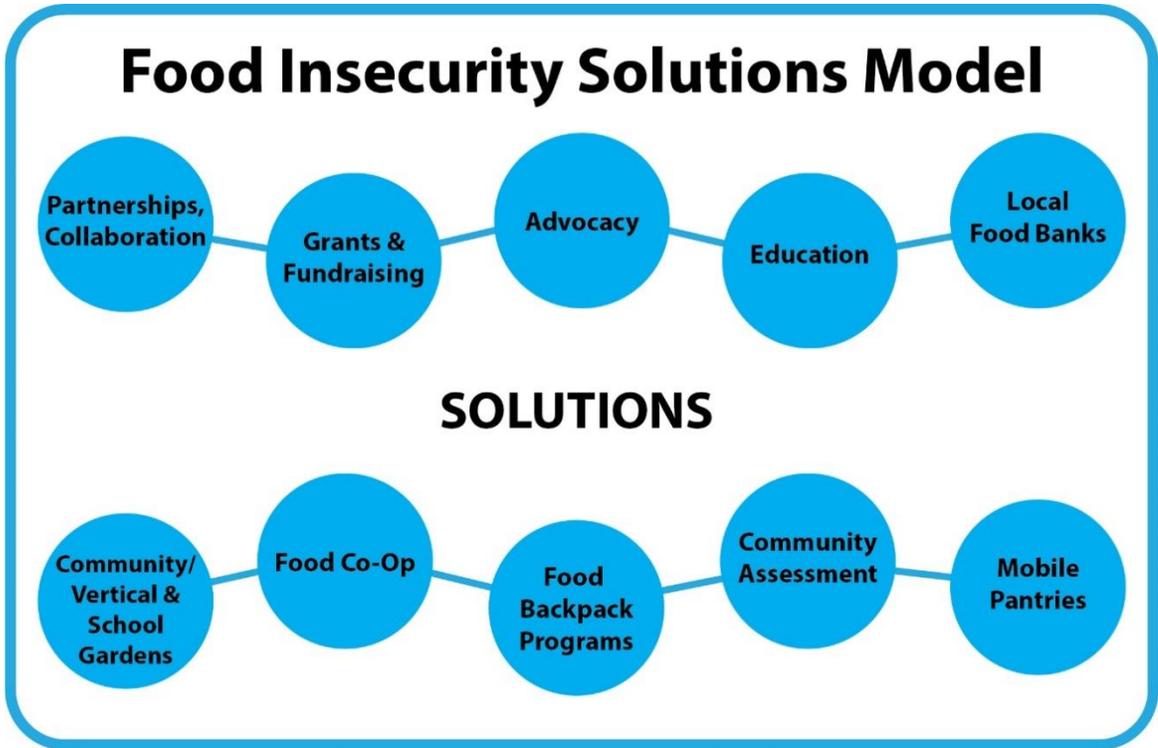
Native Americans

Food insecurity affects at least 60 reservations. Native families are 400% more likely to report not having enough to eat, while food deserts are prevalent on many reservations. Thirty five percent of Native children are affected by impoverishment.

Food-related illness is high for Native Americans, including having the highest rate of type 2 diabetes, the highest risk of diabetes-related death, and they have a 42% obesity.



Each Challenge/Opportunity described above will need a different set of solutions based on the infrastructure in place, progress in dealing with the issue, and severity of the issue to the community. We have identified twelve solutions in the following chart that contribute to resolving the challenges.



Each of the twelve solutions are described below:

Partnerships & Collaboration

There are many potential partners and collaborators as clubs evaluate solutions that satisfy the challenges and opportunities relevant to their community, these are a few to consider.

- Local government
- Churches
- School districts
- K-Fam (K-Kids, Builders, Key Club, CKI, Aktion, and Kiwanis clubs)
- Universities
- Grocery stores including CO-OP's
- Boys and Girls Clubs
- Salvation Army
- Save the Children
- Meals on Wheels
- United Way
- Feeding America
- Rotary, Lions, Optimists, Elks
- Chamber of Commerce
- Food banks

All of these potential partners are also potential team members to help with strategies, planning, and execution of solutions.

A brief description of potential partners follows.



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Local government

Your city and county governments have a wealth of information regarding the severity and locations of food insecurity in your community. Talk to mayors, county executives, and staff overseeing this issue locally. You may find there are financial resources available that can be dedicated to your solution.

Churches

Churches are often already serving food and providing sanitation kits to those in need in the community. They are a good source of information and can introduce your team to other partners and local players.

School districts

Make a point of meeting the superintendent of schools to understand their view of the challenges. They may direct you to specific schools which are at greater risk. They also are a great partner for delivering solutions to children and their families. Title 1 schools are often more at risk to food insecurity, so be sure to understand their needs.

K-Family (K-Kids, Builders, Key Club, CKI, Aktion, and existing Kiwanis clubs)

Partner with existing K-family clubs in the community. They can help promote solutions, help deliver solutions, and provide advice on what would work. If there isn't a K-family club, consider this a good opportunity to charter one and give them a focus where they will be able to measure progress as they help roll-out the programs in their schools.

Universities

You may find some faculties have done research relating to food insecurity. If so, they will have suggested solutions to address the challenges and may share community contact information. Professors and research assistants may want to participate in the implementation of solutions.

Grocery stores including CO-OP's

Grocery and Co-op's already in the community are excellent sources for food products that may have reached their best sell by dates, but are still safe and nutritious. They should be part of any solution that requires any changes to the product lines being offered to a community.

Boys and Girls Clubs

Besides being a national partner of Kiwanis, Boys and Girls Clubs know what is happening with lower income children and families. They provide substantial lunches and snacks, among many other services. Food insecurity may be a timely challenge if you are not already partnering with them.

Salvation Army

Salvation Army does so much in communities and make excellent club members because of the alignment of our purpose and service. Most Salvation Army centers have a food bank and many serve hot meals. There are service opportunities here plus a chance to work together on new solutions.



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Save the Children

Save the Children believes that children have the right to grow up healthy, educated and safe. They work in over 200 of the poorest communities in rural America – where they're often the only child-focused nonprofit – helping hundreds of thousands of children each year.

Meals on Wheels

Meals on Wheels is a driving force in the delivery of meals to seniors in communities large and small. In addition to delivering nutritious meals, volunteers provide important social interaction, and an assessment of changes in health, attitude, and safety hazards.

United Way

United Way fundraises through employees in corporations and individual donors. The funds support a variety of non-profits in communities. They do significant research to identify worthy recipient organizations. Look to United Way as a resource for information in your community.

Feeding America

For 40 years, Feeding America has responded to the hunger crisis in America by providing food to people in need through a nationwide network of food banks.

As food insecurity rates hold steady at the highest levels ever, the Feeding America network of food banks has risen to meet the need. They feed 40 million people at risk of hunger, including 12 million children and 7 million seniors. Feeding America has excellent information on the status of food insecurity in communities across the US.

Rotary, Lions, Optimists, Elks

Don't be afraid to contact other service organizations in your community. They may already be working on or thinking about the food security issue. They potentially bring both financial and human resources to the team. Consider making a presentation at one of their meetings.

Chamber of Commerce

Some chambers may be willing to support and promote a club's efforts to reverse the impacts of food insecurity. The member organizations are looking to improve the conditions in the community to make it more attractive to potential new companies.

Food banks

Food banks distributes supplies to food pantries, soup kitchens, churches and shelters. The Bread of the Mighty Food Bank often distributes directly to those who are food insecure. Where already operating in your community, they can give you a good picture of the gravity of local challenges and a snapshot of the trends.



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Grants and Fundraising

Many solutions chosen will require financial resources. Let's talk about a variety of sources of funds.

Some sources of funding only give to 501C(3) non-profit organizations. Do not be deterred if you lack this status. This is a perfect time to partner with an organization that is and the partnership will strengthen your application.

GoFundMe Page

GoFundMe pages allow organizations and individuals to solicit on-line donations from friends, family, and interested parties. Six figure amounts are possible with a finely crafted message.

Social Media – Facebook

Similar to GoFundMe, Facebook provides easy to set up donation pages that your friends can see plus the viral effect with their friends.

Foundations

Many local, regional, state, and federal foundations support food insecurity and homeless causes.

Community foundations

Local community foundations are a good place to start. In addition to financial support and a community perspective, they can direct you to relevant donor advised accounts under their supervision and other foundations serving food insecurity.

Churches

Many churches have food programs for those in need and may have funds available to support the cause. Talk to all of them.

Corporate Grants

Walmart Foundation Community Grant Program

Grants to support the unique needs of local communities in the service areas of Walmart stores, Sam's Club stores, and corporate distribution centers.

Geographic coverage: Nationwide

Application Deadline: Dec 31, 2021

Government Grants

Several federal agencies offer grants for food insecurity.

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP) with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Projects are funded from \$10,000–\$400,000 and from one to four years. They are one-time grants that require a dollar-for-dollar match in resources. Approximately 18 percent of the submitted



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proposals have received awards during the history of this program. About \$5 million per year have been authorized through 2012.

USDA

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created to ensure that children in lower-income areas could continue to receive nutritious meals during long school vacations, when they do not have access to school lunch or breakfast. The program offers funding on a per-meal basis to organizations who provide meals to low-income children during the summer. This is part of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations Nutrition Education Grant.

Funding to provide nutrition education for participants of the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, resulting in healthier food choices and a better understanding of healthy food preparation methods. This is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA Food and Nutrition Service.

The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program

Funding to support projects that will increase the purchase of fruit and vegetables among low-income consumers who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by providing incentives at the point of purchase. This is part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Advocacy

Ending hunger is no small challenge. Food banks play a critical role, but cannot do it alone. Fighting hunger and food insecurity is not only about providing emergency food to people in need – it also means taking action to address the root causes of hunger and poverty.

A food security advocate is someone who works to affect positive change and supports programs and policies to reduce the number of persons who suffer from hunger and food insecurity. Being an anti-hunger advocate is understanding that it takes more than food to fight hunger. Because there are various factors that affect food security, it takes both short and long-term solutions such as food assistance, job training and economic development programs to have a lasting impact. Advocacy is for all of us as it will take each and every one of us to change our communities. Anyone can speak about their experiences and opinions to help elected officials and the general public understand what is going on in our communities and organizations. Individual advocates can strengthen their productivity by forming groups because there is more power in numbers.

Advocates can choose to participate in several ways. Those may include, but are not limited to:

- Writing letters or emails to legislators
- Calling legislators on National Action Days and responding to Action Alerts
- Social safety net program outreach
- Leading discussions about food insecurity
- Organizing and/or participating in food advocacy related projects
- Identifying and engaging partners



Education

Introducing solutions to food insecurity will almost always require a component of education to help with the change management. Old ways die hard and for the transition to be smooth and rapid, the affected constituents will likely need a better understanding of why the new way is better, how to make the transition, and oftentimes, tools to help the transition, such as recipes and what few spices would add zest to a meal.

Education needs to be planned into every solution implementation and incorporated into discussions with stakeholders. Many health organizations and medical facilities should be able to assist with this task. Where co-ops and food banks are part of the solution, in store demonstrations at specific times of the week would add to the education.

Starting school gardens is another great way for education. If the students are given recipes and the opportunity to cook in class, they will proudly bring this knowledge to their homes.

Local Food Banks

As a Kiwanis club evaluates food insecurity and how to help address it in their community, they may want to start a food bank or food pantry. Understanding the difference in these two programs will help a club decide the scope of the service they want to provide.

What is the difference between a food bank and a food pantry?

Independent community food pantries are self-governing and usually distribute food to their clients on a once-a-month basis. A food bank is the storehouse for millions of pounds of food and other products that go out to the community. A food pantry functions as the arms that reach out to that community directly.

What is a local food pantry?

Simply put, a food pantry is different than a food bank in that it provides food directly to those who may not have enough food to eat. ... A community food pantry's mission is to directly serve local residents who suffer from hunger and food insecurity within a specified area.

Who is served at a local food bank?

The food banks distribute food and grocery items through food pantries and meal programs that serve families, children, seniors and individuals at risk of hunger.

How to get started.

For a step-by-step guide on how to start a food bank, follow the link below:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Start-a-Food-Bank#>



Community, Vertical and School Gardens

Community Gardens

Community Gardens are a proven way to combat food insecurity in areas with low access to food markets and in low-income areas. While most such gardens tend to be in areas that already have adequate access to healthy food choices, they help much more when located in areas of high food insecurity. When intentionally placed in or near food deserts, they become very effective solutions to food insecurity.

One of the major challenges to food gardens in low-income urban areas is lack of adequate space. In addition to finding and dedicating an area in or near such a community, certain key assets are needed. There must be a dedicated community or organization to provide labor and gardening knowledge to start the garden and to educate residents of the area how to sustain the garden. In addition, local residents should be informed about the benefits of healthy diets and provided with healthy recipes.

Even in neighborhoods with supermarkets available, community gardens are needed. Low-income residents have less to spend on healthy food after paying housing and other costs of living. By growing their own food, it has been estimated that a community garden saves about \$84 per month per family on food. Gardens generally have excess produce to share with friends and neighbors. Common crops include tomatoes, peppers, green beans, lettuce and cucumbers. In addition, culturally diverse foods are easily grown. The only investment in crops are seeds plus water, weeding, love and care. This way, families gain access to desired and healthy food that is otherwise not available, affordable or of sufficient quality at local retail outlets.

Vertical Gardens

Vertical Gardens are a sustainable way to provide healthy food options in a food desert without the need for an outdoor space. In urban areas, land available for agriculture use is scarce. Vertical gardens, which are also known as hydroponic gardens, have floor to ceiling shelves stacked one above each other with trays holding seedlings and plants sprouting from fiber plugs stuck in trays. They are each fed by nutrient enriched water and lit by LED lights. This allows a garden with a small to no footprint. In addition to eliminating the amount of land needed, vertical gardens reduce the amount of water needed and the need for chemical fertilizers and pesticides, providing environmental benefits as well as producing food. In addition, they eliminate weather and extreme temperatures as a factor in gardening, allowing the growing of vegetables, fruits and herbs year-round.

There is a downside to vertical gardens – they use more energy and can be expensive. Narrow and deep shelves need artificial light to mimic sunshine and to maintain growth at the back end of the shelves. The climate control systems that provide optimal growing condition are also high energy consumers. In addition, there are high startup costs.

Nevertheless, moving agricultural production into cities brings food closer to urban consumers, thereby shortening supply chains and cutting the distance food must be transported. Vertical gardens reduce or eliminate food deserts by increasing access to healthy fresh produce.



School Gardens

School Gardens are an excellent way to teach our youth about the value of a healthy diet as well as provide nutritious food. Current school gardens may not have been designed to reduce or eliminate food insecurity, but they have developed into a key role educating our youth. They produce healthy food that can be used in school cafeterias, taken home by students and/or feed people in the community. In addition to teaching students how to grow food for themselves, such gardens teach them about the benefits of eating fresh vegetables and fruit. They also add green spaces to our school properties. Such gardens can create a powerful force in communities living in urban or rural food deserts and facing extreme food insecurity.

Research has found that garden-based education does not negatively impact academic performance. Instead, it has often improved students' academic performances. Involving garden-based education in science and math classes has resulted in improved academic performance in those subjects. It has also resulted in improvements in language proficiency, particularly of students for whom English is a second language. Working toward the common goal of growing healthy food in a garden enhances the social interaction and growth of children.

One problem encountered with school gardens is maintenance of the garden in the summer, when most traditional crops are ready to be harvested. With schools out, neither faculty nor students are at school to tend the gardens. That is an area of opportunity for local service organizations to step up and keep the gardens watered, weeded and growing, as well as harvesting and distributing the produce to families or to organizations that will distribute the produce to needy persons.

In areas where there is not enough green space at schools for a garden, a school may choose to install a hydroponic garden inside. This provides a high tech and high yield learning experience in the classroom plus daily access to healthy food. The vegetables never stop growing and this leads to regular distribution of food to students and their families as well as to neighbors and food banks in the neighborhood.

Food Co-ops

Food co-ops are a substitute for large supermarkets and an excellent way to serve communities in a food desert. They are businesses owned by the people who use them. While some co-ops are for members only, many are open to the public at large. They exist to serve the members or the community, not to make a profit.

Food co-ops constitute a group of people buying food together for their community. They often purchase overstocked food and bulk items. They tend to have a much higher concentration of produce and other nutritional foods than supermarkets. Most focus on providing healthy food at discounted prices. Many buy local, organically grown meats and produce that is not otherwise readily available. They are an excellent source for healthy foods.

Because food co-ops are not profit based, they are better equipped than supermarkets to provide a sustainable source of healthy food in impoverished areas. They can focus on providing healthy food



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rather than fast food or junk food. They are part of the community and can better serve and support the needs of their local community. When a business is owned by the people who use it and is closely tied to the community in which it operates, feeding and helping people means much more than selling food. Persistent food insecurity in impoverished areas has turned the spotlight on food co-ops, particularly in communities of color.

Food co-ops have a number of secondary benefits. Most have local hiring practices. Although many use volunteers, they tend to pay a higher wage to employees. They support local and minority owned farms. Almost all co-ops have donation programs that support community organizations like food banks and social service programs.

Because food co-ops are member based, starting or running a co-op does not need to be done alone. A better way to get started is to recruit other organizations to partner with you to organize a food co-op.

Backpack Food Programs

A backpack food program is a way for a Kiwanis club to address food insecurity for children when they are out of school for the weekend or holidays.

Backpack food programs provide nutritious, non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food to children to ensure they avoid hunger when they can't depend on school meals. Every backpack food program is unique to the community and school it serves.

To get started, you need to develop information to support whether this type of program is needed in your school or another school in your community. Communities with a high free/reduced meal cost for students are usually a target for these programs. These students rely on their school cafeterias for the majority of their nutrition during the week. This support does not exist over the weekend, so many school districts have Weekend Backpack Programs.

Once you determine that there is a need for such a program, the first step is to schedule a meeting with your school principal to discuss the program, the need and how it might work. You need to have a plan ready for this meeting and you can use a toolkit to get started.

When it is determined how many children you will target, you will need strategies for marketing the program to families, a budget and backpack compilation and distribution logistics. You will need to recruit and train volunteers to support your program which can be members of your Kiwanis club and others that you can partner with in your community.

Your budget plan will depend on funding sources which can vary from program to program. Some programs are supported by a local food bank or food pantry, some are 100% community funded through donations. Your Kiwanis club can help make the community aware of the need for this program which will help in soliciting donations and volunteers.



Other things to consider are who will qualify to participate in the program, how to get families informed and enrolled, how to get the food to be distributed, menus, packing the bags, distributing the bags, etc. Click the link to the toolkit for Weekend Backpack Program to download a step-by-step approach to starting a backpack program.

<https://foodforfree.org/start-your-own-backpack-program/>

Lastly, continually evaluate your program to determine ways to improve the program and serve as many students as possible.

Community Assessment

A community assessment identifies the strengths and resources available in the community to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. The assessment focuses on the capabilities of the community including its citizens, agencies and organizations. It provides a framework for developing and identifying services and solutions and building communities that support and nurture children and families.

By accurately assessing the needs of your community, you will find

- What kinds of volunteer services your community is in need of?
- What are some of the unmet needs of our community, what should concern us most?
- What if anything is being done to meet those needs?
- Whether your clubs current service projects are still needed in your community?

The assessment may be expanded to include focus group discussions, town meetings, and telephone or mailed surveys to partnership members and the community.

Community Assessment will help your club resolve frequently noted community concerns.

Mobile Food Pantries

The difference between a Food Bank and a Mobile Food Pantry is that a Food Bank is a storehouse of food and other products, where a Mobile Pantry expands the capability to provide food more quickly and efficiently to communities for people who lack financial resources, or may not have access to traditional grocery stores.

Mobile Pantries directly serve families by bringing in truckloads of food distributed in pre-packed boxes or through a farmer's market style where people choose to take what they need.

There are some instances (due to the pandemic) where the Mobile Pantry has vehicles lined up in an orderly manner. The food boxes are prepared and located at the curbside. When the vehicle pulls forward, the driver unlocks the trunk of the car and the volunteer loads it in the back of the vehicle and closes the trunk. The driver then proceeds with the food without being in contact with anyone. It has been noted that over 300 vehicles can be processed in approximately 2 ½ hours, with enough volunteer help.



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Conclusion

Your club is taking on a vital role in your community. Food insecurity impacts many and has consequences that can be avoided with the implementation of appropriate solutions.

Your members will be rewarded by the impacts, changes and partnerships that result.

Be sure to record your efforts by regularly posting photos on social media to let the community know what you are doing and invite local print and broadcast media to attend significant events. It's a good way to attract like-minded citizens to join your club.

Once you have implemented all or most of the solutions appropriate for your community, look to see what other opportunities exist in your county and begin a dialogue there.



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Appendix A

This appendix provides more extensive information on food insecurity topics.

For information on food insecurity regarding children, click

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/food-insecurity-america-malnutrition-united-states>

For more information on Senior Citizen hunger, click <https://aginginplace.org/> and

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/2020-Executive%20summary-The%20State%20of%20Senior%20Hunger.pdf>

For information regarding each US state's food insecurity ranking, click

<https://unitedwaynca.org/stories/food-insecurity-statistics/>

To view 5 Solutions That Alleviate Food Insecurity in the U.S., click

<https://heated.medium.com/5-solutions-that-alleviate-food-insecurity-in-the-u-s-767ba03fcb94>